

AN INTERVIEW WITH CARL ESTEBAN

An Oral History Conducted by William Bailey

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

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

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University of Nevada Las Vegas, 2020

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

Claytee D. White
Director, Oral History Research Center
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PREFACE

“I think it’s important that we all embrace who you are, you know,
regardless of where you come from.”

Carl Esteban was born and raised in Marina, California until his parents moved to North Las Vegas when Carl was seven. Esteban’s mother was a caregiver and the father a front-desk agent. Esteban’s first schooling experience in Nevada was in second grade at Elizabeth Wilhelm Elementary, in North Las Vegas. Esteban came from a working class home and attended UNLV. Esteban, after completing an undergraduate degree, and at the time of this interview, is currently completing a graduate program to become a Special Education Teacher.

Esteban, grew up in a Filipino-American household inspired by the mother and grandmother. Esteban has visited the Philippines in 2006 and 2018 and the household enjoys common Filipino foods such as *lumpia*, *pancit*, *ube*, chicken *abodo*, *pacino*, *longanisa*, etc. Esteban talks about different stereotypes that would be used to harm Asian American children, thinking that as people get older they can begin to tear these stereotypes apart through lived experience. Esteban has never individually had the misfortune to be subjected to racial attacks. Esteban, however, states that crimes against Asian Americans are rising in major metropolitan areas like Los Angeles, San Francisco, and New York.

Esteban’s mother left the Philippines for America in around 1995, first living in Killeen, Texas. The parents eventually made their way to North Las Vegas in 2002. Esteban also talks about the Asian community of Las Vegas being quite small compared to Northern California. The hot weather was a big shock to Esteban. Esteban also says that Vegas has changed since the early 2000s, with the population becoming more diverse and its Asian population growing.

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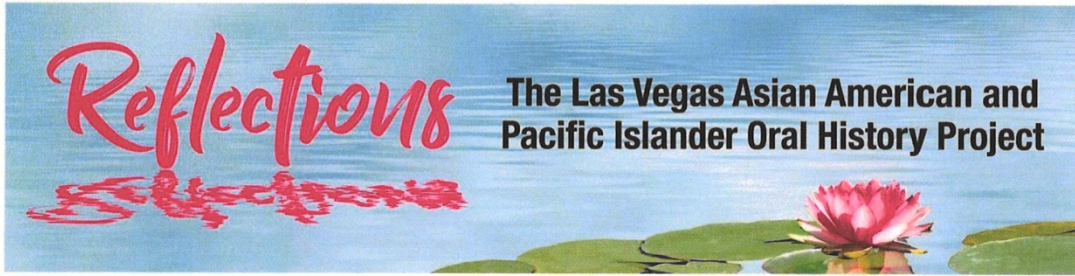
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December 2, 2022
in Las Vegas, Nevada
Conducted by William Bailey

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[Recording commences with interview in progress, December 2, 2022, with narrator Carl Esteban interviewed by William Bailey.]

My mentors, as far as growing up, and then specifically in the world of education, would definitely be my grandma. I really always look to her as a big influence. I, more or less, honor her by having her on my graduation cap, and then I got a tattoo to honor her. But she was, like I said, a big teacher as far as influencing me and making sure she took care of everybody else. She was almost like one of my first teachers when my mom wasn't around. She would babysit us.

My mom would be one of my big mentors, too, with her being an educator and then working with children now. She helped me learn the ropes a little bit.

Then it's the people I work with at UNLV. In particular, one of them would be Dr. Filler, who is now retired. He is one of the males within early childhood, and he's probably one of the biggest people who supported me in getting me to where I'm at because he saw something in me as a male educator myself that was like, okay, this guy has what it takes to make sure he's working with children.

I would probably say Dr. Sandra Candel, who is my multicultural teacher. She was just very opening and understanding and always kept everything transparent. There are more, but those are the main ones.

Dr. Filler was like—

Yes, he was a professor. I had him during my undergraduate, and then I had him in a lot of classes during my graduate degree, right now. He is just somebody who always, like I said, kept it straightforward, just very supportive. If I never needed anything, he would be able to take time out of his day to help me out, which is nice.

Yes. I definitely could use a mentor like that at UNLV.

Now he's retired, so he's changed.

How do you identify ethnically and culturally?

I'm a proud Filipino American. I embrace who I am. I love who I am. I think it's important that we all embrace who we are regardless of where you come from. But just coming from a Filipino background, I think instilled in me has always been work hard, stay humble, and get done what needs to get done, and then celebrate it later, after you're all done.

Like I said, I'm proud of where I come from. I've been able to visit the Philippines. The last time I was there was 2018 and before that in 2006. It hasn't been a lot, but the times I'm there, it's good because we have way more family in the Philippines than I have here in America. It feels like home despite not being there.

When was the last time you went to the Philippines?

Two thousand eighteen was the last time I was there because my mom's sister had passed away, and that was somebody who helped really raise my mom once my grandma died. One reason we went is for her funeral, but then at the same time, we got to still experience the culture and take time to enjoy our lives while we were there.

Yes, it's a twelve- to fourteen-hour flight to go halfway across the world. It's very tropical, very humid at times. You get a lot of rain. But I guess the heat is something that's the same as Las Vegas, and that's cool. That's good.

Is it tropical weather, you would say, tropical?

Very, very beautiful place. It's an island. It's an archipelago with seven thousand islands where you can literally see white sand beaches. I don't know how to explain it other than going there. But it's nice to check out.

Yes, go for a visit. What was your family motivation to leave the Philippines to have a new life?

I think going back to what people consider to be the American dream, like you want a better life than what their parents gave them and hoping that they can give a better life to their future families. Once my family had the opportunity to move to America, regardless of where they went, regardless of the job, they just hopped on that opportunity and ended up leaving. My mom is the only one on her side of the family in the United States where the majority of the family in the United States is on my dad's side. I look at my mom as a very strong woman, the fact that the only time she talks to her family is phone calls for Facetime or Facebook or anything like that. The fact that she is here doing her thing, representing her family, speaks to her character and the type of woman she is.

Yes, that's very tough just by her being the only person here. In a way, I can say I relate because all my family is back in Texas even though the Philippines is further. But yes, I know.

The situation is similar to mine.

Yes, I can say that it can be tough. It can be a little homesickness.

Yes, for sure because it gets to her sometimes when there's something sad going on with the family, like an emergency. She is halfway across the world. She can't do anything other than talk to them instead of physically trying to comfort them. That makes her feel some type of way. But yes, it's tough. Like you said, it's tough.

Yes, it's definitely a tough situation. When did your mom leave the Philippines?

I want to say in 1994, if not, early '95 before I was born, yes, because my big brother was born in the Philippines not too long after my parents had gotten married. Then after that they moved

here because my dad was always in America, and it was easier for my mom to come to America if my dad married her in the Philippines. They got all their paperwork, and so I would say in '94.

Your brother is born in—

Ninety-four, yes, August of '94. Yes, it was crazy.

That's a lot in one year.

Yes.

As far as them, it was just them three that came to America?

Yes. They came, and then my dad's family was already here. I think they all came in increments.

You said they went to—don't mistake me—you said they went to Texas first?

Yes, they went to Texas. I don't know what part of Texas in particular, but the last time we were in Texas, it's called Killeen, Texas. I'm sure you're familiar with it.

Yes, yes.

That's where my grandpa is buried. I don't know where they settled down in Texas particularly, but I know that's one of the main places they were.

Obviously, the hardest relatives that they had to leave behind was her mom and them.

Yes. I guess for my mom, I can say just her whole family in general and leaving her dad because he had passed away when she was pregnant with my little brother back in 2006. I know that was tough for her. But then just leaving her siblings, particularly her sisters, the ones who were like her second mom when her mom passed away.

For my dad, like I said, his siblings were here, and his mom was here, so I think he was comfortable.

Yes, he was comfortable. As far as them staying in tough, really your mom, like you said, y'all would make phone calls to them every now and then?

Whenever they can, yes.

Any Skype calls or Facetime?

Yes, they would do Facebook Messenger or Facetime when we can, but there is a big-time difference. Morning here would be nighttime there. It's trying to find a balance of when they can talk to one another. There would be nights where my mom has to stay up late to make sure that she catches them at the right time or vice versa for my family back home. But she doesn't mind because any way to talk to her family is the perfect time.

I hear that. What was your family's fondest memories?

My family, we get together a lot. We're a big family. Anytime we get together is always a celebration in its own right. Fondest memories, oh, man, let's see. There is one Christmas we got together at my cousin's house. He just got a new house. It was almost like a housewarming plus Christmas at the same time, so everybody got together. People are taking the days off that we don't regularly see on a given day coming out, so it's nice. That was my childhood Christmas.

Another fondest memory would just be getting together for big celebrations, like my grandma's birthday, and just everybody just really showing out and showing love. There is one birthday in particular, not necessarily childhood, but for her ninetieth birthday right before she passed. She wanted to have a very cultural birthday. The gentlemen would wear what we call barongs, almost like suits and ties from the Western culture, if that makes sense, very similar, but for our culture it's called barong. We wore very traditional clothing. The girls wore dresses that represented the Filipino Flag, so blue, white, red, yellow. Then we did cultural dances, and we ate and stuff like that. Just getting together as a family and anything like that would be my favorite memory.

As far as the suit and tie, you said that it's called a what, again?

Barong.

Basically, it's the same outfit, but just a different name.

Yes. It's almost see-through, maybe, and then it has cultural patterns or designs of the Philippines, so definitely not like something you would see if you're going for a job interview, like that. I guess similar to a suit, but different.

Yes, it's very cultural.

Exactly.

I think that's very neat. As far as your family members, really you said your mom was one who had to go through the stage as far as paperwork and stuff as far as coming into the United States.

Right.

Was that very stressful for her when she had to go through that?

Oh, I'm sure, yes. Like I said, being young, probably in her early, if not mid, twenties, leaving her family and everything that she knew and felt comfortable with to go to a whole foreign country not knowing what to expect, just banking on the fact that she'll have a better life for her future family, like I said, speaks to the character she has and the strong faith that was instilled in her to trust in God essentially that He'll see her through and things like that.

Yes, that could be tough for her in her early twenties.

Yes, that's like you moving to another country.

Yes, whew, that definitely can be tough. I hear that. As far as your first memories in Las Vegas, was it a very fun first memory of Las Vegas?

Yes. It's funny that you mentioned that because, like I said, we moved here in 2002. I started my second grade off in California, and then I moved here in the second semester of second grade.

When I got here, I attended Elizabeth Wilhelm Elementary in North Las Vegas, and my class was actually in an old janitor's closet. It was a janitor's closet that ended up getting converted into a classroom, so it was very small, and my class size was very small. I'm thinking to myself, what is this craziness? Because I'm coming from a classroom that was huge and was open. The environment was way different compared to the Clark County School District here. That's probably one of my biggest memories as far as getting introduced to schooling here in Las Vegas, the classroom I was in.

Where we were at now was surrounded by a lot of dirt still. Everything was still being built. Nothing was as it is now.

It was less traffic and everything.

Yes, exactly. When we got here, though, two of my cousins' families were already here. We all stayed in the North Las Vegas area, so they weren't too far away. My parents would always drop us off early mornings because they had to go to work, and then I would either ride with my cousin, or my aunt would drop us off to school. A lot of the times, we had to get up early to make sure that we got to school with them and things like that.

Definitely it was a lot of life lessons.

Yes, something like that, man. A big culture change just coming from California. The weather was different.

And it was so hot.

Yes.

What were your most difficult things, well, not first coming to Vegas, but just a difficult time you had in Vegas, your personal struggle.

I think it had to be, I want to say, the environment, but more so, the people I interacted with. Where I was from in California, it was predominantly Asian, a lot of Filipinos, and I was surrounded with what I was familiar with. When I moved here to Vegas, despite it being very transient, at the time I grew up around a lot of African Americans and a lot of Hispanics. A lot of my friends, growing up, were within that ethnicity, within that race, I guess you can say. I was not seeing as many Filipinos as I was used to. That was probably one of the big differences. Now things have blossomed, and you see a little bit of everything.

Yes, it's a little diverse.

Yes, very diverse.

Definitely you would say the diversity was difficult?

Yes, it was probably a big change, yes.

Who was the most helpful in that situation just being comfortable, in a way?

I think more so relying back on my family and them supporting me and just everybody else letting us know everything is going to be okay, and if I struggled with anything, I could always rely on them. Going back to my grandma who always instilled having faith in us, making sure that we rely on her faith to get us through as well. Family and faith were something that I could always rely on if I needed somebody to turn to.

Tell me about your Las Vegas family composition.

Here in Vegas, it's made up mostly of my dad's side, and we've got one of his sisters here and two of his brothers here. Despite not having everybody, some of our family is in California, we still make up primarily a lot of the family, and we all stay pretty much within the North Las Vegas area, so we're not too far from one another. Whenever we need them, it's just a phone call away, and we could also get to each other's house wherever we're at.

Basically, Vegas being—well, now it’s getting bigger, but at the time it was very small.

Yes. Let’s say my house is here, then maybe a few streets or down the block. It’s really not that far.

Compare to Las Vegas to other cities you lived in, like northern Cal. Like you said, at first, it was just a cultural change, and the weather was the biggest change, would you say?

Yes, pretty much so, just the weather and the culture. I was only in California until I was seven, so it wasn’t really my childhood. Just the childhood from there to here was different. Just trying to make friends was different because we grew up in a neighborhood that was still fresh, so not many families were there, and you weren’t able to see children of your age, if that makes sense. A lot of times, I was just playing with one of my brothers or my cousins. But eventually, throughout school, I made childhood friends.

Basically, in that neighborhood, it was just an older crowd.

Something like that, yes. There were a lot of either young couples or older couples trying to settle down. But eventually, an influx of families came in, and neighborhood friends started to be born, but it wasn’t overnight. It definitely took a while.

As far as the biggest changes in North Las Vegas, what is the biggest change that you’ve seen?

Like I say, growing up, it definitely wasn’t what it is now. A little bit more shopping area, more neighborhoods and things like that. Just seeing the growth in general, just seeing how big North Las Vegas has gotten, at least from my experience when I tell people I’m from North Las Vegas, especially when I’m at UNLV, they’re like, “You’re from North Las Vegas? How did you come out of North Las Vegas?” Because I’m talking to people from Summerlin and Henderson. Does that make sense? Where they’re more...

Suburbs.

Yes, a little bit more high-end, maybe. People often say, “You are where you come from,” maybe. But it is what you make it, who you surround yourself with, and what you do with your opportunities. I think North Las Vegas has been great. I love where I’m at. I feel happy. I feel safe. Like I said, my family’s been raised here, and we’re all doing okay for ourselves. But yes, like I said, the biggest change is just having more people coming in and seeing more diversity. We’ve blossomed from just African Americans and Hispanics. I see an influx of Middle Eastern. I see a lot of Asians. A little bit of everybody, man.

How would you say it is for your younger brother? Would you say he came up in a different time compared you, in North Las Vegas?

I think so, man. I think he definitely got it better than what we had. I’m not saying we went through any struggles or anything like that. But he has been able to take what we’ve gone through and either go down that path or tweak it, if that makes sense. We can tell him stories, and we can tell him how it was for us, and he can just take that experience and hopefully learn from it and use it in a way that’s better for him.

Definitely look up to big bro. He definitely look at the big bro.

Oh, yes, hopefully.

Tell us about some—I think you told me about the clothing. Tell me about some traditions and festivals that are very vital to your family.

Within our culture, we place a big emphasis on, like I said, family gatherings. A lot of the times before we eat, we pray as a family. My grandma, before she passed away, she would be the head of the table, almost, and she would be the one to get everybody together and make sure that we prayed, and she would lead the prayer. Then when she passed away, my mom took on that

responsibility of leading the prayer before we eat or anytime we got together to celebrate somebody. Down the line that ended up getting passed down to me. I feel responsible in making sure that I say a prayer that's meaningful to everybody and make sure I bless the food appropriately, if that makes sense. I'm just trying to make sure I make my spin on it to where it's meaningful to everybody and I'm not just saying anything generic.

For Filipino people, we are predominantly Catholic. I would probably say 86 or 88 percent of the people in the country of the Philippines practices Catholicism just because we were conquered by the Spaniards, and that's something that they instilled in us. Like I said, it goes back to our faith, and we do that a lot as far as going to church as a family when we can and just really emphasizes the importance of our faith.

What were some significant—well, significant past from your family history is very vital to you.

Yes. Right off the top, I think death is very integral because once you experience death, it hits you in a way that it's hard to explain. You have to live with it. One of the biggest most recent events that occurred in my family was the passing of my uncle. This was the first relative on my dad's side, one of his actual siblings, because a lot of the death we experienced were our in-laws, but this one actually to be my blood uncle. When he had passed away, it hit our family hard because he was the life-of-the-party type of guy, very sarcastic but always in a way that everybody understood where he was joking versus being serious. He was very artistic. Music-wise, he always played instruments. He always played the guitar. He was kind of like the deejay of the party. He had his own setup and things like that. Like I said, when he passed away, it just hit everybody hard because it's like the life of the party is gone, if that makes sense.

Another significant event that occurred was the passing of my grandma, like I mentioned earlier. When she passed away, I mentioned that she was the anchor of the family, so when we lost her, everybody was kind of in shambles in asking, who is going to make sure the family is okay at all times? That responsibility was taken on by her eldest child, my uncle. I think he feels like he has that burden of making sure that the family is always okay, especially for his younger siblings, making sure that their children are all right and that everybody is healthy and safe.

Another significant event that occurred for my family...Let me see. Probably when we all went to Texas as a family to go visit my grandpa because not many of us had ever taken that trip out to go see him. Like I said, he's buried in a cemetery that is not too big, nothing like Arlington Cemetery where they honor the veterans.

You said Killeen, Texas, yes, a very small town.

Yes. When we went out there, that was huge because that was about a two-day trip. We had stopped in New Mexico. When we took that trip out there, I think it hit my dad hard because him being the youngest out of his siblings to visit his dad. I think he actually took the time to really reflect on that. We visited Killeen High School.

That's where your dad went to school?

Yes, he went there for a little bit before he moved back to California. That were probably some major events that occurred in our family.

Was your dad born in Texas?

No. He was born in the Philippines, and then he had moved to Texas. First, my family went to Texas, and then they migrated to California, and that's where he finished high school. He started in Texas and then finished it in California.

Is he a fan of Texas anything? I'm just curious.

No. Ironically enough, my uncle, my dad's brother, he is a big Dallas Cowboy fan. We're all diehard Forty-niner fans, so he didn't like the fact that they're winning all the time. He was the odd one that wanted to go against the team that was beating us. Yes, he's a Cowboy fan.

Yes, the Cowgirls.

Yes, yes, yes. Are you a Texans fan, then?

Even though we suck, sort of.

Sort of, a little bit, just out of loyalty?

Yes. What was the greatest difference between Las Vegas and I guess you could say northern Cal?

Biggest difference type thing or...

The greatest difference out of everything.

Just right off the bat, I would probably just the weather to be honest with you because, obviously, here it's super-hot where there you can be eighty degrees all the time.

With no A/C.

Yes, it was natural. You've got the beaches, obviously, where it's just down the road where here you've got no beach. It's things like that, just simple things.

What should people who have never traveled outside of Las Vegas know about your culture and just the history of the Philippines?

For people who have never gone to the Philippines or are looking to go to the Philippines—

Including myself. I want to go.

Yes, man. Honestly, just judging off my own experiences and then just judging off interviews I've seen, things like that, it's probably just the hospitality of the Filipino people, very generous people, man. They'll look at you and just be very welcoming of who you are, making sure they

adapt to you and making sure you feel comfortable and making sure you feel safe. Filipino people are people who will feed you and overfeed you. It's a plate on a plate. You say you're full, and then—

I had...Is it called lumpia?

Lumpia, yes.

Because my aunt is from the Philippines. But I couldn't interview her because she's all the way in California.

It's just like a fried eggroll.

Yes, man, I like that. I had it with some sweet and sour sauce or something sweet, like a sweet sauce, oh, yes.

Yes. The food that we got I think is a big thing of what we do. Lumpia and pancit, ube, a lot of desserts. Filipino food is very unhealthy. It's very fattening and very unhealthy, but it's very good, though.

It's amazing, man, it really is.

Anybody who has never been to the Philippines, you can just try Filipino food, and that will give you a little taste of what it's like.

Out of everything in Las Vegas, what do you like the most? What is the most fascinating to you?

Really, I think it's just how transient this city is, man. There are so many things going on in this city.

It never sleeps.

Exactly, it doesn't sleep, man. It's Sin City. Obviously, it's different once you turn twenty-one. But I think there is a lot going on even as a child. There is still so much you can do, so many

little events, or if you want to catch a show and things like that. This city has so much to offer. You've just got to take the time to really dive into it. I think people look at Vegas, like I said, it doesn't sleep, but it's only for adults. But there is a lot going on for children and families, everybody.

Yes, there are a lot of family things. Oh, this is just an off-topic question. As far as the beach in the Philippines, would you say it's top tier?

It depends. If you go to resorts or a very isolated area, then yes. But if it's something very standard and open to the public, you'll get a lot of garbage still, not have as clear of water. But to them, the beach is a beach. It's not what it looks like in California, something like that, but they'll still enjoy it if it's nineties and things like that. But some are, like I said, are white sand beaches, clear water.

I'll be honest with you. I've never been on a clear water beach. Have I? Nah, I've never been on a clear water beach.

That's stuff you see in movies type of thing.

Yes. Man, that definitely sounds amazing. I want to definitely go.

What cooking smells remind you of your childhood, like what particular dish from your childhood?

My parents cook a lot. A lot of the recipes they learned from their other siblings or from their parents or their grandparents. In our culture, one of the main staple foods would be called chicken adobo, which is chicken and vinegar and soy sauce and basil. I don't know how to explain the smell, but you just know when it's being cooked, if that makes sense. That's one of the staples.

For breakfast, one of the foods we have is typical Spam, eggs, and rice; it's called (*pacino*), or corned beef, *longanisa*. Certain foods you just wake up to, and you know what your mom is cooking or what your dad is making for dinner. It doesn't get old. You can eat it every other weekend or every weekend.

Is there a particular spice you could put me, man?

No. Like I said, for Filipino food, it's very salty. A lot of vinegar, a lot of soy sauce. But nothing in regard to spices.

What would be your favorite comfort dish, as far as Filipino comfort dish?

Like I said, man, I'm very grateful that my parents and aunties and uncles and some of my other cousins know how to cook Filipino food that was passed down to them. I think, like I referred to earlier, adobo is just one of those main staple dishes that you've just got to like. It can be made in so many different styles with chicken or pork. But whenever somebody makes it, I always appreciate it because it's something that reminds me of home.

Is that with vinegar?

Yes, it's a mix of vinegar and soy sauce, black pepper, basil leaves. You let it sit for a little bit until it becomes tender.

Is it grilled, fried?

It's in a pot, made on the stove. Let it simmer, maybe.

It's like bowl?

Yes, like in a bowl, yes.

As far as different foods in Las Vegas, can you get these foods in Las Vegas—

Oh, yes, absolutely, bro. Like I said, other than my family, there will be times when we do occasionally eat out, and sometimes we'll just crave it because you don't want to put the time

into making it. One of the restaurants here is called Max's. It specializes in Filipino cuisine. They're a sit-down restaurant, and it will give you a taste of what the Philippines is like. But if you want Filipino fast food, it's a place called Jollibee, which specialized in fried chicken.

Yes, they're pretty good.

Yes. I heard it was rated one of the best chickens in America. I don't know.

I don't know why.

It's subjective. It's delicious.

I've had it. Yes, it's good. They've got mashed potatoes and everything. It's straight.

Yes. There you can sit down, but also, you can take it home, so it's fast food versus a sit-down restaurant. I think it's very popular, and it's not only amongst the Filipino community. Like you said, it could be anybody.

It definitely got me. I was like, man, it is definitely comfort. I don't know why. It is definitely comfort food.

What are some home crafted items that remind you of your family?

Handcrafted items growing up, we had this in our little apartment, and I've seen it in other people's home, not particular to our culture, but a lot of Filipino families would have "The Last Supper" painting hanging, like in the kitchen. That's something that just resembles our faith. We would have these big individual wooden spoon and a wooden fork, super huge that you just hang on your wall. I don't know what the decoration towards it meant, but it is something that I have always seen within Filipino household.

Little, small handcrafted items, you would have what's called a jeepney, which is equivalent to a bus here in Western culture. That transports a lot of people from A to B, and

that's something that I had in my home growing up as a symbol of what my mom used there as a kid. They have a little figurine or little cars.

Is there a particular one that's only made in the Philippines?

Probably, honestly, but nothing that I know of.

As far as your model minority myth, how has that gained a passion on you or your family members, or affected you?

In general, growing up, when people refer to Asians, they say, "Asians are so smart," or, "Asians are so good in math; Asians can't drive." You hear all those little stereotypes, things like that. As a child, it affects you in a way. As you get older, you understand that it doesn't affect you personally. It's not physically harming you. For me, they always saying that Filipinos are in hospitality, or Filipinos are nurses, and I kind of fell into that stereotype or that little model minority because that's what my family wanted me to be. But I did not choose that path. I'm in the path of education. Just Filipinos being very welcoming, very generous, and very open to wanting to help and being passionate about that, I think that sticks with me.

As far as that, you would say just being yourself.

Yes, right, just be yourself, exactly.

In your lifetime, have you ever experienced any racially discriminatory practices against yourself or a family member?

Yes. Nothing too crazy out of the norm, again referring back to those stigmas or stereotypes, like Asians can't drive, Asians are good at math, things like that. Like I said, those are just jokes. As a kid, you joke back, so you probably say something that's offensive to whoever you're saying it to whether you mean it or not. As you get older, you get more mature, and you get wiser, and you understand that that's just words. But nothing derogatory towards my family, nothing crazy.

Did you see any discriminatory speech against Asian Americans after the pandemic began, or Pacific Islanders, too?

Yes. I think one of the biggest things that went on, and I guess it's still going on now, maybe not as big depending where you're at, is a lot of crimes against Asians, crimes against Asian Americans, particularly in New York from what I've seen, L.A., and particularly in San Francisco. I don't know what the deal was with attacking Asians or not, but it would be against particularly older Asians, maybe, and I don't know what the background was. During the Black Lives Matter movement, I participated. I don't protest or march or whatever you want to call it. But something that brought awareness to not only Black Lives Matter, but there is also an influx of other races, and everybody else coming together as a community to make sure that we represent and show our love towards—

All lives matter.

Yes—Black Lives Matter and our lives matter. I don't know, man. Just the hate against Asians, I don't understand. I'm pretty sure someone can explain it better than what I can. Yes, it's just something that hopefully we bring awareness to and as a people we can stop because there is really no point in doing that.

Yes, and especially that shooting that happened in Atlanta at the spa, that Atlanta spa shooting. That was definitely racially motivated.

Yes. This goes for all cultures, but there is really no need for this stuff. There is a lot of Asian hate going on, and I don't think that—what am I trying to say here? It's just not needed in our society.

Definitely not needed right now. There is already a lot of stuff going on.

Touching on that, it's good to see celebrities who are Filipino or just Asian American in general using their platform to speak upon it and letting the world know that there is no need. You could hear it from a regular civilian, but when you hear it from a person of power, it comes across different. It's good to see celebrities or people in politics or people in sports using their platform to speak from, too.

How do you feel now when you hear about anti-Asian American, Pacific Islander hate and violence?

I think for me, coming from somebody who is very prideful in his culture and, obviously, me just being an educator myself, what I do goes beyond the classroom to make sure I educate those who are not aware of what's going on in the world. To use my platform, in a way, to let them know that, like I said, this is not needed, and let them know there are different ways to express how you feel rather than being violent or just being ignorant, I guess you could say. I'm using my gifts as a teacher to hopefully educate people.

I'm not going to say that's what motivated you to become a teacher, but that is definitely one of your goals to get that across as a teacher.

Yes, something like that, man. Like I said, it goes beyond the classroom because me teaching pre-K, I learn a lot of patience and flexibility and empathy where I can apply that when I talk to teenagers or adults and use what I know as a preschool teacher to hopefully, as crazy as it sounds, to educate other people.

To be honest, man, that's when it starts is at pre-K because that's where kids grow up into who they truly are. Thankfully, at the age that you're saying, pre-K, it's very vital that they grow up around—

It is. Good role models, good peers.

Yes, happiness, know kind of...Yes. That leads onto later down the line. That definitely leads onto later down the line.

Yes, absolutely.

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

That just means we're in the direction of growth as a people. We're in a direction where it's accepting and welcoming. Like I said, with Las Vegas just being so transient where everybody is coming in and out, the fact that as a people we can come here and settle down and build and grow. As a family or whether it's a profession, I think it speaks loudly of what Las Vegas has to offer.

Definitely, like you said earlier, the diversity and everything that comes in the world.

Absolutely.

Especially in a place like North Las Vegas, you can say it's the most diverse part of the city.

I think so, man. The city caters to that, so they'll host events at Craig Ranch Park or something like that where there are Asian American festivals or Filipino festivals, like Pure Aloha. That's not only welcoming to that specific people. You see everybody, though, there.

Right. Why is it valuable, you would say, for the university to collect interviews such as yours? Why do you feel...?

That's a good question. For UNLV to consider themselves as diverse and different and daring, I think it's good that they interview people like myself and people of other cultures and other races to truly represent the people who UNLV is educating so that we can speak upon what we learned as our personal experiences, but also, talk about what we learned in our academics and apply it in

our interview. The fact that you chose to reach out to me, and your professor chose to reach out to me, I think it's great because I can speak on my experience as a Filipino American, and hopefully that can translate not only to other Filipino Americans, but that could also touch on people with Hispanic roots or African American roots or European roots, and maybe there will be a bigger connection that I don't even know.

I was going to say even for kids that are biracial.

Exactly, we're two different cultures. Hopefully, we'll find a little blend, and maybe we can all be connected in one way or another. Who knows?

Definitely.

[End of recorded interview]