

AN INTERVIEW WITH JESSICA GUIAO

An Oral History Conducted by Grecia Lopez

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

University of Nevada Las Vegas, 2020

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The recorded interview and transcript have been made possible through the generosity of a grant from the City of Las Vegas Commission for the Las Vegas Centennial and funding from private individuals and foundations. The Oral History Research Center enables students and staff to work together with community members to generate this selection of first-person narratives. The participants in this project thank University of Nevada Las Vegas for the support given that allowed an idea the opportunity to flourish.

The transcript received minimal editing that includes the elimination of fragments, false starts, and repetitions in order to enhance the reader's understanding of the material. In several cases photographic sources accompany the individual interviews with permission of the narrator.

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.

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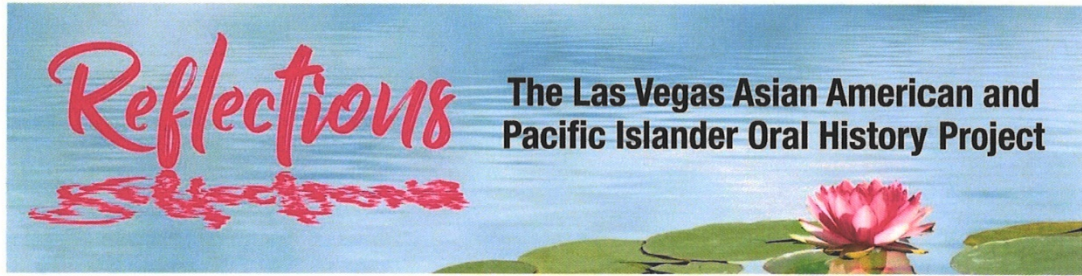
PREFACE

Jessica Guiao was born in California and raised in Las Vegas from the age of ten. Jessica's interview covers a wide variety of topics ranging from personal life and experiences to observations of change within Las Vegas as a city. Jessica's identity and perspectives intersect with observations of Las Vegas and North American culture. Jessica shares family experiences of parental pressure to become a nurse, to give them grandchildren, and more. The interview touches on the Las Vegas goth, rave, queer, and other scenes; it discusses topics that include mental health, mass shooting, politics, racism, and the effects of COVID-19; and it filters discussions through identities such as race, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, and religion to provide a complex perspective that is often unseen. Jessica's voice and perspective illuminate the diverse people, cultures, and stories that are Las Vegas.

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22 November 2022
in Las Vegas, Nevada
Conducted by Grecia Lopez

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Today's date is Tuesday, November 22, 2022. This is Grecia, G-R-E-C-I-A, Lopez, and I'm conducting an oral history project for the Las Vegas Asian American and Pacific Islander oral history project. This is for my class, for 349 Asian American Studies. I'm not Asian, but I have taken it upon myself to do this assignment because I think it's very important.

Jess, could you introduce yourself?

Yes. Hi. I am Jessica Guiao. That's J-E-S-S-I-C-A, G-U-I-A-O. I was born in California and moved here a couple of years ago. I come from a family of four. My parents are from the Philippines. I have two pets, a pug and a chihuahua. That's about it.

Could you tell me your age?

Oh, yes. Twenty-nine.

Can you tell us a little bit about your family, your childhood? If you want to get into specific places, events, like your siblings, schooling, things you did, your family friends, but about your family and your childhood?

Just basic stuff about my family?

Yes, whatever you want.

My parents are both Filipino. From what I know, we're not mixed with anything, like even my great-grandparents are Filipino. I kind of forgot when they came here, but it was in the '70s, I want to say. My sister, she was born in New York, and I was born in California, like I said. My sister is two years older than me. She was born in 1990. Wait, she is actually three years older than me because she was born in 1990, and I was born in 1993. What else is there to say?

That's fine. Can you tell me a little bit about...so, your grandparents came in the '70s?

No, my parents.

Your parents came in the '70s. Do you know why?

As far as I know, my mom came to get a job in nursing. My dad, his family, like his brothers and sisters, have been doing it, so I guess he just went with it, too; he didn't go here to find a job or anything.

They didn't come because of the military? Your dad wasn't in the military service?

No.

But your mom was as nurse?

Yes.

Cool. Could you tell me a little bit about why your sister was born in New York and you in California?

I never asked my mom why. She moved to New York first. But I'm pretty sure it has to do with her job in nursing. That's where she met my dad because my dad, I believe he first moved to New Jersey, and how they're close, so they met eventually and had my sister. I believe they moved to California because my mom had better job prospects there, I think, and then that's when I was born.

Your parents met in New York, and then they had your sister, and then they went to California.

Yes.

Do you want to talk a little bit about your childhood in California?

Okay, yes. I was in California until 2004, and I moved to Vegas when I was ten, and so my memory might be a little bit rough. As far as my childhood goes...What's there to say about that? Like my schooling and stuff?

Yes. Who did you live with? Did you live with just your mom and dad?

Yes, I just lived with my mom and dad. My grandmother lived with us for a couple of years.

Yes, just me, my parents, my grandmother every now and then, and my sister.

Did your grandma immigrate, or was she already living here?

Oh, she was a visitor. Yes, she just lived with us for a long time. She didn't immigrate or anything.

What about your grandpa?

Oh, I never met him. He died in 1980 something. Both of them, actually. It's kind of weird. My mom's dad and my dad's dad died around the same time.

You came in 2004 to Nevada?

Yes.

Did you guys come to Vegas right away?

Vegas.

Why did you guys move?

Housing was cheaper. I wanted to stay in Cali because my friends and stuff, and I wanted to go to UC Berkeley, and I knew nothing about the colleges around here, so it was like...hmmm.

Why did you want to go there?

Because everyone else was, if I'm being honest, yes, all my friends in northern California.

Did you know what you wanted to study?

No.

You just wanted to go?

I was really enthusiastic about arts, any type of arts, graphic design, or traditional arts, so something like that.

I think you did some schooling here, and you went to school for graphic design, right?

Yes.

Do you want to talk about that, like the schooling you've done here?

Oh, it gets complicated because I went through, I think, three different schools. I started at UNLV as a comp sci [computer science] major, and I hated that. I was just in there because my parents were saying that I could money easily and stuff. They actually wanted me to be a nurse at first because, you know, Filipinos. I was like, hmm. Yes, I took comp sci just because they accepted that. I wasn't going to be a nurse. I was going to be some type of IT person or whatever. Yes, I was in comp sci for maybe two semesters here at UNLV.

I forgot what year, but it was my second semester or something, I tried getting into the graphic design program. It sucked for me because they changed the application process. I wasn't able to just change my major to graphic design. I had to apply, like submit a portfolio and stuff. I wasn't immediately in graphic design, so they put me in some regular arts program. I forgot what the exact major was called.

Then from there, I left UNLV. I don't remember my exact reason. My mind was all over the place. I transferred to the Art Institutes of Nevada to study fashion design. That school is known as a scam school. It has all these lawsuits and stuff. I didn't feel like I had a good future there.

Then I ended up at CSN, and I was a web design major there.

You did all that fine arts stuff and a lot of creative stuff?

Some type of art.

Yes. While you were doing that, did you get pushback from your parents?

I had to lie about a lot of things. My parents, I don't think they even knew I was a fashion design major, if I'm being honest. I kind of lied and just said it was graphic design. I feel like I could

have fooled them a lot more easily if I put the word *graphic* in front of my major. I don't know if that makes sense. If I said I was just going to another school to study the same thing, they would have been mad, but I said *graphic design* and not just *design*, not so regular art thingy.

Let's pause for a minute.

We're back. We took a quick adjustment break. The last thing we were talking about was schooling. What are you doing now?

Right now, I am finishing my web development course at CSN. It's web design but a little bit different. I have one more class to take, and it hasn't been available for a couple of semesters, so I'm just waiting to hear about that.

Do your parents know about that one?

Yes, yes, yes. They think that anything involving IT, computers and stuff is acceptable and will get me a good job.

I feel like that's more leeway than some people get.

More what?

More leeway.

Oh, yes, yes.

But yes, because I have a lot of friends that are just nurses. They're just like, okay.

Did you want to talk about your grandparents a little bit?

I can try. I was never close to them, so my answers might not be very good.

Do you want to talk about why you weren't close to them?

Oh, big language barrier. Both my grandparents on my mom's and dad's sides, they didn't speak English. I only understand Tagalog. They wouldn't be able to understand me.

Your whole family just speaks Tagalog?

Tagalog and there is this other dialogue in the Philippines called Kapampangan. I don't speak that one at all.

But you understand it?

Very little because it kind of mixes with Tagalog as far as I know, so sometimes I can pick up the Tagalog words.

Wait. Why did that not happen? Why did you not learn it?

That's a good question because my dad speaks Kapampangan to my aunts and uncles. I feel like I should be able to speak it, right? I guess it's just because they spoke to me in Tagalog, and my dad never spoke to me in Kapampangan now that I think about it except when he was mad.

You understand a little bit of Tagalog, but you don't speak it? Or just little phrases?

If I were to describe it, I feel like I have the speaking skills of a ten-year-old.

So you do speak it, but it's minimal?

Yes, very minimal.

Why is that?

I forgot throughout the years. I was way better when I was little.

Did your parents speak it at home?

Yes.

But you just didn't pick it up?

Yes, I don't respond to them in Tagalog. They speak to me, they're like, "Jessica, where is your car keys?" Because I always lose them. Then I'll be like, "I don't know." But they'd ask that question in Tagalog, and I would be responding always in English.

At home, it was bilingual, then, both languages? Or three?

Like what's spoken in the house? Yes. Yes, three languages.

What about your sister?

Me and her have a little bit of a strange relationship.

Me, too. Me, too.

I think she speaks it better than me, but she also is the same as me when we talk to our parents; she responds in English.

Only if you feel comfortable, but why is that relationship strange? Only if you feel comfortable.

I knew this was coming. No, it's okay. We fought a lot. I feel like *bullying* might be a strong word, but I can't think of any other way to describe it. She did kind of bully me, and I hope she never hears this audio. Like in high school, I was a really big nerd. I went into anime. That's how we became friends and stuff, right? She thought that was only for nerds or for people that wanted to be Japanese. She would basically make fun of me for liking things like that. She would bully me over other things as well. I don't know, just random things. I had really bad acne in high school, and she would make fun of that. There were just a lot of things.

Thanks for sharing.

It got better, but we just don't talk. We're not fighting, but we just don't talk that much.

I know this interview is about you, but I think it's appropriate to share that my relationship with my brother is also pretty strained, like we don't talk. There's not beef, but we just don't talk. Yes, I think it happens a little bit more than a lot of families like to admit, yes.

That's comforting to know. That's really comforting to know. I see all my friends, and they have really close relationships with their siblings especially, but then I'm like, my sister is just there.

Yes, same. But what about your parents? Can you tell me about who they are and what they do?

Like their names and stuff?

Yes.

My mom is a retired nurse. She was born in 1956. My dad was as well. They're only a month apart. My mom has been a nurse since forever. She has never had any other job. She was always in nursing.

My dad, he kind of went through multiple jobs that I know of since we've gotten here. He was a machine operator at one point, and he was also a poker dealer at another point. But the exact years are kind of blurry from my memory.

My mom was the breadwinner of our family, I guess, because she made more than my dad. Yes, respect to her.

Your dad had a lot of jobs?

Yes.

That's like my mom. She also had a lot of jobs, too. Would you be comfortable talking about their immigration status?

Yes. I don't know too much about that stuff.

Did they come here with visas?

They never talked to me about that stuff.

You guys never talked about things like that?

Yes, I don't know too much. They haven't told me anything.

Are they citizens now, do you know?

Yes, yes.

Do you know if that was recently?

No, it was a long time ago, so I think that's why I don't know anything. It was before I was born that they were citizens already.

How do you identify ethnically or culturally?

I just say I'm Filipino. Sometimes I don't know if I should say Pacific Islander or Asian on certain forms. It's just easier to say Filipino.

How does your family look like in terms of ratio of people here in the U.S. and the people there in the Philippines? Is most of your family in the Philippines?

I think so. I have a lot of family members. My dad, he has ten siblings, and my mom has four, and a lot of them are still in the Philippines. It just branches off from there. The family tree just gets larger over there.

Is your family the only one that immigrated over here?

I have a couple of cousins here. No. There are a couple here.

Do they live in California or here?

Oh, some of my family lives in Cali and some of them here. I'd say more of my family that immigrated to the U.S. live in Cali than they do in Nevada.

How do you keep in contact with people in the Philippines, if you keep in contact?

When I did, it was through Facebook, and then I just stopped checking it, and I feel bad. Yes, I haven't checked my family Facebook in five years or so, maybe more, but I should because my family members in the Philippines are all on there. But all I get was game requests and stuff, so yes.

You would actually talk to them, though? Just for me, for reference, I don't actually speak to anybody. It's more like my parents speak of me, about me to them.

I can really relate. Yes, yes.

Are you the same way?

They just talk about me, but I don't talk to them. They probably know details about me that I don't even know because my parents tell them.

Is that like a disconnect just because we're just not together? Obviously, I barely know people from Mexico. Is it because you barely know them, too?

I think so. It's that and, also, probably the language barrier as well.

Do you know what remittances are, like where you send back packages or money?

I think so. I think there is a Filipino term that my parents always use. They always send pasalubong to the Philippines, or something like that. Yes, they send a lot of gifts to my family in the Philippines a lot, but I never chip in, as sad as it sounds.

How do they send it?

There is this Filipino service.

Is it the one at 99 Ranch?

I think I have it. A balikbayan box or some crap? Yes, yes.

What are the things they put in there?

Oh, my god, it's like really, really fucking—sorry. Actually, I don't know. Really random stuff, like from clothes to fricking M&M's and random candies and stuff. They love sending them candies. Yes, Filipino candies, most of them are just dry and boring compared to the chocolates here.

In terms of clothing, is it hand-me-downs or brand-new stuff or a little bit of both?

A little bit of both. My parents love the brand True Religion, so they would send a lot of True Religion jeans to them. They also thrift, so a lot of it is also Goodwill stuff. I know that they spend more stuff that I just can't think of. As far as I know, it's a lot of candy, a lot of candy.

Do you know how frequently they do that?

I want to say once a year because we always have these big-ass boxes in one of our rooms, this room that no one uses, and sometimes it lies there for months before they send it off. It feels like it's once or twice a year. But those boxes are in that room forever.

Cool, I like that. Obviously, this is about Las Vegas. Do you want to talk about places you've lived here, or talk about Vegas in general here?

Yes. When I first moved here in 2004, I was in North Las Vegas. I went to Cheyenne High School. Wait, wait, wait. No, I started at Swainston Middle School and then Cheyenne High School. In 2012, I moved further south, like Enterprise area. I lived there for four years. I was living in my cousin's house because he lent us a house to live in for a while. It was like four years. Then I moved to the southwest in 2016, and that's where I currently live.

It's almost hitting Blue Diamond, right?

Which one?

Your house?

My current one? No. It used to be on Blue Diamond, the one that I lived in for four years. It was my cousin's house. That one was on Blue Diamond.

I think that's the house we would talk about when we first met, like how far you lived.

I believe I met you at that house, yes.

Yes. Do you want to talk about, maybe, some of the jobs you worked here?

There's not a lot. I'm kind of a loser. But yes, I could talk about it. My first job was as a scare actor at Fright Dome in 2013.

Oh, that's cool.

Yes, kind of a cool first job. But that was only for a month because it's for Halloween. After that I got another seasonal job as a little Santa elf on a Santa set, just taking pictures of family and leading people out and stuff. Then I got a really, really short job as a gift shop associate, cashier. I have social anxiety. I don't know what to call it. I only lasted two days on that job. It was at the New York New York. That was not a good experience. Then after that I got my real job as an Amazon associate, and that's what I've been doing for the past five years.

Let's talk about where you lived. Where you live, what is the demographic? Would you say that's where a lot of Filipinos live or just where you happen to live? Like where you've lived, those places.

Yes, I would say when I first moved here in North Las Vegas, I would say there was a very, very small amount of Filipinos at the time, Asians in general. I feel like the Asians stood out at Cheyenne High School. There was not a lot. When I move to the Enterprise area, I noticed that there were a lot of Korean and Japanese places popping up, so that was pretty cool.

Yes. I think where Pink Wa Wa is and where the Japanese—Daiso is, too.

Oh, yes, yes, that's down there.

That area, for whatever reason, I'm not sure, but that's becoming almost like a second little Chinatown there.

Yes. That's funny because I was describing it as a second Korea Town.

Korea Town, too, yes. Tell us about clothing, traditions, festivals that were important to your family? Are these traditions, festivals that you would like to reinstitute, and can you

get those proper clothing here? I'm not sure if you have particular holidays where you have to dress up traditionally, quote-unquote, or if you even go to those celebrations, but can you talk about that?

Does it have to deal with the festivals?

Yes, it could be festivals, but it could also just be religious holidays, too.

My parents would gift me—well, it was from my family that would gift to my parents, and then they would gift it to me. They would gift me these—I don't remember the Filipino word, but they were these Filipino dusters that have floral prints on them. But they weren't for festivals or anything. They were just to wear around the house. I guess it's a traditional Filipino house clothes. They would get me that. I don't know if it's a tradition or anything, though.

I think on the subject in terms of cultural outfits and then your style, how do you balance that because your style is very black, very goth. Have you looked into traditional clothing and then maybe having that be bought in darker colors? Can you talk about that in general if you've mixed and matched?

Sadly, I never have. But at home, I wear them. I don't care how I look at home, so I wear those Filipino dusters or whatever. I wouldn't wear them out because I usually wear black out, and I've never seen any of their traditional house clothes in black. They're usually in green or pink or some bright color, and it just doesn't match me.

I feel like that's some work that you could explore.

Like make it goth?

Yes. Yes, make traditional clothing more like goth, yes. Actually, there is something to it.

What celebrations or religious holidays do you celebrate?

That are strictly Filipino?

It doesn't matter. Just in general.

Because they are very big Catholics, my mom and dad. The main holiday that we celebrate all together no matter what, like we never miss it, is Christmas, and I guess Easter. It's mostly my parents that celebrate Easter, and they go to church and whatnot, but I don't go with them.

I don't want to assume, so I'll just ask. But my family is also Catholic, and the way we celebrate Christmas, sometimes it may kind of look the same because a lot of Filipinos and a lot of Mexicans go to the English mass or the Spanish mass, whatever. How do you think being Filipino influences those traditions? What are the things that you add that are clearly Filipino to your Christmas traditions?

I feel like we celebrate it the same as most people, but maybe the food that we cater is different and the way we decorate. There is this traditional type of Christmas light that is shaped like a star. I think it's called a *parol*, and that's what my family used to put up. We don't put it up anymore, but that's what they used to do. Every single one of my families, most of them, had the *parol* up in their porch or something. The food, I feel like we always serve *pancit* and other Filipino food, lumpia and others that I can't think of right now.

When you do have Christmas, who is in your house? What day do you celebrate?

We always celebrate Christmas on Christmas Eve, and I feel like that's a thing for ethnic families. Who celebrates it on Christmas Day? No one.

We do it on the 24th, yes.

Yes, the 24th. Who is at my house? It varies because sometimes we celebrate at my cousin's house. It depends on which family member wants to host. But the past few years, it's been between me and my other cousins that are in Vegas. When I was younger, my cousins in

California used to visit, and my house would be really, really crowded at the time. But nowadays, it's maybe eleven people total.

Does a lot of your family live here, or do they travel here?

Some of them live here. When we were younger and my cousins weren't college students and stuff, they had more freedom, and so they were able to visit us more often. But now that my cousins are working and in school, they can't come. I'm trying to get my uncles and aunties to come because they have a little bit more freedom than their sons and daughters, but they haven't visited, at least since two years ago.

Because of COVID or just in general?

Oh, a partial reason, yes. They visited right before COVID, I think, and that was the last time they spent the holidays with us.

I know that that's not part of the questions here, but I do want to talk about COVID and Asian hate. Do you want to talk about that? Have you had experiences, or have you navigated that, being Asian during COVID?

Most of the hatred I saw was through social media. It wasn't firsthand experience with that.

No, that's fine. You're blessed, then.

That's okay. I'm blessed.

You're fine, yes. But was that scary, though, to be out and about?

Being Asian and out and about? A little bit.

But you didn't feel it as much here?

No.

Thank God.

Yes.

That's something I really worried about because, how do you hide being Asian? You don't.

I don't know. I feel like part of the reason why I wasn't scared is because in 2020, I did take isolation seriously. Maybe I wasn't scared because I wasn't really out.

Speaking of anti-Asian hate, you don't have to, but do you want to talk about experiencing racism against you or your family or people around you in general?

Yes. Should I start with myself?

Yes, you can talk about...yes.

I feel like racism towards me was stronger when I was little and lived in California. I lived in Highland, California, and that's where I attended elementary school. Yes, a lot of kids would call me Ching-Chong, and they'd do the squinty-eyed thing with their fingers and their eyes. I didn't cry about it, though, so maybe it didn't hurt me, but it was just really, really annoying. Actually, my friend, her eyes were a little smaller, and she would get more hatred and bullies than I did for some reason. I would get mad for her. I'm trying to think of worse things that have happened. It was just more that we were getting made fun of. We weren't getting hurt physically or anything. They weren't pushing us around because we were Asian. They were saying stupid stuff, all these kids around us.

When I moved to Vegas, I feel like I only had one racial remark towards me that pissed me off. It was this girl. I guess I was in her way. She was trying to look at something. She kind of said it under her breath. She didn't think I would hear her. She was like, "Move, you nerdy Asian bitch." I heard her, but I'm awkward, and I just ignored it even though I was mad. Internally, I was just like, argh, that stupid bitch. So sorry if I'm not allowed to cuss.

No, I think it's fine.

I'm happy that none of it was physical. None of the racism towards me or my family was physical. My mom did tell me of this time before I was born. They were in New York, and this subway guy was pestering my dad and calling him a Chinese man. I don't remember if anything happened. It was over a seat or something, but it was on the subway. She didn't tell me what happened. I can't think of more.

That's fine. You don't need to think too much. It's just where you've experienced it. I feel like living on the West Coast has kind of saved us from some of the more extreme types of racism.

Yes. All the things I've experienced were always verbal, and so I'm glad about that. Well, I'm not glad about it, but I prefer that over people targeting elder Asians on the street and murdering them. Also, none of my family members own a shop, and I know that a lot of the racism happened at stores and stuff. I guess that's another reason why we've avoided it.

Because your family is not in those businesses or businesses in general?

Yes, they're not really in the public, I guess. Maybe I should have asked them because they play poker a lot. What if they've had racist remarks towards them during a poker tournament? I don't know. There probably has been more.

Are they professional poker players?

They probably keep it to themselves, huh? Because it's being recorded, like the WSOP and stuff, I feel like if they are racists, they keep it to themselves because it's recorded and stuff, and there are a lot of Asians in those poker tournaments.

Really?

Yes.

Are those local?

Yes. I think it's also held in Cali. I don't know very much.

I don't know about poker tournaments in general, but you said there are a lot of Asians in them?

Yes.

Do you know why?

No, I have no clue. I guess because money. I think poker is one of the few casino games where you can strategize and win not just out of chance but with strategy, too, because blackjack is kind of by chance, but poker you can kind of...

Yes, you can kind of build your hand. That's cool. It really is.

I don't know if this is racist, but maybe it's that because Asians are known to be... What's the word I'm thinking of? Mentally... I can't think of it.

Intelligent?

Yes, I guess so, yes. Maybe that's why they like poker, because they like that you can strategize for it, but I don't know. There's just a lot. They always have Chinese. It's a lot of Chinese people that are at their poker table.

I think I could answer that, but I'm not, not right now because I feel like it would take time. But I think I can understand. I can see why. It kind of has to do with the type of machines and the government and how tables and then machines can be controlled whereas table are by hand.

Oh, yes.

I think it has to do with something more or less about that. But that's really cool that your parents do that; that they're involved in poker. That's not something... That's cool.

Because they're both retired, then that's what they do almost every day, almost every day.

I think in one of your Instagram posts you mention that, that fact. You mentioned that.

It's kind of cool, though. They rack up points, and with those points, we always go to the buffet and stuff.

Yes, you always mention that, too. I like that. Could you talk about some of your favorite food places here in Vegas because you're a bit of a foodie?

Yes, I used to call myself a bigger foodie back in the day, but I still am one. I feel like I like Korean barbeque more than any other savory stuff. I might take that back later. But my favorite Korean barbeque place is 888. What other stuff do I like? I mainly like cafes nowadays, but you can't go wrong with Café Gabi. I love it there.

It's really pretty, too.

Yes, the interior and what they serve, the food presentation is always really nice. This is so basic, but Boba. I just love Boba. There is no Asian that doesn't like Boba. It's not even a race thing. There is no race that doesn't like Boba.

I think everybody loves Boba. It's so good, yes.

I don't have any specific places that I like for Boba. I was obsessed with Tiger Sugar for a moment. It's sad, but I don't think there's a Filipino restaurant I like here in Vegas. I went to—it's near here—Max's.

Yes, yes.

Me and my family didn't like it.

I think I know where it is.

It's on Flamingo and Maryland Parkway, I think.

Yes, it's not too far from here, yes. I see it.

I ordered this Filipino dish called *sisig* there, and it was just really, really greasy. I know it's a greasy meal on its own, but it was a little too much. I can't explain it without showing you. It was too greasy.

In terms of food, do your parents cook? Do they know how to cook traditional?

Oh, yes, they do.

Do you?

I sadly do not. But they always cook, and I always eat. Should I list specific meals?

Yes, talk about some of the stuff that they make.

Some of my favorites, it's kind of basic for a Filipino person to say, but my favorites that they cook are sinigang, adobo, *nilagang*. I probably pronounced that one wrong. I'm going to be mad because I know there is way more that I like, and I'm going to feel like, why didn't I say that? I'm going to butcher this one, but there is this other meal that I like called *kaldereta* and *pancit*. My parents don't usually cook this type of noodle, but I really like it; it's called *palabok*. It's this fat noodle with shrimp and eggs and stuff. My auntie is actually a better cook.

I'd feel bad for saying that.

My aunt is known as the cook in the family. She's my uncle's wife. She is not related by blood. She usually cooks all the meals whenever we have gatherings. We love her food. I love her *palabok*. Actually, I don't think there is any type of meal that she's made that I didn't like.

Does she live here?

Yes. She is my Tita Reggie. I don't know too much about her besides her being married to my uncle, who is my dad's brother. I don't know much about when she came here or anything. But the point is, she is known as the cook of our family.

That's nice. What do you like most about living here, in Vegas in particular?

What do I most enjoy? I think entertainment is endless, especially in the past five years with all the stuff that's opened up, like Area 15. There is also the fact that a lot of places here are open past nine because in California, they all close at nine or ten or something like that, so I do enjoy that. I like going to concerts, and I feel like a lot of bands don't skip Vegas as much as they did before because they used to skip Vegas, but now I feel like a lot of bands that I like actually come here. If I were to live in, I don't know, Tennessee or something, I feel like I'd be miserable because a lot of bands skip certain cities.

Speaking of bands and when we talk about bands and subcultures, can you talk about yourself? I feel like a lot of my Filipino friends, it's kind of rare for anybody to be in a subculture, and I feel like you're a very unique, rare person, very cool, very stylish. Can you talk about your style and who you like, how you identify in terms of a subculture and stuff like that?

Yes. I hate to call myself goth, but that's the subculture that I'm into. I don't think any real Goth person likes calling themselves goth, to be honest. In high school, I feel like that's when I started getting into goth subculture. There is this subculture in Japan, I guess, and they look really cyber goth, and they're all associated with this underground club there called Tokyo Decadence, so I was really, really obsessed with them, and so I wanted to look cyber goth, and that just kind of evolved. Cyber goth, they wear a lot of neon colors and stuff. I've evolved from that, being really colorful, and then I just kind of died, I guess. I wear mostly black or purple now. I guess my music taste changed because I liked a lot of cyber goth bands in high school, industrial bands, and then I started listening to more of the big three in goth music, like the Cure, Siouxsie and the Banshees, and Bauhaus. From there, it just expanded to all these not well-known goth groups.

Can you talk about the goth, quote-unquote, community here in Vegas?

Yes. I will say right off the bat, I feel like there is a lack of Asian goths.

Very rare, yes.

Yes. Most of them are either White or Latino, so it's pretty cool. I feel like actually most of my friends that dress goth are Latino. I know that some people identify Latina or Latino. Does it matter which one I say? Latinx?

You can say whatever you're comfortable with.

I've been told *Latino* was known as a gender-neutral term, but I'm not sure anymore.

It's up to you. Honestly, I don't have a preference. But you can say what you want, it's fine.

I'm just used to that ever since my friends were like, "Yes, call me Latino. I don't care." What else was there about the community that you wanted me to talk about, again?

I think the reason I thought it was so surprising to see you is because, yes, there are not that many Asians. I think like in most subcultures in general, there is kind of like a White space, and so to see you in it, it's very cool. It's also I feel like the style sometimes borrows from Japan in particular.

Yes.

Or they kind of intermix, and they kind of do that. Can you talk about your parents' response to it?

Okay. Well, since it kind of evolved over time, it wasn't immediate. They weren't shocked by any of it. But I will say, when I started wearing cyber goth inspired stuff, they were kind of shocked by it. They thought it was too much. In high school, I cut my own hair. Goths just loved V bangs.

I had V bangs.

You had V bangs. My parents hated my V bangs. They thought I was ugly. Looking back, I thought it was ugly, too. Yes, I thought it was cool. They didn't like that. I didn't wear any shocking imagery, but if I did wear a pentagram or something, well, maybe the Baphomet, they would have lost their mind. Nowadays, they don't know, or they don't care.

I feel like that's why I stepped away from goth clothes is because a lot of it was—not necessarily anti-religious, but if you're Christian or you're very much from Catholic parents, they'd be like, oh, my god, the devil.

Right, right. I feel like if I did jump right into wearing that imagery, they would have been so mad. I don't know what would have happened. I don't know. This might be bad to say, but maybe they would have hit me or something. Back in the day, yes, yes, I got hit. I feel like I should have said that earlier, stuff about Filipino parents. A lot of them hit their—well...

Do you want to talk about that because we can talk about that?

Okay, yes, yes. A lot of Filipinos, at least from my perspective, my experience, they discipline their kids by hitting them. It's kind of traumatic now that I think about it. I wonder if I'd still be this awkward, timid person if I wasn't hit when I was younger. I don't know if it's just a Filipino thing, but I feel like you guys...

I don't if all Latinos, but I feel like, yes, we also go through that.

You guys have that joke about the *chanclas*, so yes.

I hate that. I really hate that, and that's something that I hope all the communities that hit their children step away from, but I hate that so much.

I hate that, too. Do you also wonder if you would have been different if you weren't hit?

This is about you, but I feel like it really stunts you. It really stunts you, yes. It really does.

In my emo moments or whatever, I do feel like, would I have been a completely better person if I wasn't lowkey abused when I was younger?

I think when we have looked at statistics, like in my class, it talks about that a lot of POC are not in therapy, and they're not in...and stuff like that. Do you want to talk about that?

Have you gone to a therapist or a psych or anything like that?

I haven't, but I've wanted to.

For a long time?

Yes. There was this one time I got into an argument with my parents. It was kind of a heated argument, and I kind of blamed them for me being how I was. In the heat of the moment, I just said stupid things. Then it led to...like I was saying, "I should have gone to therapy. Why didn't you guys put me in that?" Then they told me that I didn't need it. Filipino parents in general, I don't feel like they believe in mental health. They don't think it's a thing.

But then, during COVID, did they not feel also...Because my parents personally, they went through their first mental health syndromes in terms of my mom first experiencing anxiety during COVID. Did your parents go through that?

Like going through mental health stuff?

Yes, during COVID.

I don't think so, no.

Or have they shared their struggles with you?

No. My mom, there is this time she was in an argument with my dad. They weren't really talking. She lowkey told me that she thinks my dad is autistic. But she was mad at him at the time, so I don't know if she meant that or not. Was she just mad or what? But yes, she said that. "I think your dad is autistic."

Is that something that maybe runs in your family? Is that why she said that?

I should ask, but I don't know.

I feel like even when it's not in terms of getting help or in terms of therapy, I think regardless we should talk to our parents about our history with...Because my dad was on antidepressants, and I never found out until I shared that with him that I was on them.

Oh.

Yes. I don't know. Maybe ask your parents.

They do have a medicine cabinet that is filled from the back of the shelf to the front of it, and so I'm like, maybe they are, and they haven't told me. I never dig through their stuff, but maybe I could find out today.

Could you talk about your relationship with your parents? Is it good? Has it gotten better?

It's gotten better, yes. For some reason, we're not physical. This sounds kind of sad, but I barely hug my parents or anything. I'm not affectionate with them except on holidays, like I'll hug them on Christmas or New Year's or whatever, or if I haven't seen them in a while, I'll embrace them. But yes, it's okay. It's not bad, like how the way me and my sister are.

I feel also, too, that physical affection is also a Euro-American thing. That's how people here show their affection, and not everybody has to be physical.

It is encouraged in my family, though, physical...What's it called? I hate that I forgot the term.

There is this thing that Filipinos do with their hand. They put it out, and then the other person puts it to their forehead. I forgot the name.

Oh, I've seen it, but I don't know what it's called.

I forgot. I think I know a term, but I don't know if it's Filipino or Tagalog. It's called (*siglud*). What did I just say? I don't know if it's Kapampangan or Tagalog, (*siglud*). But yes, my parents really encouraged that. I haven't done that to my family since I was in elementary school.

Is that a show of respect?

Yes, yes, to your elders and stuff. I think that word starts with an M in Tagalog. There are two different ways to say it. Besides that, I don't even hug my aunties or uncles or anything, though my parents don't like that about me.

Is that because you don't know them that well? Because I also feel kind of awkward when I interact with certain family.

Yes, it's that. It's that. And it might also just me, my personality, because there are certain friends, even though we've known each other for a while, it's awkward to hug them, yes. It's also me, just me and, also, me not knowing them.

Let's take a break.

Okay, we're back. Can you talk about your first memories of being here in Vegas?

Yes. I moved here, and it was during the summer, so I remember hating the climate because from Vegas, I lived—I was ready to leave—in Hayward, California, which is in the Bay Area, and it's known to be pretty chill there. The summers weren't too hot, and the winters weren't too cold. I really liked that. But then when I moved to Vegas, it was just too hot. The summers were scorching. It's dry. I remember when I started middle school here, I'd get constant nosebleeds, and I think it was due to the weather or something.

Yes, it dries your nose out.

Yes, that's why I had them, and it would be embarrassing because it would be during class, and that was miserable. Until this day, I don't like our summers, until this day.

They're very hot, and they're only getting hotter.

Yes. Another memory I had was that in the Bay Area, there is just so much more of Asian population. I felt more at home there, I guess. Then here, I feel like when I first moved here, there wasn't very much, but over time, we've had more and more Asians move here as well, especially Cali—what do they call them, Cali implants or something? Yes, we've gotten more. It took me a while to feel, I guess, comfortable. I remember there were just so many. When I moved from southern California to northern California, I remember being in shock at the amount of Asians there compared to Highland where I had lived for a couple of years.

I feel the same way. I think about what it means in terms of your identity. Maybe if I would have been raised in California, I would be like...I don't know. I think when I was struggling with my identity, I felt like if I was raised in California, I would be more Mexican or whatever. I don't know. Just because the lack of representation and stuff like that.

In Vegas?

Yes. I wonder if...The fact that there is not really a big community until we started getting more Californians, now.

Yes. That's what I was trying to say, but I wasn't eloquent about it. The more Cali implants we got, the more people that are the same race started befriending us and whatnot. That's weird. When I lived in Highland, slash, San Bernardino, there was so little Asians there, but only an hour away, there are so many in L.A. Highland is an hour away from L.A., but there are so many Asians in L.A., but not in Highland for some reason, at least when I lived there. There was only one other Vietnamese girl when I was in elementary school.

Can you talk about who—we've mentioned it, but who are your friends now? What have your friends looked like throughout the years? Have you only had Filipino friends? Like that.

This kind of contradicts what I was saying about feeling more comfortable with more Asians around. For some reason, I migrate towards Latino people for some reason. Majority of my friends are Latino. Even the males and females, they're Latino for some reason, most of them. I probably have one fully White friend. My friend group is very diverse. I have two Filipino friends and one is half-White, so I don't know if she really counts. I feel like I got along better—not got along, but I feel like I befriended Filipinos more easily when I was a little younger, like ten years ago younger. But yes, for some reason, the ones that stuck around were mostly Latino people. You met Eduardo. He's Mexican. Then my friend Alberto, he's Guatemalan. My friend Andrea, she's El Salvadorian. God, there's probably more I can't think of. You. You are full Mexican.

Can you talk about your friends and what you guys do around Vegas?

Yes, yes. I feel bad for this now because I totally forgot another girlfriend of mine. She's Chinese. I don't know why I forgot her, but she's one of my best friends. With her, she is probably the one I do foodie stuff with the most. The others, like my friend Alberto and Eduardo, we do shows and stuff mostly. Me and Eduardo, we skate a lot because he is learning how to inline skate now, and I have been roller skating for two years, so naturally, we just started skating more together. What did I say earlier? We do shows and stuff. We go to a lot of concerts and thrift stores and whatnot. We don't do that many foodie adventures, as much as I'd like. That's mostly with my Chinese friend that I mentioned. My friend Andrea, the Salvadorian one, we like to dress up. She is probably my main friend that I dress up with. You know how I like to

dress up wildly. Me and her, we go to bars and stuff. Karaoke is another thing that my friend group likes. I feel like all friend groups like that. That one is not specific to certain friends of mine. They all like it.

My goodness, I have so many questions. Where did you meet friends? I feel like nowadays, especially after you get out of K through twelve, it's hard to make friends. Where did you meet your friends?

Most of them I met in high school, like my friend Alberto, Eduardo, and Tresha, I met them in high school. Oh, another good friend of mine that I forgot and feel bad for, his name is Hector. By the way, he is Guatemalan and Mexican, so that's another Latino friend that stuck around. I met him in high school. My friend Andrea, I met her in Amazon when I was twenty-seven or so. My friend Angelica, she is the one that is half-Filipino. I was actually friends with her brother at first. I don't really talk to him anymore. Her brother and I went to the same high school as well. I basically met her through her brother, but we didn't go to the same school or anything because I think she's five years older than me. I think she was born in 1989 or something like that. What other friends do I have? Oh, other friends that I talk to I met through the anime community, which I'm not as involved in anymore, but I used to be, and you're one of them.

Yes, that's how we met.

Yes. Do you know Tresha?

Not personally, but I know who that is.

Yes, Tresha and Azalea. I don't think Azalea...I don't know if they go by that anymore.

I think they go by A.Z.

Yes, they, they, I don't know what they go by right now.

I think I would feel more comfortable using they because I'm not sure, either.

They didn't really change their Facebook yet, did they?

Not to spill tea or anything that's not anybody's business, but I know they're transitioning, but I don't know. They never made it a big deal that they like he/him only or anything.

They never made it a big deal, yes.

Yes. I was like, "You could ask, it's fine." But yes, a lot of my friends now are ex-anime people.

Right. Out of all the friends that I met through the anime community, I feel like only three lasted:

You, Izzie, and Tresha.

Oh, Tresha, yes, yes. Oh, my god, yes.

Also, you know how I was saying I mainly befriend Latinos followed by Filipinos? A.Z. and Tresha, kind of like, support that.

Yes, they've been in contact a lot more, and I feel like they're social media, we've been lowkey communicating, but I remember we didn't meet up again until after ten years.

Oh, I know, right? Yes, yes.

I was going to talk about traveling. Have you gone to the Philippines?

Yes. I don't know why I haven't spoken about that. Yes, I have. What should I say? What do I say?

How often? Who do you go with? When was the last time?

Sadly, I haven't gone since 2011. I went with my mom, dad, and sister. I had fun. It was really fun. I enjoyed the foods, authentic food from the source. I think this applies to any country, but when you try their food in that country, it's just way different than having it here in the States. I forgot what I was going to say.

There was a language barrier. They teach English in the Philippines, so a lot of my family did speak English, but it was broken. There was a language barrier. But I was still able to communicate with them, and my parents would help out if they were also in the same room as whoever I was talking to.

How long do you go for?

In 2011, I think I was there for a month. It was kind of cool. You know how they say if you live in a foreign country for a while, you'll get—what's the word I'm thinking of?

Acclimated?

It's culture shock; is that it?

I think so, yes.

I didn't feel any of that. I wasn't uncomfortable. I don't know.

I think for me, again, not to center myself, but for me, what got really exhausting in Mexico was the lack of safety; that I couldn't just walk here to the front door, not literally, but you know what I mean, without being escorted by my family because they're like, "We don't want you to get kidnapped." Could you talk about the sense of security we have here in the U.S. other than the shootings, but what is the vibe in the Philippines?

I think Philippines is really similar. My parents would constantly warn me about holding my purse tight whenever we'd go out. It's funny because they weren't wrong. I'm kind of a forgetful person sometimes, and I was in the dressing room when we were shopping at a mall, and I left my phone, back when phones had straps on it. I hung it on the little knob where you hang your clothes, and I forgot it. Not even ten minutes later, I realize it, so I went with my mom to go get it, and my phone was gone. It was already stolen. There was someone in that stall, this lady, and my mom and her got in an argument because my mom thought that the other lady stole it. It was

kind of a wild thing because they were also from the U.S. I don't remember what they said in Tagalog, but my mom was like, "I'm from American," dada, dada, da. Then she also said the same thing back, "Well, I'm from there, too." We don't know till this day if she stole it, but my mom thinks she did.

When you go to the Philippines, obviously—well, not obviously, you're there to visit family, but what are the things you do with your family? Do you go to the museums?

No, not really. We mostly do celebratory stuff, like fun stuff, I guess. Every time I go, we always hit the beaches. When I was younger, my memories are blurry, but we definitely went to the beach. When I went in 2011, we went, I don't know, three or more times while I was there to the beach, so we always do that. We'll always have a get-together where they cook food. Sometimes it's at home, or sometimes it's at a big restaurant or something. I've never liked it, but they always have the roasted pig that's there.

Oh, the rotating?

Well, no, ours doesn't rotate. But it's just there sitting on a platter, and it's a whole pig. That traumatized me ever since I was young. I forgot the word for it. Why am I forgetting every single Filipino dish? They always have that, and I never, ever eat it because I don't like it. It's scary to me.

Where we go to Mexico, they'll sometimes—because we don't go there often, either. I think the last time I was there was 2013, maybe. They'll kill an entire goat for us or a cow, and I'm like, gross. I don't eat meat. Please.

Right, right. And it's so sad to see it there, its whole body. It's not even chopped up or anything. It's just sad to see it lying there dead and roasted and stuff.

I don't even know how to call this. For immigrant families, for ethnic families, it's very common for us to live with our family. Can you talk about that?

Yes. I still live with my mom and dad, and I don't really have any plans to move out. Maybe if I make more money. I don't have a reason to move out right now. Other family, I guess White families, or American White, they pressure their kids to move out at eighteen, right, a lot of them. Yes, they're not pressuring me or anything. They didn't pressure me or my sister. My sister moved out when she was thirty. I have a lot of cousins that are in their late twenties that still live at home. There is no pressure to move out, yes.

Are there any pressures from them, though, in general, in terms of dating or marriage or kids or a job?

Yes, there is definitely pressure. I think I said how they wanted me to be a nurse. There was really big pressure on that for a long time. They got used to me not wanting to do that. Now they're just pressuring me to finish school and get a better job because even I don't like my current job. They kind of pressure me to find a man because they want a grandchild really badly. They pressure my sister, too. My sister, she is actually in a relationship, so I feel like she gets more of the pressure. They want grandkids really badly. I feel like this goes to all my family members. Their parents want grandkids. It kind of sucks for us that don't want any. Yes, we're not traditional—they're very traditional, is what I mean; they want grandkids. I don't want any kids.

I know you mentioned on your Instagram that you didn't get to go to the family trip, but I think that that's really cute. Could you talk about that, the fact that you guys do have a family trip every year?

Yes. It feels like it's every year, but it depends on finances. My parents really like cruises and stuff, so they've been going maybe on average once a year or maybe every other year. For their last trip, they wanted me and my sister to go. They went to Italy. But I wasn't able to go to that. We have one coming up in late February from L.A. to Mexico, so I'm actually going to join that one. It's going to be my first family trip. Is there more that you wanted me to talk about?

I lost my train of thought. Let me pause because I lost my train of thought.

In terms of pressures from your family, we talked about that. This is something that's always interesting to me. What are things that you can tell that are—we talked about for Asians in general, being goth is very rare. But as you and your family as a whole or just individually, what are things you guys do that are not traditionally seen as Filipino or Asian?

I might have to think about that one. What my family does that's not really Asian?

Once you move to the U.S., you change a little bit. What are things that have changed?

Even just the way some of us celebrate Christmas, it's not going to look the same from the Philippines to the U.S. What are things you guys do differently?

I feel like my family is just...

Or are they traditional? That's fine, too.

They kind of are, I feel like. I don't feel like they're really different.

They've kept up with traditions, then, like very much?

Yes. I'd say so, yes. You know how you mentioned me dressing gothic or whatever, they didn't really like that at first. I guess I could talk about my sister because she is a really, really huge raver.

Yes, talk about your sister.

I don't know how long she's been into the whole rave scene, but I know that she is really, really into. I don't believe my parents supported that at first because you know how EDC is overnight, and you're gone for the entire fucking night?

Yes.

They didn't like that at all because I don't think the Philippines has a rave scene—well, maybe they do, but they're not known for that nightlife. They're not known for that at all. I know Japan is known for nightlife, and Korea, but Philippines, I don't think we have anything. They're totally unfamiliar with the rave scene—were totally unfamiliar with the rave scene. My sister started going out for ten hours, out until five a.m. They were worried for her safety. They thought she was doing some crazy druggie stuff. Maybe she is because raves. Yes, yes, my parents are totally unfamiliar with the rave scene and how you dress at it and stuff. I feel like I could talk about that.

Yes.

You know how at raves they dress skimpy? At goth clubs, it's no different, just in black. It's skimpy but in black. Me and my sister, before we go out to a concert or bar or rave or whatever, we have to throw on a big jacket or a big T-shirt over our skimpy clothes just because my parents would not accept that. They would never tolerate that. Till this day, they've never seen me go out in revealing clothes. The most revealing, probably like a miniskirt or something. Yes, I cover up.

That sounded crazy. I feel like I'm the same way where I'm like, uh, yeah, no, I can't do it, because I feel like that conservativeness of wanting to cover up kind of rubbed off a little too much, and sometimes I'm like, oh, god, I wish, but I can't even. Yes, I like that. I think that's really cute that you guys are the same in the style-wise, and they're just color differences.

They're just color differences, yes.

It's so interesting because I'm a little bit more in the rave scene now, and the way that you do see a lot of Filipinos, and you do see a lot of Asians in the rave scene.

ABGs.

Yes. You also see a lot of Latinos. It's really interesting that she got into a subculture that is actually quite populated by a lot of Asians.

Yes. Maybe my parents know about it more because a lot of Filipinos are there. Even my cousin is a really big raver nowadays. More and more of my family is getting into that. I feel like if she were to, I guess, come home in crazy rave gear and stuff, they wouldn't be too shocked.

I want to look at identity and how you identify, not just culturally, but also politically if you want to talk about that, or religious or spiritually what do you practice, what do you not do? Because you were raised Catholic, stuff like that. Can we talk about your identities?

Yes. I feel like the last time I called myself Catholic was when I was thirteen or something. Then I went to high school, and I feel like all my beliefs went away, and I never developed new beliefs. A lot of my friends are witches and whatnot, and I explored some of those things, I guess, but they just became interests. I go to occult stores and stuff. It's just out of interest. I don't know if I believe in any of that. I guess I never put a label on my spiritual beliefs, but I guess I align more with atheism. I just think I don't believe in anything.

You're still what I call culturally Catholic. Culturally, all this stuff that comes with Catholicism, you still get involved with, like Christmas and going to church every now and then?

Oh, no, no church, no church at all. To my parents' dismay, no more church, just Christmas.

Man, I was going to say something that I feel like would have been really good, but I forgot.

They're mad. They're not currently mad, but they're, I guess, agitated on the downlow that me and my sister don't go to church anymore.

Because they're really religious?

Yes. They wish we were involved and went to church and stuff. My mom reminds me to pray every night, and I just nod and pretend like I do. They actually don't know that we consider ourselves atheists. I don't know if my sister does, but I know that she doesn't believe in God. They don't know, and I feel like if they were to find out, we'd get a stern talking to.

I think my situation is somewhat similar, too.

They don't really know?

Yes. No church at all, only Christmas. You don't even do Ash Wednesday?

No.

Not at all?

I used to. The little thing on the forehead? Yes. No, I don't do it.

I feel some people still do some of the major stuff, and they don't go to church.

Yes, yes. It applies to my cousins as well now that I think about it. All my cousins that are around the same age as me or younger, they just don't believe in God or go to church anymore like we used to. It's kind of weird.

We talked about religion. We talked about spirituality. Do you want to talk a little bit about politics?

I can try.

Like, what you believe in or who you voted for, whatever, what your thoughts are right now, however you want to answer that.

I think there is stuff I could say. Politically, I lean left. I have no idea what I am, but I lean left. My parents, I have no idea what they lean either, but they are anti-gay and stuff, sadly, and I'm very much an ally. It's saddening because most of my friends—I'm not even going to lie. Every single one of my friends are LGBTQ+. My parents, with them having their beliefs, it's kind of sad that they don't support it. Thankfully, they don't vote. It's sad because if I were to tell my parents that...I don't know what I am. If I were to tell them that I might be asexual, I don't know what they would do. I just know that they'd be really upset. To any of my cousins that might be not straight, they'd probably get in trouble if they were to tell their parents or come out to anyone older in my family. It's only the elder people in my family that are thirty or older right now, they're the ones that are very anti-gay and stuff.

I know they're anti-gay, but would you say your parents are also anti-abortion?

We've never talked about it, but I'm pretty sure they are.

Right, since they're Catholic. They don't vote. Do you vote?

Yes. They don't know what I vote for. No, wait, when it was the recent election—

The state one?

Sorry, sorry, the one before that one, the one in 2020. They knew I voted for Joe Biden. They didn't really care. Yes, it's great that they don't vote because they'd probably vote for the Republican, I feel like.

They haven't really been politically active, then?

No. Whenever my dad says anything political, it's so, for lack of a better word, stupid. He wanted Trump to win just because he was already famous. Yes, yes. It's great that they don't vote because they're so uninformed. Yes, he wanted him to win just because he was a billionaire and rich and whatnot.

Do you think that they're uninformed because there is not a lot of information in Tagalog?

Possibly, possibly.

Because I feel like my parents have always been political, but it really helped that things were in Spanish. But are you politically active? Have you gone to the rallies?

I have not, no.

You're just voting?

Yes, just voting.

Okay, no worries.

Wait. Does attending protests count?

Yes.

Oh, okay, well, yes, yes, there's those. I haven't done this in a while, but I used to go to those women's marches. Those were the main things. Today, actually, if there's time, I was thinking about going to the vigil for the Q.

Yes, for Club Q. To set the timeline, I think a day or two ago, there was a mass shooting at a gay nightclub in Colorado. Today, at our local center, we're looking to have a vigil at five or six. I forgot about that. We should go.

I could take you if you don't have a ride.

Yes, we should go to that.

Sorry, we're getting distracted. Sorry, sorry.

Do you want to talk about—I'm not sure about your sexuality, but that's part of the community. Do you want to talk about you, the community, and your identity?

I could try. I don't know because asexuality is not liking anything. Sometimes I'm like, am I even part of it? They don't go through anything.

Yes, they are. Yes, they are, yes.

I don't feel. I don't feel like they get discriminated against. "Oh, you're an asexual." They don't have a slur against them.

No, I think there is conversation around that, and even I'm not sure how to feel about it, either. But for me, my thing is I don't care. As long as you're happy, I want your happiness. But can you talk about your community involvement? Do you go to gay clubs here? Your friends, you mentioned they're all queer.

Yes. You said clubs, right?

Yes.

Yes, I used to go a lot back in the day. Almost every weekend I would go to the Vegas ones, like Share Nightclub, Piranha, Flex. There were a lot that I would go to almost every weekend with my queer friends. They didn't say anything. I know there is a stigma, depending on the person, against females at a gay bar nowadays. I see a lot of discourse about it on TikTok. But I've never gone through that, thankfully.

I think one big thing about that is not so much women going, it's more like straight people invading the space. But I think that there are nuances to that. It's good and it could also be bad. Do you want to talk about things that you do? Do you go to the gym? Do you go hiking? Do you snowboard? Do you do sports? I know you mentioned skating, but what else do you like to do in the city?

I gym every now and then, not as much as I'd like to. Skating is honestly my main thing.

Something I feel like might be relevant to this, because we were talking about my friends and stuff, I just realized a lot of my friends I met through skating as well. A lot of them are Filipino. I don't know why, but there are a lot of Filipino girls that skate. I think it's pretty cool. I wouldn't

call any of them my best friends or anything, but a lot of my skate friends are Filipino and Latino as well.

I feel like, yes. I feel like everybody in Vegas right now is skating, especially last year. Yes, I love that.

Did you want to talk about identity in terms of, did you always feel like you were Filipino, or how did you navigate Whiteness in the U.S. and your racial identity?

I don't know if this answers the questions, but I used to have some weird self-hatred thing about being Filipino. I used to think East Asians were the best thing ever, and so I would also lie about my identity. On my profiles, I'd lie. I'd probably say things like I'm 12 percent Chinese or something stupid like that just because I wanted that validation from others because a lot of other people only think that East Asians are cool. I'd also think them as higher than Southeast Asians. But I don't think that way now. I think it's stupid. I think I overcomplicated that, but yes, I used to lie.

That's a great answer. I think even when we talk about who is Asian, most people think Chinese and Japan and Korean. It's like, well, what about everybody else? It doesn't not make sense that you went that way. I think that makes sense.

Now that I think about it, I also knew someone that lied about their race. I mentioned earlier that I had a friend named Jelly, and I met her through her brother. Her brother, when I met him, I thought he was Korean because he told me he was. I feel pretty stupid about it now. Yes, he is actually half-Filipino, half-White, but he told us that he was Korean. I don't know why, but I feel like it might also be because he thought that Koreans are cool or whatever, and it's not as cool to identify as Filipino.

I think that makes sense because especially in the past ten years, Koreans are the culture, especially K-pop. That's very, very everywhere. I think it makes sense when a minority group wants to try to be like that. I think it makes sense. I don't have the proper words, but that makes sense to me.

Yes, it's still really prominent till this day. We have all these people, mainly White, that are trying to pass off as Korean on social media. I feel like this ties into Southeast Asians trying to identify as East Asian. I think a lot of us still do that. I don't see it in my family or friend group, but I feel like a lot of them still do.

Yes. I don't know if it's just necessarily colorism or the lack of representation or the coolness, quote-unquote, factor, but I feel like it makes sense when you don't really have representation that you want to be associated with the dominant group or more so. Do you want to talk about Euro-Americans or White people? And it's not just White people. I feel like there are a lot of different people that want to pass off as East Asian and have East Asian features.

Another thing, my parents would gift me papaya soap and stuff. They don't do so anymore, but they used to. Because it had whitening qualities or whatever. Using that as a preteen did something with my brain, and I thought that being whiter made you look more attractive. East Asians typically are whiter skinned. I feel like I just wanted to look like that. Yes, there is some self-hatred that they involuntarily put in my head because I'm naturally very brown.

The Asian beauty standards versus the American beauty standards, how do you navigate that? I think a lot of Asians in Asia talk about getting surgeries whereas Asians here are like, no, not really, actually.

I used to navigate it poorly. I'll just say that. I did the papaya soap thing for a really long time.

This one is kind of sad, but I would buy these beauty tools that are supposed to make your nose smaller, these little clip things.

Yes, I bought them, too, embarrassingly enough.

Oh, god, yes. I didn't navigate it very well, like the beauty standard thing. Until this day, I still think about getting certain surgeries. Rhinoplasty and stuff like that, skin whitening, I don't think about that as much anymore.

Again, not to center myself, but I also struggled with my nose and wanting to get surgery on it. I feel like a lot of us that are not White struggle with those for different reasons. It's also our parents. It's not even just society here. It's also culture expectations of beauty.

Yes, they did this to us.

They did this to us. Is there anything you want to talk about on your own without me asking a question? I feel like I've hit a lot of them.

Do you have enough content?

Do you want to talk about your experiences as a girl, as a woman, how you've navigated the world as a Filipino woman?

I don't feel like I really struggled that much. That's why I'm like, I don't know.

That's fine. You can talk about that.

I do feel like there is a hierarchy of privilege, right? It's White people and then Asians. I feel like maybe that's why I haven't really experienced anything. We're not...I can't explain it. We have these privileges, too, that I don't feel like we have gone through as worse as other races, but I'm not too sure.

There are struggles I could talk about that relate to my parents' expectations, but they're not directly related to me. My parents are super against tattoos. They absolutely hate them. When they first found out about my sister's tattoos, she was just lying in bed, and her midriff was showing, and that's where her tattoos are. My dad freaked out. He kicked my sister out, and that's not a thing that we do. We've never gotten kicked out, me and my sister, but he kicked my sister out, and she had to live with my aunt for a while. It was really traumatic for my sister because, like I said, we're not that type of family that kicks out their offspring. She got kicked out, and it took a while for my dad to get over it. He sees tattoos as dirtying the skin or whatever. I believe a lot of Filipinos still think this way, especially the religious ones.

Fortunately, my parents weren't mad about the tattoos I have. But here's the thing. They found out about mine—because I've been hiding them for a while, and they only found out about my tattoos because I had a seizure. This is really TMI. I don't know if this is going to be bad to say. I sleep naked, and I had a seizure overnight. They heard me moaning, so they busted into my room, and they saw me shaking and whatnot, naked, and that's how they found out about my tattoos. The only reason they weren't mad about my tattoos is because they were too concerned about me seizing.

Oh, my god, I think maybe you mentioned that. That's scary, my goodness.

Yes. It's kind of fortunate. I feel like I would have gotten kicked out if I wasn't seizing.

That is crazy. Are you okay, though?

Yes, yes. No, I haven't had a seizure since then. I'm sorry if that's not allowed.

No, it's fine. That's so crazy to find out like that.

No one in my family...They all disapprove of tattoos. What's funny is that all of the younger generation of my family, they want tattoos, but all their parents are against it.

What about piercings because I know you've had dermals. Did they ever say anything?

They never found out about these because I got these after the seizure, and they fell out, so I don't have any visible piercings that they disapprove of. For some reason, they didn't care about my multiple earlobe piercings, but I feel like because it's lobes.

This is common in a lot of Latinos, but is it common Filipino culture to get your ears pierced really, really young?

Yes, yes, yes, I got my ear piercings when I was a baby. I don't remember anything.

Me, too. They're still there.

But yes. They know that I have a belly ring also because of the seizure.

Oh, my goodness. Let's take another break.

We're back. We were talking about cultural clothing. Do you want to talk about cultural décor in your house or how you decorate your house that is distinctly Filipino or Filipino American?

Yes, Filipinos, we're known to have a portrait of "The Last Supper" in our kitchen or dining room. Yes, we had that for a really long time. I don't even know where it went, but we don't have it anymore. It's not really a décor, but we have the Filipino style brooms, *walis*. We have those. We're known to use buckets to clean ourselves after using the bathroom. Yes, we have those. There is a lot that we have. I think it's a Catholic thing, but we're known to put a cross, a crucifix on the top of a door in our rooms. We have that in almost every room. Everything that we have that's like our tradition, I don't know if it's really Filipino or if it's just a Catholic thing.

We also put crosses on our door, or behind the door we'll have a Catholic saint behind it, too. Do you guys have altars?

Yes, yes. I forgot about that.

Can you tell me about your altar?

It's kind of creepy because in my parents' room, they have this really realistic picture of Jesus, and it's ventricular lens or whatever, so it moves.

Oh, my god, we have those, too.

You do?

Yes.

I don't know if this is a tradition thing, but next to it on the altar, there is a little plate with money. I don't know what that is. I could have said this in one of the early questions, something nontraditional that we do, well, nontraditional to Catholic Filipinos is that we have this really big statue of Buddha in our living room. Actually, we have a big Buddha, and we have small Buddhas, too. My parents don't identify as Buddhist at all. I don't know why we have them. I think it's because he's known to give you luck if you rub his belly, right?

The big one, the fat Buddha?

Yes.

Yes.

I think my parents have a lot of Buddha statues just because they play poker, so they want luck.

That's cute, oh, my goodness.

We're not Buddhist at all.

I could be wrong, but do you guys have a Day of the Dead equivalent?

No. I wish we did. Maybe we do, but we don't celebrate it.

I thought you did. Anyway, on your altar, it's for Jesus, and it's in your parents' room?

Yes. My family in the Philippines do have altars that are for family members that have passed away, though. We don't, but my family members do.

What does it look like?

It's a picture of them, candles, and maybe—because I have an uncle who passed away who was in the military, so there are military documents on his altar in the Philippines. That's as far as I know. Maybe flowers and stuff.

Cool. I really wanted to ask about your dogs. Can you tell me about your pets?

Yes. I currently have a chiweenie, but I just call her a chihuahua because she mainly looks like a chihuahua. And I have a pug. They are both the same age, five years old, and they're both my babies.

Are they family dogs, or are they your dogs?

I would say they're family dogs.

Do you want to talk about your family interactions with the dogs? Are they spoiled?

Yes. Yes, my mom is more affectionate with my dogs than my dad is, but they both like to spoil them. I don't know if this is an Asian thing, but they don't care about overfeeding my dogs. They never have. I was at a party just the other week, my friend who is Chinese. I was talking to them about my pets and how our vet wants my pug to lose weight. My friend's mom was saying she doesn't believe in that because she overfeeds their cat. They have a pet cat. I don't know if it's an Asian thing, not caring about whether your pets get fat. That's funny.

I think maybe it's because of the animals back home because they tend to be thinner. At least in Mexico, there are a lot of dogs that are very skinny and thin, so they'll just eat anything.

Yes, same in the Philippines. We have a lot of street dogs, and they're all thin, and they look...It's sad.

Could you talk about the things you do with your dogs?

How I take them out?

Yes. Do they sleep with you? Do they sleep in a cage? Do they go to the bathroom...? Stuff like that. Because everyone treats their dogs differently.

Yes. I think that in my family, we didn't believe in keeping your pets indoors. Every single one of my aunts and uncles and stuff didn't believe in that. For the longest time when I was younger when we had chihuahuas, we kept them outside. Now my current pets live inside, so I'm happy about that because pugs overheat in the summer. It would be really dangerous to keep my pug outside.

Have you only ever had dogs?

I've had a bunny and a cat. The cat was when I was really, really young, but my bunny was pretty recent.

That sounds really cute. Final thoughts, I guess?

I can't think of anything. We were just talking about animals, so I'm happy that my parents are more friendly with them now, and they don't want to keep them outside. I suck at this.

I just want to say thank you so much for agreeing to be part of my interview.

No problem.

And that I love you. I love the Filipino community so much, too. This is such a pleasure to do because all my friends have been Filipino for a very long time.

Yay.

I also navigate between that cycle of Filipino and Mexican with my girlfriends, too.

We're similar. Filipinos and Latinos for life.

Yes. Thank you so much. We're ending at 4:47. Thank you.

Thank you. Bye-bye.