Jim Toy Gee, an American-born Chinese, provides brief responses to lifestyle questions, as well as some on the Chinese community in Houston. As a retired person, he spends most of his time tending to the household. He rarely socializes, or participates in the Houston community. The majority of his responses do not indicate a strong connection with the Chinese culture.

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JG: Well main thing is that each work different part at the poll. I mostly work on the machine....for the people to vote on.

DG: Would you tell why there are not many Chinese run for any kind of office?

JG: I really don’t...can’t not tell on those, because each one of -they have their own political, either, whatever you call it.

DG: Would you encourage anybody Chinese that is eligible to run for some kind of office?

JG: Well, I have –I don’t go to any club, other meeting, so is no way you can encourage anyone to run.

DG: Do you speak other languages other than Chinese and English?

JG: That’s the only two I know of.

DG: Does your parents speak other languages also?
JG: Only 2 I know of.

DG: How about your children? What do they speak?

JG: They mostly speak English...a few Chinese words.

DG: Do you regret that they don't speak Chinese?

JG: No. So far they aren't (?) doing good on their own.

DG: Did your parents put any emphasis on speaking the Chinese language?

JG: No.

DG: How did you learn English?

JG: Well, I had to learn English to go to school.

DG: Did you encounter any difficulties in learning English?

JG: No.

DG: It came very easy to you?

JG: Yeah, because I was young.

DG: What do you do in your leisure time?

JG: You mean now?

DG: Yes.

JG: Well, now I take care of the yard, and do whatever necessary at home. That's about it.

DG: Do you attend any classes now?

JG: No.

DG: Do you have any hobbies?

JG: No, no hobby.

DG: Do you socialize with your neighbors?
JG: Well, not if you socialize by going over to the neighbors. No, we don’t.

DG: Are you still working?

JG: No.

DG: Do you socialize with your relatives?

JG: We go meet one of them once in a while.

DG: And who lives in your home now?

JG: There’s me and my wife.

DG: In the past, who lived in your home?

JG: Well, when the children were small, at that time, I lived in a different house. All the children, and my son’s family too.

DG: Do you belong to any community clubs that aren’t all Chinese?

JG: No, I don’t belong to any other club.

DG: Why?

JG: Well I believe...of course I used to belong to, you know, On Leong. That’s about...

DG: American clubs?

JG: Oh no, I don’t belong to any American club.

DG: Do you belong to any Chinese clubs or organizations?

JG: Well, On Leong and our family. That’s about it.

DG: Do you know who started this On Leong?

JG: That’s before I was born, I believe.

DG: I mean in Houston. When it first started [inaudible several words]. [long pause] Do you know who owned the...

JG: No, I don’t remember who actually formed the On Leong in Houston.

DG: How about the Gee Association?
JG: Well, Gee Association... I don’t remember what year we formed it, because when I came, well it just, a few Gees, not that many.

DG: You don’t remember who started the Gee Association in Houston?

JG: I believe it’s – the name started of the Gee Association is C. Y. Chu.

DG: Do you ever go to Chinatown?

JG: Once in a while.

DG: How often do you go? Every month? Every-

JG: No, I don’t go monthly.

DG: For what occasion?

JG: Well, sometimes a banquet and sometimes we need some Chinese groceries, we go there and buy it.

DG: Did you ever go to the Chinese theater?

JG: Never have.

DG: Are you interested in Chinese opera?

JG: I don’t understand them.

DG: Are you interested in Chinese art?

JG: No.

DG: In your opinion, what is missing in the Chinese culture in Houston?

JG: I don’t understand you.

DG: Like [speaks in Cantonese]. [inaudible English]

JG: Well, I don’t think about – I don’t think so. I don’t know those.

DG: Do you think we need some improvement on our Chinese culture?

JG: Well actually I think the Chinese population in Houston does need improvement.

DG: I mean the culture. We’re not talking about the population.
JG: Well, even population is part of culture. It has. You do need it. Well one thing is, since the Chinese population have grown so much in Houston, it seem like everyone I have, been falling apart instead of getting together more. They don't know one another as –like we used to, so everything –all the population, Chinese population in Houston, seem like it’s –everyone is for themself.

DG: Anything else?

JG: Well, I think our Baptist Church is not doing as well as it should on the membership either.

DG: Why?

JG: Well, since I haven’t taken any activity, I don’t know, can’t tell you why, because when I go to church [inaudible 1 word] I can tell. I’ve seen it.

[10:50]

DG: Have you gone back to your homeland?

JG: No.

DG: Do you have any future plans to go back to your homeland?

JG: No, I don’t have no future, and don’t looking for it.

DG: Would you let your children or grandchildren visit China some day?

JG: Not as China of today.

DG: Do you communicate with anybody in China?

JG: No.

DG: Do you still have relatives in China?

JG: No.

DG: What do you miss most about China?

JG: Actually, since I grew up over here all these years, I don’t miss anything.

DG: Do you maintain any Chinese traditions or customs?

JG: No, not actually maintain, but we still remember the Chinese New Year.
DG: And what other?

JG: That’s about it in tradition of Chinese?

DG: Do your children maintain any Chinese traditions or customs?

JG: No, they don’t. About the same as I do.

DG: Are there any Chinese customs that you've abandoned that your parents strictly observed?

JG: No, I don’t think I have.

DG: Do you think this is true of other Chinese in the Houston area?

JG: I don’t understand you.

DG: [speaks in Cantonese]

JG: It’s hard to tell. It’s pretty hard to tell what the other Chinese believe, what others do.

DG: Are you aware of any customs that your Chinese friends may observe that you don’t?

JG: Well in the last few months I have noticed some Chinese going to the [changes to Cantonese] –going to the Communist meeting. I don’t believe in that though.

DG: In your opinion how many Chinese do you think live in Houston now?

JG: Oh I haven’t paid that much attention. How many do you think? [directed at third person] I haven’t paid attention. Huh? 70,000? Do you think it’s that much?

DG: How many do you think, not me.

JG: I mean do you?

DG: [inaudible]


DG: Do you view the Chinese as an ethnic group in Houston?

JG: Well, they don't have a group.
DG: In other words-

JG: They don’t have a team.

DG: In other words, how do you view us Chinese as a minority group? Do you think they are better than the other minority groups or equal to the other minority groups like Mexican, American, Black people, or are we better or whatever? Do we accomplish more or accomplish less?

JG: Well since I retired from my business, I don’t pay that much attention in old age of what our minority is good, are bad, are better, or others. I think our Chinese today are equal to Caucasian and other race.

DG: Are the Chinese closely knit compared to other minority people?

JG: I don’t think so.

DG: Why?

JG: I don’t know.

DG: You said they are not closely knit. Why aren’t they?

JG: Well, that’s just –like I said before, look like is everybody for themself.

DG: Do you think the other Chinese view themselves like you do compared to other minority groups?

JG: Probably some of them do, but everybody is not the same mind.

DG: Do you see any political division in the Houston Chinese community?

JG: Well, the Chinese is mostly always been a merchant or so on, but the younger generation, they not following the older generation as merchant or whatever so on. They –after they education, well they go to work as other...that’s the reason.

DG: Do you see any changes in political support among these divisions with U.S. opening relations with China?

JG: Well, I have –yeah, I see some Chinese are changing, because they go to the communist meeting. For myself, I’m not for it.

DG: What social values do you think remain most important from Chinese tradition to you?
JG: Well, the mostly, well my thinking is always, my mind is always to remember your family. That’s one thing you can’t cut it off. Maybe some of the younger generation, they forget that, but I always tell my children always to remember your own family generation.

DG: Do you think that other Chinese in Houston think the same way you do?

JG: Mostly does.

DG: The older Chinese?

JG: Yes.

[20:00]

DG: How do you think you were disciplined by your parents when you were young?

JG: Well they didn’t have to discipline us. We mostly had to go do what they tell us. That’s the only thing.

DG: Do you see any changes in thinking about child-rearing from your parents’ time?

JG: The children now...

DG: The child-rearing. Like bringing up your children, how they different now compared to your parents or to your time.

JG: Well, at our time, well we don’t have the things we have today to raise the younger children. We don’t have the things and back in the old country well, you don’t have all the medical facility and the doctors.

DG: How did you discipline your children?

JG: Well I always give them advice. I don’t discipline those. I just give them advice what to do the best way.

DG: What did you do in your leisure time as a child?

JG: What did I do as a child, leisure time? Oh it’s a long time ago, isn’t it? Well, I remember when we first opened –when my father first opened a grocery store in Mississippi, I always helped whatever I can at the store.

DG: That’s working. Leisure time!

JG: I don't have no leisure time at that time.
DG: You didn't have any toys to play with?

JG: Make my own toys.

DG: What do you make?

JG: Well, different things, like, like uh, I was going to school in Tennessee, there's snow there and I make my own sled.

DG: Do you see your childhood as much different from your children's childhood?

JG: Yeah. They have more things to play and more different games [inaudible 1 word] learning and the education is more [inaudible 1 word] to them than I was.

DG: Do you see any changes in family size in the Chinese community nowadays?

JG: You mean the family...

DG: Size.

JG: Size, well...

DG: What – are there more children or less children than you – at your time?

JG: Well it's hard to say that, because you – mostly I heard like my children were after they got 3, well they says nothing, so they not going for any more. See? So mostly the family are not going to be looking for a big family as before the old time.

DG: What problems do you think Chinese coming to Houston now can expect to encounter if any?

JG: I don't think there is any problem for any Chinese come to Houston. It's the opportunity there for whatever the...whatever the work they looking for, the education too. They have opportunities just as much as anybody else.

DG: What special problems do you think the Boat People could expect to encounter in Houston?

JG: Well, the Boat People, well as I know, they – I heard that down in Seaport, they are tried to fight them not to let them go as shrimper or fisher, as the Caucasian is there. They try to stop them from being there.

DG: What other problems would they experience besides that?

JG: Well, they have more opportunities than what we have, because when they come over, United States [inaudible 1 word] government financially and give them a place
to live. I believe that’s what it is. They are more easier to – to make their living than when we first – we have to scather (?) or scratch whatever we can.

DG: Is there anything you would like to add to this interview?

JG: Well, all the questions it seem like its everything for life. Nothing I know of can tell you what I want to add.

DG: Do you know any respected Chinese in Houston who we would want to get on tape for our oral history study?

JG: I really have not think anything who would be a good – would be willing to do this sort.

DG: Do you have any documents that we may use to support our oral history study?

JG: No, I don’t.

DG: What do you think lead to the presently large population of Chinese in Houston?

JG: What do I think?

DG: No. What do you think LEAD to the presently large population of Chinese in Houston?

JG: Well, I believe it’s the same thing as the opportunity for everyone. Chinese also, as the same as the others, because they’re moving from other places to Houston.

DG: Why? What kind of opportunities that Houston has, other cities don’t have?

JG: Well, main thing – Chinese come to Houston, they have more opportunity of opening a business than others… city probably. And seems like that’s what it is in the last couple or three years.

DG: Do you know any Chinese person that has contributed outstanding things in Houston?

JG: No, I can’t recall of any outstanding they doing. Of course a lot of Chinese in the last few years but they – after they graduated now is doctors and optometrists, like my grandsons, and dentists, I have noticed, and… and I don’t know what else to say. Well, profession? yeah. Whatever the – which way they’re from – they have the opportunities [inaudible 2 or 3 words] used to be.

DG: I think this is all, and thank you very much.

JG: No, I thank you for the opportunity speaking with you.
DG: Thank you.

[29:58]