

Title

Malaysian-Chinese American Project

Date(s)

1999 – 2000

Extent

6 interviews

Repository

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Project Abstract

The Malaysian-Chinese American Project, completed between October 1999 and May 2000, was conducted in response a question raised by the interviewer about her own identity as Malaysian-Eurasian. This project sought to explore and understand themes of ethnic identity and immigration experience with those who identified themselves as Malaysian-Chinese or Malaysian-Chinese American. How did they identify themselves? As Malaysian? As Chinese? As Americans? How did they navigate through this complex construct of identity? Four of the six interviewees are now nationalized citizens of the United States. The years about which they speak are the last two decades of the twentieth century.

Restrictions

None

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Interviewees

Angie Teh Barad
Irene Ee
Gina Lai
Eric Loo
Tan Malkowski
Aaron Ow-Yeang

OH 2916

Teh Barad, Angie

“An Oral History with Angie The Barad: Surviving and Thriving in America”

Interviewed by Cheryl Eberly

May 14, 2000

Language: English

Project: Malaysian-Chinese American

Status: Incomplete

Abstract

An oral history with Angie Teh Barad. The purpose of this interview is to gather information about Mrs. Angie Teh Barad’s life in Malaysia and her experiences upon immigrating to the United States. This interview is part of the Malaysian-Chinese American Project. She discusses her life in Penang, Malaysia, and dialects she speaks; tells of first visit to the United States in 1987 for vacation, and decision to remain because of the weather and culture; discusses meeting husband, and learning English in a English as a Second Language course; shares opinions regarding similarities and differences between US and Malaysian cultural practices, transportation issues (i.e., traffic), neighborhood communities; shares experiences in networking with other Malaysian-Chinese Americans through ESL class and potluck dinners; employment in dry cleaning business and housekeeping; tells of starting her own housekeeping business; discusses difficulties in maintaining ties to friends and family abroad; religious practices (i.e., Buddhism, Judaism,), conversion to Christianity and her participation in the Saddleback Church; her illness and recovery from ovarian cancer; health care systems in the US and Malaysia.

OH 2913

Ee, Irene

“An Oral History with Irene Ee: A Rebellious Divorcee’s Second Chance”

Interviewed by Cheryl Eberly

October 04, 1999

Language: English

Project: Malaysian-Chinese American

Status: Incomplete

Abstract

An oral history with Irene Ee. The purpose of this interview is to gather information about Ms. Ee's life in Malaysia and her experiences upon immigrating to the United States. This interview is part of the Malaysian-Chinese American Project. Specifically, this interview deals with Ms. Ee's ideas about US culture prior to her immigration in 1993, and then her impressions after her arrival; her opinions regarding similarities and differences between Malaysian and American culture (i.e., educational systems, interpersonal relationships, divorce, and child-rearing); her marriage to a Malaysian-Indian, their children, and subsequent divorce; discusses differences between Chinese and Malaysian-Chinese culture; her fondness for Malaysian cuisine; her political views (local, national, fiscal); the roles of women in Malaysian and American culture; her career as plant manager at a Shell refinery; hopes for the future; stresses importance of immigrants sustaining ties to their native culture.

OH 2915

Lai, Gina

"An Oral History with Gina Lai: The Tourist Who Stayed for Thirteen Years"

Interviewed by Cheryl Eberly

November 25, 1999

Language: English

Project: Malaysian-Chinese American

Status: Incomplete

Abstract

An oral history with Gina Lai. The purpose of this interview is to gather information about Ms. Gina Lai's life in Malaysia and her experiences upon immigrating to the United States. This interview is part of the Malaysian-Chinese American Project. Ms. Lai discusses her visit to the United States in 1986 and her subsequent decision to remain in the US; first impressions of the US, coming through Customs; differences between Malaysian-Chinese and US culture, clothing, civic planning; also talks of difference between Chinese who grew up under a communist regime and those who did not; grapples with identity issues with regard to being an immigrant (she still follows the "Malaysian way" even though she likes the "American ways"); her marriage to a Vietnamese-Chinese man in the US, and the similarities between the two cultures; lauds the US educational system; discusses her religious background (Buddhist) and her conversion to Christianity; Feng Shui; superstitions; networking in the US with other Malaysian-Chinese Americans; discusses political situation in Malaysia and Indonesia, and her opinions regarding Anwar Ibrahim; racial discrimination in the US and abroad.

OH 2917

Loo, Eric

“An Oral History with Eric Loo”

Interviewed by Cheryl Eberly

December 3, 1999

Language: English

Project: Malaysian-Chinese American

Status: Incomplete

Abstract

An oral history with Eric Loo. The purpose of this interview is to gather information about Mr. Eric Loo's early life in Malaysia and his experiences upon immigrating to the United States. This interview is part of the Malaysian-Chinese American Project. Mr. Loo discusses his decision to immigrate to the United States for educational reasons, though he did not complete his undergraduate degree; opinions regarding cultural and lifestyle differences between Northern and Southern Californians; issues of discrimination; focuses on interpersonal relationships and his preference to date women of Southeast Asian or Chinese origin/heritage; friendships with other Southeast Asian immigrants and social activities; relationship with his parents who remain in Malaysia; preference for Asian cuisine; challenges in adapting to US culture; dating practices and customs in the US.

OH 2914

Malkowski, Tan

“An Oral History with Tan Malkowski: Love and Romance American Style”

Interviewed by Cheryl Eberly

May 20, 2000

Language: English

Project: Malaysian-Chinese American

Status: Incomplete

Abstract

An oral history with Tan Malkowski. The purpose of this interview is to gather information about Mrs. Malkowski's life in Malaysia and her experiences upon immigrating to the United States. This interview is part of the Malaysian-Chinese American Project. Specifically, this interview deals with Mrs. Malkowski's life in Malaysia and Singapore before her immigration to the United States in 1982; her career as a photographer in Southeast Asia; her 1979 visit to the US in which she met her future husband, Casey Malkowski; her return to Malaysia and the difficulties of conducting a long-distance relationship; her return to the US in 1982 and subsequent marriage to Malkowski; finding employment and various

jobs she held before taking a position with a heart valve manufacturing company; discusses cultural differences between Malaysia and the US; challenges and satisfaction raising her two children in a Western progressive tradition, yet maintaining a connection with their Malaysian-Chinese heritage; opinions regarding differences in child-rearing practices in Malaysia and the US; her fondness for ethnic cuisine, and love of Malaysian food; developing friendships with and sustaining a network of local Malaysian-Chinese immigrants; process of learning to speak and understand English; political views on Malaysian government; discusses her religious beliefs.

OH 2918

Ow-Yeang, Aaron (b. 1981)

“An Oral History with Aaron Ow-Yeang: A Young Man Living Out His Parents Dream”

Interviewed by Cheryl Eberly

October 3, 1999

Language: English

Project: Malaysian-Chinese American

Status: Incomplete

Abstract

An oral history with Aaron Ow-Yeang. The purpose of this interview is to gather information about Mr. Aaron Ow-Yeang's early life in Malaysia and his experiences upon immigrating to the United States. This interview is part of the Malaysian-Chinese American Project. Tells of his family's immigration to the United States at the age of ten; memories of childhood in Malaysia and the trip to the US; impression of US and American culture during his first years in the US; discusses differences between Hong Kongese and Malaysian-Chinese cultures; shares opinions regarding cultural differences between US and Malaysia (i.e., sense of community, television, consumer culture, violence); issues with identity, and a sense of not being fully Malaysian-Chinese nor fully Western; approval of social freedoms in the US, such as free speech and openness between parents and children; discusses “whitewashing” or degree to which immigrants assimilate into US culture; talks of financial hardships the family encountered upon immigration, and their subsequent ownership of a sunglasses factory in China; labor issues in China, worker's demands for higher wages; his and his siblings higher education and the fields chosen reflect their parents expectations rather than the wishes of the children; interpersonal relationships and his preference to date women of Southeast Asian heritage; education in the US and Malaysia; importance of Malaysian cuisine in maintaining cultural identity; hopes for the future.