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OSU Multiracial Beavers Oral History Project 2016-2017

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Interviewees/Interviewers: Tara DeMaderios and Charlene Martinez

Transcriber: Jalen Todd

CM: Charlene Martinez

TD: Tara DeMaderios

[00:00:00]

CM: Hi, my name is Charlene Martinez and I'm associate director at Diversity and Cultural Engagement at Oregon State University and I have the privilege of sitting with a recent alum and participant of Multiracial Beavers and we are collecting oral history around all things Multiracial Beavers and it is November 22, 2016. So I'm going to go ahead and allow my partner here to introduce themselves and their pronouns.

TD: Thanks Charlene. My name's Tara DeMaderios. I use she/her pronouns and I recently graduated in this fall--well I guess I got my diploma in fall and finished over the summer. And I moved from Oregon right after graduating to Kansas, my home state, with my family. So I'm a nontraditional student who returned to college at the age of thirty. I'm a wife and a mother and a daughter and a friend and I identify as multiracial or black and white. I also have started to really think about my identity--getting back to a spiritual aspect of who I am and trying to not be so attached to the labels that society places on me. I'm kind of trying to find a balance between living in this society, in this reality that labels us and we have to contend with that marginalization and all the things that go on with that. Also knowing that that's not truly who we are.

CM: So what motivated you to participate in this interview?

TD: [Laughs]. Well, you know I've been thinking a lot lately where we find refuge in times of sorrow and, you know, we need those communities spaces for ourselves. Especially this week following the election, I'm really sad and I just want to be a part of creating as nice a space as possible for people who are also dealing with a lot of sadness or struggling with feeling otherized or marginalized.

CM: We have a whole script full of questions but I don't feel like that's totally appropriate in this very moment so I'm going to go off script and ask how, as you sit

with both sorrow and hope for building stronger communities, how that may intersect or is influenced by your multiracial identity?

TD: It's interesting, I'm multiracial, mixed black and white. I have family members who are white and I have family members who are black and I really have experienced both being raised surrounded by a white family and also being raised culturally surrounded by my black family members. It's a different--it's two different worlds really that exist that I've personally experienced and of course there are other cultures and ethnicities that also have their very distinct realities and cultures and worlds that they exist in, in that space for themselves. I just, I know that I've found--it's difficult to navigate between seeing how vastly different cultures can be within our society at large. Seeing how people are treated differently based on characteristics of their skin tone or their facial features or the way that they present themselves within gender norms or outside of gender norms. Their abilities or disabilities, all the things that affect how people treat you, it's been something I've been acutely aware my entire life because I have existed in the space between two worlds and I haven't--I've often felt that I don't really belong in either one of those spaces.

CM: Can you--you shared how you identify in terms of your racial identities – what about other salient identities that you have and how have they changed over time. How has your identity changed over time?

[00:05:24]

TD: That's a really good question. One of the primary identities for me is being cis female and that's something I never struggled with or questioned. It's been interesting to me to have my eyes opened to the fact that there are so many people who don't. I was raised believing gender is binary, so you're either born female or born male and that's it. And I--I'm sorry my dog is squeaking her toy in the background. Even though that identity hasn't changed for me, my understanding of identities and how everything--there's so much out there that people can claim for themselves and identify doesn't have to be on a binary scale. So, I have a better appreciation for the fact that I was born into a body that looks like how I feel so I haven't had to struggle with that - so I feel like that's been a blessing that I have because of my other struggles that I have experienced. I also, one of the things that's really important to me is my relationships with people. So I often say that I'm a mom, or a wife, or a friend, or a sister. Really those things have changed a lot over time because I am thirty five and I am a mother and I'm a wife and I didn't really believe it - in my early years of, like my early twenties and as a teenager that I would ever be someone's wife or someone's mother. When you say never, I'm never going to do this, often times those things actually end up being the very things that you do. I grew up in a very fundamentalist religion where being anything other than heterosexual was seen as evil and a sin. And so, I think that I felt at a very young

age that I wasn't only attracted to men but I thought that that was wrong and evil so I refused to acknowledge that part of myself for a very long time. Then as a teenager I started to learn that that wasn't necessarily the case. I started to understand more about sexual identities and gender identities and sexual orientation and who you're attracted to and I realized over time that I really--it doesn't matter to me what gender someone is or what their sexual orientation is or anything in the realm of how people want to present themselves. Because I'm attracted to human beings for who they are. So my sexual identity progressed from thinking of myself as heterosexual to thinking of myself bisexual to now believing that I am pansexual because I--there's no limits on who I would want to be in a relationship with and love because I really believe that love that I feel for other people is a spiritual connection. It doesn't have anything to do with what body we have.

CM: Thank you. What are some of your earliest memories of other people making assumptions about your race, racial and ethnic identity?

TD: My entire life, as a child even, people would comment that I looked exotic. I didn't really understand how offensive that was until I became an adult. It's just one of those things that a lot of multiracial people have to deal with because we're seen as something outside of the norm. So I would often get that comment from people and I would also have a lot of misconceptions about my racial/ethnic identity. They'd say 'are you Hispanic or are you Moroccan or are you Middle Eastern?' or they would say 'what are you?' as opposed to like 'who are you?' or 'what's your family background?' Even some of the ways that people word things could be hurtful. Or they wouldn't believe that my father was my father, or that my brother was brother. They would actually argue with me about my family members, like 'no, that can't be your sibling. They're too dark skinned or they're too light skinned.' People would also speak to me in other languages, ask me what country I was from, or argue with me when I'd tell them I was born here in the United States. I just felt that I had to always explain myself and it was another way that made me feel otherized and outside of the norm.

[00:10:40]

CM: What are some more recent, memorable experiences that you've had related to your racial and ethnic identity?

TD: Well one of the things I still get a lot from people is, they'll say to me 'no you're not black. I don't believe it.' And I have gotten to the point lately where I either just completely turn around and ignore them or I will say something really sarcastic, like 'wow, thank you so much for clearing that up for me. I'm thirty five years old and all this time I didn't realize that I wasn't black, but you made that so clear to me now so thank you. Thank you for that.' It's just really exhausting, having to explain myself to

people all the time or having to be the spokesperson or representative for all multiracial people, or all black and white people. Having to explain these issues of marginalizations, or microaggressions, or aggressions to people, and just feeling that constant burden of not being understood, not having the other people of color in my world understood. It's tiring, it's exhausting to be the person who has to explain to people all the time what's going on.

CM: Do you have any stories of belonging or not belonging by your ethnic or racial groups that you want to share in a story?

TD: Yeah, you know, it's one of those things that's changed over time because as a kid it was more difficult. I think kids especially really feel the need to label other kids, and group themselves into these really tight circles because that's what feels safe to them. We see it play out on a large scale in adults in politics in the United States when we talk about regional cultures and things like that. But as a kid it's really acute because you are put into these situations where you're with a bunch of other kids and you really don't have any choice in who you can interact with. So I always felt like I wasn't white enough or I wasn't black enough. I didn't really know where I fit in. I would try to deny parts of myself to people, so I'd get to be like 'no, no, no I really do belong in your group.' I think that now as an adult, I just feel more confident in myself and I could walk into a group of people and say--for instance, if I walk into the black church members group that I have spent time with here in Kansas since I moved back, they accept me because I accept myself. There isn't a need for me to explain myself or the first thing out of my mouth is 'I'm multiracial and black.' I don't feel that I'm excluded or looked at with any suspicion or anything that would make me feel that I'm not part of the group. On the other hand, I do feel that because I have, you know, brown skin that is nebulous and ambiguous that people can't place who I am or what my racial or ethnic identity is - when I'm in a group of white people I often get those questions, the first thing when people meet me are like 'well, what are you?' It does place this barrier between myself and the other person because then I feel like I need to be on the defensive and I feel like that I'm not understood and maybe that space isn't safe for me. I'm really careful about who I let into my space and who I let be a part of my tribe. I think as an adult I have the ability to determine who I spend time with and who I don't in a way that I wasn't able to as a child. I don't spend time with people who aren't holding positive and safe space for me, because they're cultivating that in my life and it's important for me to not be around people who are going to make me feel otherized or marginalized.

[00:15:36]

CM: What was it like for you to be in Oregon and then specifically, Oregon State University?

TD: When I first moved to Oregon, I was really excited about all of the things that I'd heard about being so progressive and liberal. I just thought it was going to be this utopian place where everybody would be able to understand these issues and then I realized the longer I was in Oregon - I was in Oregon for thirteen years - that Oregon was founded as a white racist utopia and so that's really the underpinnings of--the undercurrent of racial tensions and relations in Oregon. It's very, very white. I started to feel really isolated and whenever I would see another person of color on the street I would want to jump up and down and wave my arms and be like 'hey, hey! Hi, who are you?' [laughs]. [I'd] get really excited because you're just surrounded by white people and there's hardly anyone that looks like you. So when you do see someone that looks like you it's very exciting but it also really hits home that it's very isolating to live in Oregon as a person of color. I actually felt that when I came to OSU because of Multiracial Beavers and the Diversity and Cultural Engagement Office that I found a lot more community at OSU because it's not normal to have those spaces in Oregon. Sometimes you can find them if you really are searching and you happen to live in a big enough city where you have access to a group of people working to form a community together, but often times that's not the case. And so, when I came to OSU I really felt that was a positive aspect of the campus. There are a lot of things happening on campus that are really hurtful to people, especially in classes and with professors, and curriculum, and overall policies of the university but it's yet another reason it's so critical to have those spaces for students of color or other marginalized students because we are so surrounded by people who aren't like us and how they're seen by society and we're not treated the same way. It's important to create those spaces.

CM: How did people experience you here in Oregon in terms of your race and ethnicity? Was it similar to Kansas or did you experience a difference?

TD: I would say it was similar to Kansas, although I think that the racism in Oregon was much more subversive. I think that people -- a lot of the racism that I see is white liberal racism. You have a group of people who think of themselves as white allies and they are really proud of their liberalism and progressiveness and they have -- they participate in all of these causes they think are important but what it really comes down to is they don't value people of color, they don't value people of color's voices or experiences. They don't really want to hear what people of color want and need. It's hurtful because you get excited about the fact that -- like when I moved here I thought 'oh, Oregon's so progressive,' and I got excited about that because I was really looking forward to it being really different and then you kind of get your hopes up more than you would otherwise then you realize the dirty truth is that nobody really cares and it's kind of just a show. It's like theater. In that way, I feel that Oregon is different. In Kansas, people's racism is a little more overt. I definitely was denied service when I lived in the Midwest before, I heard people using the n-word in front of me, there was a lot more overtness to

people's racism. But in some ways that's almost easier to deal with, like it's really obvious from the beginning who you can trust and who you can't trust so it just shows itself in different ways.

[00:20:27]

CM: So, thinking about this Oregon as white utopia and sort of the pervasiveness of whiteness and white privilege, how do you think that lands on individuals, or how does it land for you for you as someone who is mixed with white? In terms of multiracial identity development or empowerment and at the same time being able to unpack racism and address whiteness.

TD: That's a really complicated thing to try and navigate and figure out what my place and my role is because, on the one hand I do hold some privileges and I feel like I have to use whatever privileges I have to help other people. I happen to be married to a man who is part Japanese, but he looks white and he is a male, he's a cis male, so he has a lot of white male privilege that is bestowed upon him. I think because of that we happen to be in a particular situation where he makes an income that puts us in the middle class. We were able to buy a house. We're not necessarily overtly being targeted by anyone as people who are suspicious or having racism directed at us. So I want to do things that my privilege has placed me in a position to do which is provide monetary support to causes, go march for things and protest, call representatives and sheriff's departments and demand that my voice as a citizen be heard. Talk to people in my social circles and really try to change their mind. But on the other hand I feel this tremendous sadness and anger that the people in my life that I love – you know, I have family members who are very, very dark skinned and I fear for their life. I know that they're not safe and I don't necessarily believe that I'm safe. Because I don't look like a black person, but don't necessarily look white enough either. It's just a really challenging place to be in, to know how much I can do, but also knowing that we're fighting against systems and to feel that overwhelming exhaustion from constantly fighting something that I don't know how much headway we're really making. Sometimes I feel like we're making headway and things are improving for people, then sometimes I think we've taken like five giant steps backwards. Like all the efforts we're expending aren't doing anything. [Laughs], I guess when I go into a space that's full of much darker skinned people than myself, I don't talk, I don't make any of the stories about me, I really listen and try to be respectful of the fact that I'm sure their experience is much more traumatizing and harder to deal with than my experiences. But when I'm in a group full of white people often times I feel the need to say something about what's going on and try to insert some perspective that's different for them, or some knowledge about what it's been like to be a marginalized person. Sometimes it's really tough to be in those spaces where people don't necessarily realize that I am a multiracial black person and they say things that are really hurtful. I'm caught in this space of, well I'm here I could say something,

or do I have the energy, the emotional energy and strength to argue with these people about this right now.

CM: Thank you so much. Do you have any last thoughts or reflections? It could be about your experience with Multiracial Beavers or anything at all.

[00:25:08]

TD: No, I'm just really grateful that you and everyone involved in Multiracial Beavers is having that space for people. I feel that I got so much from the meetings that we went to and from working on the project that I worked on. Academia has really given me a lot of information and tools and research and knowledge and data, but it's also drained me spiritually. So I'm starting to – I've been away from school for a couple months now and I'm starting to try to reorient myself. I value the connections and the talks that came out of the Multiracial Beavers group and I'm going to hold onto that stuff and I'm going to try to find that balance between being in my head and being intellectual and thinking about facts and figures and research and data and all of that and getting back to a more whole, spiritual perspective of who I am and my connection to other people. So thank you for creating that space for people. I think it's really important and it can be life changing. I definitely discovered a lot of things about myself from being in the group so that's going to be something that I hold in my heart forever.

CM: Thank you Tara. It's been a privilege to know you and cross paths with you.

TD: It's been a privilege to know you.

CM: So in true Multiracial Beavers form, because we don't do anything typically or normally – whatever that means – we're doing a reciprocal interview where you're actually going to be able to interview me and I'm going to pass the mike to you.

TD: Okay. Thank you Charlene. So, I would like to know a little bit about you. A little biographical blurb about who you are and about your place at OSU came to be and how that relates to the Multicultural Beavers.

CM: I'm going to start off just by sharing that I identify as multiracial, Taiwanese-Columbian American, and I grew up in California, San Diego specifically. But all my family – a good majority of my family resides in New York, New York City specifically. Before coming to Oregon State I had the privilege of working at five different higher educational institutions and at those institutions – I was at UC San Diego, I was an undergrad at UC Santa Barbara, went to Sacramento State, Mill's College. In those times I did a lot of gathering together of multiracial people in different forms. At one campus it was a support group at another it was advising a student organization. I feel like it's

been part of my life to support multiracial identity development and change agents, to develop those change agents, for almost half my life now. Coming to Oregon State, I didn't know what to expect. It actually took me an entire two and a half to three years to actually feel settled and comfortable here. But right when I got here a few multiracial staff and faculty came together – we just started having lunches together – and talking about all the things that we consider to be multiracial issues and consciousness and talked about the lack of resources. So I think there were times in my previous lives and career in California where I didn't really need to do multiracial stuff anymore. I supported it, I supported students but I didn't really need to dive in anymore because I got to a place where I felt really confident about my own identity and there were other, bigger things that I kind of needed to attend to at those times. But coming to Oregon State, it has been a necessity. A necessity to gather together with other people, build that community, talk about issues because we do have – there's just this sort of myth of mono-racism and mono-racism that happens here in Oregon because of the numbers, because of this sort of heaviness, or how we don't really talk about whiteness but we center everything around white privilege and whiteness. That's such a dilemma, particularly for people of color and communities of color. Then I think the further invisible group is then the multiracial people because we know, or I know, a lot of the people of color in Oregon are multiracial, right? We know a lot of folks are multiracial but there's not a consciousness, a vocabulary, an ability to identify that way because people are really – and this has been in my experience, my observation – really just trying to hold on to any aspect of their culture or their history or their racial identity that they can.

[00:30:55]

So folks end up coming into groups and denying pieces of who they are trying to grapple with some of the issues we have in Oregon. That's a really long-winded way of saying I landed a job at the University of Cultural Engagement. I host a whole lot of projects but they're very interdisciplinary in nature and I took the multiracial student connections and Multiracial Beavers groups kind of under my wing in that I just couldn't let them go. And I'm glad I didn't because there's a lot of beautiful things that have come of it and I love to see the growth of it that actually has nothing to do with me. It feels really good that Stephanie and I were able to plant some seeds and, you know, be joined with Kim, and Melinda Shell, and John Stoll, and a lot of actually really great support of people. Great things are about to happen and we're just getting started.

TD: That's great. I guess, you kind of touched on some of what your motivation is but do you want to go further into what your motivation, what your purpose is for participating in these oral histories?

CM: For me, it's about visibility and it's about documentation. I think we have a lot of history about a lot of different groups but for some reason we don't talk about the complexities in multiracial identity. My motivation is to contribute to this community of people in particular who have, in the last three years because that's really all I know, the last three years here have really helped to build this community and I don't want the — I don't want that history to be lost and I don't want our efforts to go away with the wind if we all move away and then people don't ever know that this thing happened here. I know before us there were people talking about this as well and I would have loved to have heard their stories in the archives. It would have been helpful for me.

TD: That's great. You talked about your racial and ethnic identities and so the follow up question to that is: what are your other salient identities and how have they changed over time?

CM: I resonate a lot with what you shared in terms of iden — I am a cis woman and I have worked with LGBT communities and LGBT or QTPOC, queer people, trans people of color, communities for a long time. But it actually hasn't been — and by a long time I mean since I was nineteen years old and like sitting in or being an activist and getting our LGBT center at UC Santa Barbara. But even in those times and in all the times after I didn't really unpack or interrogate how I showed up as a cis woman and I think that also connects with my multiraciality in that now when I'm an advocate or an accomplice, right, for trans groups or LGBTQ groups. I realize that I have influence in a way around this sort of like normative gender binary [and] that access to privilege is so important and that I acknowledge that and that I don't take up the space for others and I make sure that I'm listening deeply to what's happening and what people are feeling. Because that's not my reality. If I want people to understand my reality as a multiracial individual, I need to understand the reality of others that's not my own. So I feel like that's been a blessing because I've been able to really help and empower people that I never thought — I mean we have nothing in common in terms of like gender identity issues and that's really humbling and that's really important to me. I think it helps me understand how to stay at the table when I really want to leave. Because many people leave the trans table all the time because it's too uncomfortable for them to wrap their head around 'you're not this, you're not that, you're both. Or you're this or you're that or you're not.' It's really complicated in that way.

[00:35:35]

I think another salient identity that I resonate with you is actually being a mom. I think post-election I've been thinking a lot about what it means to be a social change agent within an institution, an academic industrial complex, which really has very specific goals. One of those goals, I do believe, is to take spirituality and humanness, I think, out the purpose of all that we do. That's important to me because I think as a mom if I'm

not showing up with my children, with the patience and the kindness that I want to – mainly because I’m so outraged at what’s happening with everything in society – then I think what is the point of me growing other humans into the people that I want them to be? I think that that’s really effecting me a lot right now. I think a lot about being a professional and then a mother and a change agent and what I want for my kids and how do I want them to behave and how, you know, I’m so revolted by what’s going on in our nation. That really has just been uncovered, I think, in that way. My last salient identity I think that I’ll share today that’s really popping up for me is this change agent identity. And how authentic can I be in that, with all the emotions I think it’s really challenging for me right now. Because who I think I want to be is not how I get to, how I have to show up to be the professional that I am as well.

TD: I don’t know if you’ve been struggling with this, but as a mom I’ve been struggling with how far to go with things. Because I also have a duty to provide safety and security for my children and I think that if I were single and I wasn’t a mother I would be a lot more willing to just throw my body against, you know, in revolution. My life, be willing to give up my life to further the cause but that’s not something, I feel constrained by my responsibility to my children and that’s not a bad thing. There’s also something really important and necessary about having the role and the responsibility of taking care of the next generation but it’s at war with the rebel inside of me.

CM: Yeah, I resonate with that.

TD: [Laughs]. So, getting back to our interview questions: What are some of your earliest memories of people making assumptions about your racial and ethnic identity?

CM: I think some of my earliest memories – see, some of my earliest memories don’t have to do with people making assumptions. But they have to do with just race in general. I remember not being desirable at the ages of nine and ten when all the little boys – like I wanted to be liked by boys, right? Boys were a very big thing then. There was a – I think that this is fascinating now – I haven’t actually thought about it quite in this way and I’ll share why. There were quite a few mixed boys, mixed race boys in my neighborhood. One was white and Mexican, one was black and I think Latino also, another I think was Asian/Latino, and I actually never thought about this. This is the first time I’ve thought about this. It’s this like brand new reflection, right? [Laughs]. But I remember wanting to be desired by them in particular and they all desired my peers who were white and had blue eyes and blonde hair. And I think about what that does to a young person psychologically and what that did to me and it made me not want to be brown. It made me not want to have big lips, it made me not want to value my curvy body. It did those things to me and I think one of the reasons why I do the work that I do now is to try and figure out how you make those interventions and how do you really help people be whole when they’re recovering from the trauma of their childhood

So I think that the earliest memories that I can—in those particular situations was that, you know. I don't even remember being exotized at those times but I do remember, some years later, about wanting exotize myself. Wanting to resonate with Pocahontas, and Jasmine, the Disney characters. I remember I had this little patch that I would put on my backpack and it was a very big deal for me because I wanted—I needed to feel proud. I wanted to feel like I was beautiful and they were beautiful to me. And then I further kind of went with that so when people would call me that, I would allow them to. I would embrace them in calling me that. So I think that it's a very fine line, and a tricky place to be as a younger person and trying to love yourself and seeing no representation. And when you do, it's totally problematic representation. But you don't know that until like six years later and you go to college and your like 'okay, I get that.' But it's part of the process.

TD: Yes, it is part of the process. So, fast forwarding to now and your experiences in the space that you're now in as an adult, as a professional, as a mother, what are some memorable experiences that you have regarding racial and ethnic identity, currently?

CM: Currently.... I don't know why Disney keeps coming up right now, but like the Moana movie's about to hit in a couple days and my daughter's name is Moana so this is a very active conversation related to my racial and ethnic identity because my daughter and I don't look very similar. This is an old picture. [Takes out picture of daughter]. I'll show you a picture of the family here. So they're clearly lighter than I am and they don't necessarily have the same features and they can completely probably pass and if I didn't remind them that they are also Taiwanese, Chinese, Columbian and all these things, and they have family members that they would know when they could pass. So that relates to me in that it's constant, it's additional work that I have to like—if I didn't, if I wasn't--. Sometimes I am exhausted so I can't necessarily do it, but it is also an exhausting processes for it to be at the forefront of my consciousness since I don't really think like that, but I have to continue to embed it into my children and that effects my identity because often times I feel like I'm losing pieces of myself while I'm here in Oregon, because there aren't necessarily mixes like me in masses, or at least in a greater number. At least in Southern California, I did take for granted that there were other Asian/Latino mixes and that I knew them, you know. More particularly Mexipinos, a pretty big group of Mexican/Pilipino folks. That affects me. It affects me and that's probably why I'm doing what I'm doing. So my other most memorable experience is like started Multiracial Beavers and doing this work has been great.

TD: Along those same lines, do you have any stories that you want to share about belonging or not belonging to your ethnic or racial groups?

CM: Yeah, you know, four years ago when I got to Oregon and started working at Oregon State there were, particularly Chicano, Latino, and Asian American groups that I wanted to be part of and that I tried to be a part of and that now I'm a part of. But in the beginning I definitely got overlooked on emails, on invitations. Like, I would have to go and find the things and insert myself. No one was coming to me and saying, 'yes, Charlene is Latino.' And even still to this day there's a Latinx group that meets, and it's not, I don't think they mean to be exclusionary but if I don't insert myself I also don't get called to the table. I think some of my colleagues are more cognizant about that now than we were three and a half years ago. And I think they were also at that time feeling me out in terms of how I identified and how I wanted to be identified. And truth be told, I'm not even sure that I knew I wanted to be part of those groups fully because I didn't know how they would treat me and my identities.

[00:45:35]

So those are active stories and they're hard because they're hurtful. I know it's wrapped up in other things too. I know that coming from California, and there's a whole lot of assumptions about that and then the directness that I think a lot of us from Cali come with doesn't really work for the Pacific Northwest and avoidance of talking about race. That doesn't work for the Pacific Northwest, so there's a lot of things that I think were convergence of my identities all together that didn't sit well with others and then also didn't sit well with me. It's only been after these last four years that I've been able to reconcile that. Then lastly a story of harmony and hope was hosting the very first Multiracial Aikido program. That was this past January and it was almost full circle; it was full circle from not feeling like I should live in Oregon to feeling like this is the most important work we can do in Oregon. Feeling like everyone there valued me in particular, but other folks too, because we recognized we weren't the same mixes but some of the same microaggressions, the same feelings of Oregon that we've had were not isolated. I think that that's extremely empowering and important, particularly for a place where we can be completely invisible.

TD: Being invisible, or feeling invisible to many people in Oregon, can you touch on that a little bit more and the differences between Oregon versus OSU? I feel that the work that you've done has really made a difference in the campus for multiracial students at OSU, but maybe you could elaborate on that a little bit.

CM: Which part?

TD: Well, how things have changed at OSU since you got here and what your experience is now about being in Oregon versus how that looks for being on campus at OSU.

CM: So I can't speak – I don't know if I have enough data, even anecdotal, for pieces about broader Oregon versus Oregon State. Because I spend so much of my life here at Oregon State. But I will say something that is pretty consistent with Oregon State and then outside of Oregon State is that people – like where in California the microaggression was like the 'what are you?' question – I've never been asked that here in Oregon. And I think it's because people are too afraid. I think they're just like, 'oh that's, I don't know. So I'm just not going to ask because it's not appropriate to talk about a race.' So I think that there's actually something funny about that to me because all my life I had struggled with that question and here I don't struggle with that question at all. And maybe I would. Maybe I would if I was more rural or I'm not on campus but there is some sort of neoliberal, progressive stuff that goes on here that I think disables that conversation for me when – or not disables. It doesn't occur to people, or they're too afraid to have that conversation. That's my perception. In terms of what we've been able to do in the last three years, I think it's powerful what can happen out of lunch conversations, you know. Lunch conversations is what did this. And when we started we had the same amount of resources that we did three or four years ago except now I have this support really from my supervisor, Allison Davis-White Eyes, who has really given the greenlight on being able to do greater things. Like do Multiracial Aikido, the partnership with Stephanie Shippen and CAPS has been great because they launched a weekly – or really we launched together, but really Stephanie's energy really helped to really make it consistent – this drop in group hosted by CAPS. And now what's been awesome is that now after a year and a half, we're getting close to two years, of the drop in group and our second annual Multiracial Aikido, the number of students who are coming out as activists and emerging as leaders, as change agents, through the process has been really beautiful.

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It's not just about identity development – yes it is about identity development, that's so important to move around and be yourself – but the purpose of all this in my opinion is to be able to think critically and figure out how navigate and provide new visions for some really antiquated ways of being. To help give students that agency to do those things is great. So, now some students are going to a conference with us, Critical Mixed Race Studies, it's in California, in February. We're doing this oral history projects. The two students of ours just presented at the Students of Color Conference this last weekend and now they've been asked to do it in other places in Oregon. So it's this really cool ripple effect and I think that that cannot be underestimated or understated. I'm really proud to see all of you all going off doing the things that you're doing.

TD: That's great. So is there anything else that you would like to say about the Multiracial Beavers or any final thoughts that you'd like to talk about?

CM: I think one of the things that I struggle with, I think all my life, has been this piece about perfection. I think I attribute it to wanting to be perfect for all groups. For my Taiwanese family, for my Columbian family, wanting to be perfect. And what I'm acknowledging in myself in this oral history interview is I know – like that's coming up for me, right. Like, how did I come across, and how did this go. [Both laugh] But I'm really proud of both you and me for just kind of putting ourselves out there and being vulnerable in a place where, this is going to go in the Multicultural Archives so I'm feeling this sense of accomplishment and pride in even just doing this. And I hope that this plants a seed for other things to happen.

TD: I do too. I really appreciate you and honor you and I'm thankful for the opportunity to have you in my life and have this conversation and I too was thinking about, 'oh, I'm crying and my eyes are puffy.' But I'm like, you know, that's real. That's how I feel right now and that's okay. That's something to be acknowledged. So I don't need to look a certain way for people to hear what's coming from my heart. So I appreciate you saying that.

CM: Alrighty, well that concludes our reciprocal interviews and I'm going to go ahead and stop this camera.

[00:53:15]