

Houston Asian American Archive
Chao Center for Asian Studies, Rice University

Interviewee: Debbie Lin
Interviewers: Chelsea Ward (Junior); Winifred Tung (Sophomore)
Date of Interview: October 25, 2014
Transcribed by: Chelsea Ward and Winifred Tung
Edited by: Patricia Wong, Sara Davis (8/12/16)
Audio Track Time: 1:33:19

Background:

Debbie Lin is originally from Taiwan and came to Atlanta, Georgia with her family when she was 17. She attended Georgia Tech for undergrad and attended Emory University for medical school. She is the loving wife and mother of Jimmy Lin and Laura Lin, respectively. The narrative transcribed in this interview is hers alone and has been shaped by her experiences in Taiwan as well as her time in the United States.

Setting

For this interview, we were located at Fondren Library room 201.

Profile Blurb

Chelsea Ward is a junior at Duncan College scheduled to graduate in Spring 2016. She is an Asian studies major and premed. She speaks both Mandarin Chinese and Spanish. She is originally from Daniel Island, South Carolina.

Winifred Tung is a sophomore at Martel College with an expected graduation in May 2017. She is considering either a major in chemistry or biochemistry, with a minor in business. She speaks Mandarin fluently and is from Cupertino, California.

Interview Transcript:

Key:

CW	Chelsea Ward
WT	Winifred Tung
DL	Debbie Lin
—	Speech cuts off; abrupt stop
...	Speech trails off; pause
<i>Italics</i>	Emphasis
(?)	Preceding word may not be accurate

[Brackets]	Actions [laughs, sighs, etc.]
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CW: Well, first of all, thank you for coming. This is especially for you, not for your husband. This is just special—[overlapping] you time.

DL: [overlapping] Thank you for having me.

CW: Mm-hmm for sure. Okay, so we're gonna frame the questions sort of kind of as far as, you know, like your childhood then young adulthood, adulthood, and just like things that we're personally curious about I guess. Yeah. Okay. [to WT] So do you wanna start?

WT: Okay, sure. So you said you're from Taiwan, and so first of all we'd just like to know what was your childhood in Taiwan like?

DL: Uh, I think my childhood in Taiwan, um, is quite typical of, uh, children post World War II, I think, in Taiwan. I was born in 1965. So, um, Taiwan, uh, from 1965 to 1985 were—um, I think it was a—a special period for, uh, the population there in terms of, uh, rapid economic growth and also the development of a democracy or solid—solidification of democracy. I should say that.

Um, as you probably know, you know, being from Asian studies, that, um, the Chinese government, the Chiang Kai-shek government, went to Ch—uh, Taiwan in 1949. So around the 50s and 60s, uh, Taiwan was under pretty much one ruler [DL laughs] rule I guess. Our, uh—this is considered, um, uh, military martial law. So there was—there was very little freedom. And a lot of, um—a lot of, uh, uh, scholars and, uh, government elites, you know, uh, successful business people fled mainland China, or fled the—the communist, uh, government and—and fled to Taiwan. So, you know, brought in lot of energy to Taiwan.

And I'm the second generation of that, I guess, you know. That my parents were—my parents actually were, uh, born in Taiwan, but they will, um—they—wor—they—they had to compete with a lot of, uh, much smarter and, uh, better educated, uh, students, young people that fled China and came to Taiwan. So to them, the—it was a—it was a challenge and also it's a, uh—quite a, uh—a exciting, uh, experience.

So there's, um, a lot of marriage or—or Romeo and Juliet, you may say that. They were—there were Taiwanese go—uh, families do not like the mainlanders. And the—and the mainlanders *do* not like Taiwanese and vice versa. And—and I am the product of their romance I suppose in that, um, my generation, you know, born in the 60s, um, we were the first, uh, Taiwanese that, uh, sort of embraced both China and Taiwan.

I do not speak any Japanese because, um, you know, by the time I was born, Taiwan was not under Japanese rule. Um, I, you know, speak perfect Mandarin. I don't have any Taiwanese accent because all the teachers at the time, um, had, you know—had, um, really good, uh, or—or good education background from China. So that they didn't have to learn Mandarin a week before they teach their kids Mandarin. So—so the—you know, that is the background that I have, you know, a first generation of Taiwanese that sort of, uh, consider themselves Chinese.

At the same time, by the time their 80s, another—Taiwan had become a tot—uh, a real

democracy, or they have the real, um, as, um, government that kinda allowed the second political party to form and to—to have a conversation that k—and to have a free election. Um, and that there was a set of, uh, the Taiwanese, uh, people who—kinda wanna say, you know—pro-Taiwan independence. Um, so a lot of those, uh, people were my age.

So you see, ‘c—I’m—I belong to very interesting generation. Like the, um, uh, new president, um, candidate in Taiwan were pretty much my age and—and, um, that—that too—that kind of freedom was never dreamed of—of my, uh—in my parents’ generation. So—so I think that I grew up in Taiwan in a very interesting time.

[0:04:48]

Um, um, by the time I came—well there a lot of, uh, people of my parents’ generation—meaning in the 60s—they, uh—they came to United States. But the—those were the rich elite people who, um, had a college education and parents can afford to send them to America to—for the university with or without scholarship. Um, even if they have scholarship, a lot of, uh, families, couldn’t afford to send their kids to America because they couldn’t afford airline tickets or, you know, transportation or the lodging.

So there were—there were a set of my parents’ generation of Chinese that came to United States via Taiwan. They—they stay there for a couple years. They came here. They have a—a total set of experience when they first came here. I think that, um, being a Chinese in America in the 60s and 70s were quite different from, um—the—the—the Asian or, uh, Asian American like me who moved to United States in the 1980s. So, um, you see that there’s, uh, like a puzzle. Um, their—my experience coming to America is *totally* different from my uncle’s experience who came to United States in the 70s.

CW: Hmm, interesting.

DL: Does that help you?

WT: Definitely. [laughing]

DL: Okay.

WT: Um, going back to you know the 60s when a lot of the mainlanders came to Taiwan. Was there conflict between—?

DL: Absolutely

WT: Mm-hmm.

DL: Um, there—the—there’re conflicts in many levels. Um, um, in the government level for sure. Okay? Um, their—their violence as well, and—and, um ... but not the extent of the kind of violence you’ve seen in—in—in mainland China, but still it was quite, um, traumatic for Taiwanese, um, people.

Because I think that a lot of them had this romantic, um, idea of we're finally, you know, coming back to our—our motherland, or our—our—our—you know, we're no longer a co—a colony of another, uh, country, another race or, you know, that sort of thing.

And, unfortunately, China, um, at the time was going through a—a tremendous, uh, turmoil, post World World II poverty, corruption, and you name it, violence. And so, um, Chiang Kai-shek's government, uh, lost China for good reason, and mainly corruption.

So when their government came to Taiwan, you know, unfortunately the first—the first wave that came to Taiwan were not exactly [laughing] the elite or the organized retreat. So they—they had kind of shattered, uh, a lot of the romantic, um, expectations of the—the—the Taiwanese elite. Um, it's basically, you know, if you have a bunch of, uh—how should I say this? Um ... refugee. That disorganized refugee that came in here. They were just basically robbing everything or stealing everything they can. Um, it's not exactly, uh, a repre—a representation of, uh, uh, a good government, even though the—the Chiang Kai-shek government, you know, they tried to, um, build Taiwan to certain degree. But—but I think that the—the—the mistake was made, um, already at the time. So, um, for the educated Taiwanese there was—there was like, "These are the people? Like these are the people coming to govern us?" Um, so there, you know, um, was probably a lot of unhappiness as well. And then you have, um, uh, all this ... I hate to say this [laughing] but this is true. You have all this very *young*, uh, college students who, uh, have travelled with the government, uh, either as students or as, uh, army or, you know, um. They came with the—the—the government to Taiwan. They were in the marriage, um, age. They were in their twenties, and they came to Taiwan.

They were looking for wives, girlfriends. And so, um, they were quite smart and attractive. And, you know, of course a lot of local Taiwanese girls would like to marry them, and—and of course—of course there—that that created a lot of, uh, uh, conflict because their, um, parents were probably, you know, don't know if, you know—if these guys were going to stick around [laughs], uh, uh, or are they going back, or they thought they were going back to China. And then they don't want their daughters to marry somebody who's, um, coming out of nowhere. Don't know their background and don't know where they're going. And so there were, you know—there were a lot of, uh, very, very heartbreaking, uh, romantic stories as well. Um, so—but that—you know, that kind of conflicts, um, also created a lot of opportunities. I think that, um, it transformed Taiwan in many ways, um, and make it—make it very unique.

[0:09:52]

CW: So what kind of opportunities did that create do you think?

DL: I would say—you know, um, for example, you—you—you have bunch of really young smart, uh, people, um, all congregate into a very small island. Taiwan is not big. [CW laughs] And, um, they, um—they basically, you know like, in terms of like, uh, music composition, for example. You know, I recently, um, was going through, you know, the—the ... the history of, uh, Taiwan and music. You—you have all of a sudden all this great composers and performers that come to China. And they brought in all this, you know, uh, energy and talent. And Taiwan, um, provided them a safe haven that they didn't have for—for years: World War I, World War II, you know, Japanese invasions, all that.

And, um—and they, um—some of them migrated to Hong Kong, uh, in the movies and, uh,

films compositions and so forth. Um, and then Taiwan in—in many ways provide them a, uh, small laboratory. It's very—if you're good and then—and you're—you're—you're—you're—you put in—it's almost like a college campus. You put a lot of smart people in a small space in a—in a defined time, a lot of good things happen. So I think that, kind of, to me, that's probably what Taiwan felt like: young and vibrant, even though it was very chaotic. And—and also—also there was I think the tremendous, um, uh, um, uh, collections of the arts, uh, music and, uh, even, um, the preservation of the histories. They were all done in Taiwan. Um, and because of that, it kind of, uh, escaped, uh, the Cultural Revolutions, a lot of destruction that had happened in China.

So, right now, that, uh, a lot of times when the Chinese, uh, scholars who want to study a *certain*, uh, histories, especially 20th century, um ... or even the—the 19th, 18th century, they—they would have to go to Taiwan 'cause Taiwan preserved it, whereas, um, a lot of them, um, were destroyed, um, in, uh—in China. Of course, and if you go any—any further than that, if you go into the anthropology, or—or what do you call it? Digging up the dinosaurs? [laughing] All those kinds of things. Then you—you have to go to China because, uh, Taiwan doesn't have much to dig, um, and—and so forth or—or the—the—the—the first emperor's tombs. And, you know, if you want to go thousands years, um, and beyond, then you—yeah, you have better chance of doing it in China. But if you wanna, uh—if you really wanted to—to study the—the more recent, uh, Chinese history, then you might have to go to Taiwan.

CW: Hmm. So it's like a time capsule of sorts?

DL: Yeah. It's funny. Um, it always happens when a group of people sort of get displaced to another place, whether it's voluntarily, involuntarily. Um, for example, uh, I'm gonna sa—go back to my uncle who—who, uh, moved to United States in the 70s. And right now in their 80s of course. His experience is quite different from mine. And—and of course, by the time I came here, um, uh, China started to open. Taiwan has gone through the, uh—the—the economic miracle, so they're—you know, they were the factories for a lot of, uh, American companies, um, for, you know—for a period of time before China turned out to be the world's factory. And so, um, so Taiwan had a—a, um—enjoyed quite a bit of, um, economic, um—how should I say? Um, *boom*, boom time. [all laughs]

And so, when I came here, I didn't have to go to—to, uh—to restaurants and—to wash dishes and work 16 hours a day, then go to school the other 8 hours. [laughs] I don't have to be a super woman. I, you know—um, my parents were provided housing and, you know, um, tuitions. Whereas my uncle's generation, he came here, they probably have a few dollars in their pockets. And then they have to work in the restaurants for few months. And then they go to school for, you know, period of time, and then they have to work and so forth. Their exper—experience was quite different from mine.

And they may have, you know, uh, also experienced the inferiority of, uh—of Asian American at the time. You know, it's a white man's world. And, uh, if you're Asians from a, uh, you know, war-torn China, and—and you have no money. I mean, this is America. You know? You don't belong to any clubs.

Um, by the time that I came here, I think that, um, I—I—I didn't have to go through this, uh, feeling of like I'm not, um ... I'm inferior. I don't think I had to go through that. But then, you know, my experience, um, will be quite different from my, um—my niece and nephew's experience when

they come here right now as, uh, high school and college kids. And I'm like, "Kids, you know, like just because your parents have money doesn't mean you come here and then you can buy everybody because you *don't*."

You know, um, you probably have the experience going to China. They—they are so proud of their—their economic power right now. They're a little bit, uh—a little bit to me it's like a—the new rich, you know? The people just come to the power right away and then think that they—they own everything. They don't.

[0:15:10]

Um, my experience is probably more, um—more balanced in that I don't have the—the Asian inferiority complex. At the same time, you know, I didn't come here, you know, with loads of money. And whatever we came here, um, we came here and we achieved through our own hard work and just like all the other immigrants of America. And—and, in a—in a way that, um, speak the truth of American strength.

'Cause by the time I see my, uh, younger, uh, nephews and nieces [laughing] younger generation Chinese friends who are coming here, I say, "You know what? You think you're as—as strong as America? You don't. You know, you—look at your—your—your—your—you—the way you treat your, uh—your populations. Look at the way you treat your *housekeepers*. You know, you don't. You don't deserve to call yourself a super power until you have the kind of strength and resilience that you have in America, meaning giving everybody equal opportunities and treat everybody equally." And that's something I think, uh, is very important to—for an Asian American to—to teach [whispering] the younger Asian American.

CW: Yeah, definitely. Well, okay, so you mentioned like China as kind of this new money kind of situation. I'm just curious as to how you think that's shaped their society.

DL: Uh, I think it shaped their society in a shaky way. [laughs]

CW: Yeah.

DL: If, uh—I can tell you this very funny story. My mom bought a house for my brother and I, uh, when we went to university. And it's right off campus, so, um, mainly just so that when they come and visit us, they have a place to stay. And after we graduate, they, you know, being Asian parents, nobody sell their properties, right? I mean, we're kinda like hoarders, you know? We own this. We just own it forever until we die. So my parents still own that little house. So they start to rent it out to, uh, Asian students.

Okay, my mom used to, uh—'cause they don't live here anymore, so they—they basically said, "Okay, you know, uh, there're—there're 6 rooms. I rent out for 5. I give one room free for a Chinese, uh, student, a graduate students usually. And you can stay here for free, but you have to collect the rents for the other 5 for me and then keep it in a bank account for me." And then—and I'll come and then do—you know, sort of like a—it's a RA I guess. You know, or what do you call this? ETA, whatever, [laughs] uh, um, situation in a smaller scale and, um, she never had problems to find

somebody who—even though it’s a lot of work, you know, you have to knock on the door, have to collect the money, have go to the bank. And if there’s some, you know, leakage, you have to kind of repair it and that sort of thing. But, you know, she never had problems to find somebody to fill in because there’s always students who can use the money.

Okay, and she’d done that for 20 years. And recently my mom said, “You know what? I’m gonna sell the house.” I said, “Why?” “I can’t deal with it anymore.” I said, “Why?” “I can’t find anybody to who wants that position.” And—and—and, you know, the students who came here, they used to buy—they used to ask my mom ‘cause my mom—you know, she doesn’t always do it for money. She does it because she sort of like, you know, empty nest. She’s lonely. So she—she would—all the—the new Chinese students would come here and then—and she would take them to buy second-hand, you know, like used cars, take them to open the bank account. You know, like, you know. They would say, “Oh, um, because Auntie Ho. You know, like, can you do this for us?” And you know sort of like helping out in—in a transition time.

And, this is a very funny story. My mom said, “Oh, they used—always asked me, ‘Oh, where can I get a, you know, good second—uh, used car, second-hand furnitures’ and all that kind of stuff. Now they—they say, ‘Oh, where can I get the beamer? Oh, where can I get, you know, um, like, this and this and that.’”

And—and the funny part, not only she could not find a, um, I guess, assistant she was looking for. She said, “Well, you know, I got this girl and then she paid me six months rent on the *first month*.” I said, “Oh, good.” “Well I’m kind of happy but she said, ‘Well, but, you need to take me to buy a car?’” My mom goes, “Sure, but, oh, do you have a driver’s license?” She said, “No, I don’t need one.” And my mom says, “But you do need a driver’s license. The Americans drive ...” “Oh I’ll do it later when I get a car.” And so my mother said, “Well, okay. You know what? I’ll—I’ll teach you how to drive. I’ll—I’ll take you to [laughing] get a drivers license.” This is again from China. It’s very cute.

And, um ... but, she said, “Well, but you need to help me buy a car before you go back to Taiwan.” My mom’s only here one month a year. And so, long story short, so my mom said, “Okay. You know.” You know, she finally got a—a learner’s license I suppose. And—and so my mom, you know, took her to buy this beamer or whatever she wanted.

[0:19:53]

And a month, two months later, she call my mom. She said, “Well, I’m moving out.” And my mom says, “Why?” She says, “Well I—I just don’t like to live here, you know, um, but I’m moving out.” My mom says, “Well, but I cannot give you back the money.” “Don’t worry, you can keep the money.” So, yeah, my mom goes, “Oh. Okay, well—” She feel really bad. She—she—she’s, “Well, if I can find somebody to rent your room, then I’ll give you back the rent.” She says, “Don’t worry! It doesn’t matter.”

And so—so my [laughs]—this is a story! This a true story. My mom told me this. I was laughing so hard. And—and so she, for some reason, then she came over here. And then she—she went back, um, to—to see the house. My mom says, “She didn’t move out! All her things were there!” So she—so she call her, saying, “You know, you still have your things here!” “Oh, you can throw it out for me.” And so, this is a story.

My mom says, “But they’re—they look okay.” “Oh, don’t worry about it. You know, you

can—you can donate it.” So, my mom went through this and donate it to my daughter. So we had all this little earrings and little necklace. There’re little I don’t know. My mom says, “ Well you know, Laura, Laura, Grandma has all these things. You can pick—you have first pick and the rest I’ll take it to—for donation.” [laughs] And my daughter went through it and she found—actually found one Tiffany necklace. And—and my mom said, “This is it! I’m selling this house. I think that these kids are just not worth my time to help anymore.” Okay?

CW: Oh my gosh.

DL: This is a true story. But it’s—you know, it’s very interesting. It’s all in the matter of 40 years or less.

CW: That’s very interesting. My mom would have had a heart attack [all laugh]

DL: I—trust me, I was like me, “Can I go through the pile too?” [all laugh] Except, you know—and nothing fits me, of course. But, you know, it’s—it’s kind of funny, and, um, how, um that, um, kind of attitude can really turn people, the American people, against you. I mean, I consider myself American, you know, even though I’m Asian. *But* it’s—it’s because you cannot, you know, come in here and think you can throw your money and then get respect. You don’t!

This is a country that everybody can have opportunity if you can contribute and if you work hard for it. You know, you—you get it. But just thinking you have money and come here and throw it and then buy respect? I don’t think so. But somehow, when you ask me what does the new economy does—do—to the Chinese people. And I think that that just show you that, um, when you’re, you know, newly rich, you will create this very obscure, funny, set of mentality [laughs] that doesn’t make sense to the rest of us I think.

CW: No, it’s very interesting. Have you seen any kind of similar changes like that in Taiwan, or?

DL: Taiwan is different, okay? Um, it is very—I have to go back to this. I don’t know if this is related or not. But—[indistinguishable]

CW: Hmm, it’s all related! [laughs]

DL: Okay, um. I would s—my daughter’s applying for high school right now. So, you know, can imagine it’s like, you know, sort of, uh, uh, practice for applying college. And so I recently went to a, um, open house in Kincaid, which is a nice private school here in Houston. And, um, the—the student who gave us a tour, uh, were just saying, “Oh this is a great environment. We’re going for the Honor Code. And, um, you know, I never lock my locker. And, um, you—you know, and I lost my iPhone here and there and then I can always find it.”

And, um, she was basically saying how wonderful, um, the school is and—and, you know, how safe an environment it is. And I’m kind of happy. I remember I—I—I lost my purse as a—a freshman, uh, in college. I left it in the ladies’ room and two days later, I still found it there. I was kind of happy. But this is 30 years ago, of course. Um, and—and—and that would never happen in Taiwan

in 30 years ago. Okay? So that was my first taste of America. The Honor Code, or the fact that, you know, um, you—you feel a little safer here, um, because—um, how should I say this? It does—there is this certain honor, um, in the society and it's just very charming.

Um, then a week later and I went to my daughter's, uh, art, uh—my daughter's art teacher had a little function for the parents. And so I went there and—and she said, “Oh, we had—I had a picture that was there—” What was it? No, take that back. I said, “Wow, there's a hole in the—in the—in the wall.” Like, um, also there was a, uh—a picture there. It was beautiful, um, picture and it got some kind of award or something. And—and—and somebody took it.

[0:24:54]

And so—so we thought—so I said, “ Oh, so must—a student must've took it home.” She said, “Well, unfortunately, somebody else took it. [laughs]. It was such a nice painting that somebody liked it and then took it.” And—and that reminded me of—of the story that I heard a week prior was where we have you a iPhone sitting around everywhere. Um, I shouldn't say, you know, public school versus private school. May or may not be the case.

But to me, it kind of go back to what Taiwan is. Taiwan is westernized. Taiwan has been, um, rich for a while, for 30 years. Taiwan, kinda, in many ways, remind me of a place where—a bit more Americanized in that, you know, you feel safer. You—if you—if you lose your, uh, briefcase or something, you probably have a much higher chance of finding it in a subway station [laughs] than you would in uh- China. China is still in this, um, situation where, um, it's a fight for your life and—and steal for survival, uh, mentality. And, um, we're all products of our, uh, environment. And if you're in that environment, if you're—if you, um, don't fight for it you—you're never gonna get it, right?

Um, tell you another story that, um—again, it's—it's—it's kinda illustrate a little bit of what I'm trying to say here. Um, I was interning—oh, uh, no. I was a freshman in college, and I went back to visit my dad. My dad's a judge and then a lawyer judge, uh, in Taiwan. So he said, “Well, you want to make money this summer, so you can be—you can be—” I guess, um, what do you call this? Um, intern I suppose. “You can file files in the courthouse for me.” So I said, “How do I do that?” He said, “Well just walk across the street and there is a window. You wait—you wait in line and then you—you give that thing that you get a, uh, receipt stamped and bring it back to me.” Oh, that's easy. You know, I can make money that way. It's very easy.

So I went there. There was no—there was sort of a line, but by the time the line go to window, it just breaks. So I was there for 45 minutes. I couldn't get in line! Because there wasn't really a line. It was a—get it? You—whoever has longer arms, whoever is taller ... get in? And the ones like us who's short, who's from America, who doesn't know how to fight for your life will just stay there forever. And finally there was a policeman watch this little, you know, teenager girl was standing there for 45 minutes and like eyes were popping out like mad at all those people. Finally, he just, you know, opened the line for me, so I can get my, uh—my, uh, case filed. Um, that's, um, 1983, all right?

So now I go back to Taiwan. Not only there's a line, there is a line that—there's an honorary line. You know, like if you go away, go to bathroom, come back, people say, “This is your space.” Okay? If you go to the subway, you know, there is a line for women and children. *No* guys would ever even go there. There—there're the—the blue chairs in the subway that says pregnant

women. You know, the—you know, there's um, handicap chair. Even if it's *packed*, nobody would sit. You know, actually I thought, "Well that's a little bit dumb. This is too extreme. Okay? I'm gonna sit until somebody needs it." Like, I'm—right? In America you—you're allowed to sit in the—the handicap seats until somebody needs to use it. Come on, common sense. But in Taiwan they're going *so* extreme, those six seats were empty.

Okay. This is a matter of 30 years. It's—it's—it's doable—it's doable if you set your mind to it. Um, I don't know if China, um, can achieve that in 30 years. If China, um—if they want to achieve that. I'm not sure.

WT: Um, so you talked about like your uncle coming here and then you come here and like your niece and nephew. So is it a popular, kind of like, life transition, um, for Taiwanese to come to America? Was this something like—[overlapping] a popular thing?

DL: [overlapping] Okay. Like my—well my uncle came to United States. Um, he has a one-way ticket. All right? [CW laughs] So basically, like, you—you—either you swim [or] you die. There's nothing for you to go back. I mean, you get your PhD, and you come go back. But, before that, forget it. All right? Um, so—and a lot of them, um, came here and they find jobs here and stay here.

Um, the ones who went back to Taiwan, people started ...or the relatives ...: "Oh, so you cannot make a living in America, huh?" You know, like, "You're not good enough, huh?" You know? [laughs] All right? I mean, "You cannot survive in the real world? You know, you came back?"

My generation's a bit different. We came here because my parents thought, "Oh man, the competition is too much. I'm not so sure if my kids can make it there [laughs] and we have the money, so maybe we'll take a shortcut." All parents do shortcuts. We did shortcuts, okay. More so for, um—for maybe they want their kids to have a easier time, uh, getting a better education.

[0:30:08]

Um, my—in my generation, by the time that we—by the time I finished, uh—I'm an MD, so, um, you know, I—I did my residency here and that. But my other friends who get PhDs and when they started to look for jobs, it—it was in the mid 90s. Taiwan has, uh—it was flooded with money and, uh—and, uh, lots of opportunities. So, a lot of my friends—over half of my friends actually, went back to Taiwan, and they have very good jobs. So, my generation go back to Taiwan is like, "Oh, you're smart. You know where the money is." Like [laughs] it's—nobody would say, "Oh, you cannot make a living in America." I mean, it's totally different.

And, uh, my, um—my daughter's generation, um, they—they come here They don't want to come here. They were like, "Uh, why are you going to America? Um, I can just—"you know, you come back and you did not necessarily get a better job. Um, "I don't—I don't want to go there and live by myself, and I don't want to learn a second language." I mean, in other words, they're happy. Life is easy, okay? Nobody is, you know, pushing them into line. Nobody is—you don't have to *fight* for your life.

So—so, in a way, my—my mom actually felt like if, um, there is a difference between China and Taiwan is that the younger kids in Taiwan are so pampered that they might lose the competitive edge, um, to China. 'Cause they're still in that sort of like, you know, uh, uh, uh, very small pond with

1000 gold fish in there, koi. They all, you know, try get a bite of food. Um, they—they—they're worried that Taiwanese kids are—are gonna lose it because of that.

CW: So—

DL: And—and if—if you're in Rice, you'll see, there are l—there are less, uh, students, uh, foreign students from Taiwan and more from Mainland China

CW: So do you think there is definitely a competition between China and Taiwan right now?

DL: Um, again, this kind of competition, you know—competition you can have a government-to-government level, or you can have individual-individual level, or corporate level. Okay? Let's not talk about the government 'cause it's not—I don't care. I don't know. And corporate level, maybe, maybe not. You know, lot of the Taiwanese, uh, gover—um, uh, company, they're actually, you know, set up, uh, factories in China, vice versa.

CW: [overlapping] Right.

DL: A lot of, uh, uh, early investment, uh, were Taiwanese money. So, um—so that—that is a little of murky. But they don't—it's not very transparent, anyway. Individually, um, I would say that, um, there're—there're over, uh, 600,000 Taiwanese living in Shanghai city alone. I mean [laughs] it's like a—a proxy city in Sh—yeah. It—it—So the—the—the interchange is quite, um, extensive. Um, from—it's not so much of my generation. I guess my generation, a little younger, they're the more likely to go to T—uh, China for the opportunities. 'Cause a lot of opportunities have gone from Taiwan to China because, say Merck, you know, um, even GM, you name it, the big American companies, they set up in—in China instead of Taiwan. So that, um, the jobs—the high pay jobs, better jobs are in China. So a lot of Taiwanese, uh, kids—or young—I shouldn't say kids. I'm not a kid anymore. But the, uh—the Taiwanese, uh, will—will work in, um, Mainland China.

Um, I think that, um, there are a lot of, uh—how should I say that? There are a lot of Amer—uh, Chinese guy want to marry—marry Taiwanese women 'cause they think they're—they're nicer. [laughs] In terms of, you know, like they're jut more relaxed and more, um, westernized, and perhaps, really just more laid back.

CW: That's interesting. So then how has that shaped the dating—like what is the dating culture like in Taiwan without—?

WT: And how is it different from America would you say?

DL: I don't think there, uh, any difference in Taiwan and America, other than the fact that I think that it may be—this is another interesting thing. Um, Taiwan is really, really westernized. Um, but then, you have the people like my uncle who came here, um, in the 60s and 70s. They're like, um—they're in a time capsule of their own. They keep their kids, you know, like tightly controlled. You know, um, they're not allowed to date any Caucasians, and they have to learn Chinese as a first language, and they're actually celebrating Chinese New Year every year.

And like, um—and my cousin, which is in their 40s—and 30s and 40s, our age, they rebel like hell. You know, like, “What the hell is this?” You know, um, [laughing] “I’m American. I’m—you know, like, uh, you know, who—who speaks Chinese, seriously? Why do I have to learn this?” And so they—they all married—married non-Chinese. [laughs] Let me tell you, this is rebellious as hell, you know. Um, and my—my uncle’s like, [pointing her fingers in different directions] “I’m not going to your wedding. I’m not going to your wedding. I’m not—” You know? And it’s really ridiculous.

[0:35:16]

And, my—the—you know, I’m kinda okay. I—I tell my daughter, you know, “You can date anybody. You know, just date girl—I mean, don’t date girls. [CW laughs] Date boys. And—and—and—and—and—and don’t date aliens, okay? If there’s—there’re aliens around, you know. I don’t know, you know, what planet you’re going to.” You—you get the picture. So, you know, I’m more laid back and—and—and my view is probably, um, more similar to the contemporary Taiwanese.

But, I want my daughter to—to, um, still sort of like, don’t go too wild. Um, you know, you’re allowed to date, but you have to bring your boyfriend home. And, um, don’t date anybody that you’re embarrassed to—to show your—and don’t do this, like, one night stand. You know? You—you get the picture.

Whereas in Taiwan, they’re going the extreme, in that they’re—they’re—think that they’re more westernized. So they don’t have an idea of—that the kind of wester—westernized, um, society is not represented fairly, you know, Hollywood pictures. Get it? So, in other words, they’re seeing all this very strange behavior in—in the movies and they imitates it and—thinking that’s American. And it’s very, very different from what the true America. So when I bring my daughter back to Taiwan, you know, then there’s the—the—again, there’s discrepancy. But I think that, um—many ways I think my daughter is more representative of what true American is than what the Asian countries’ perce—uh, perception of what American is. So that there is a difference.

And, um, in terms of, uh ... Tell you this very funny story. Fashion. Um, in America, yeah, there—you have this fashion. You know. Uh, you—you have the greatest fashion talents! No kidding, you know! Go look at New York! Right? Fashion week! But most people don’t wear funny things. We wear functional things. [WT laughs] So, when—when we go back to Taiwan, then people will say, “Oh, they’re from America ‘cause they—they—they look *so dull*. Their clothes are *so ugly*.” [laughs] Get it? Um, it—it’s so—for us, it’s like, “Why you wear *so weird*?” You know, you don’t look right. [laughs] But, again, that’s because—um, again their idea of, uh, Western country is purely from Internet and purely from movies and TVs, and so it’s very strange.

CW: That’s really interesting. I never—I mean, we didn’t have any questions on the fashion aspect. But that’s—that’s really interesting actually. I would have never thought of that—that kind of influence.

DL: Yeah, I can tell you this. If I go to Shanghai, you know—

CW: Yeah.

DL: I will be the least dressed pedestrian. [laughs] I'm *pudong* [Chinese for "common"] Okay?

CW: Yeah.

DL: And I would see these beautiful women. They're dressed just beautifully. And I would just think, "Oh she must from—she must be from New York or Paris." And then—until they open their mouth. I said, "Oh, you're from here." [all laugh]

CW: [overlapping] Shanghainese.

DL: You never left this country. You know, um, yeah.

CW: That is really interesting

WT: Yeah, but it seemed like a lot of Am—um, I mean, Taiwanese teenagers, they still really like—like for example Hollister and Abercrombie. Like for example, my cousin would be like, "Can you bring me back some like—

DL: [overlapping] Yes.

WT: [overlapping] "—Hollister and Abercrombie." So why are they still like so obsessed with ...

CW: [overlapping] Those brands.

DL: Do they think that is like representative of Western fashion?

DL: Again, remember I said that when you're not westernized enough, you want to be westernized enough right?

CW: [overlapping] Super Western.

DL: When you are, um—when you're living in a Western country for years, you want to retain your heritage. So, um, for—for them, that's their way of showing that the—the world—worldliness is having all this, uh, brand name fashion statement, I guess, in a way. Um, for us, probably not so. Well, I guess we have a foreign address, so we don't [laughs]—we don't need to wear Abercrombie and Fitch or whatever, you know. So, I don't know.

CW: Interesting. So does your daughter have a strong sense of like her Taiwanese-ness? [overlapping] [indistinguishable] Like how does that?

DL: Oh, that was a really funny story. My daughter was born in New York City, and we moved here in '08. And so, about a month ago—no, one summer ago—she goes "Oh, I'm a Texan now." I say, "What

do you mean? What?” “I have been in, uh, Texas one extra day than I’ve been in New York, so I’m no—I’m no longer a New Yorker; I’m a Texan.” I was like, “Wow,” seriously. You know like—I said, “I think that—I—I think—I think you’re more—I—Laura, come on. I think—I think you’re—you’re—you’re Taiwanese-American.” Come on, you know, like. She said, “Well, I’m not Taiwanese.” I said, “Well, but your parents are from Taiwan.” Um, “Mm-mm, I’m not Taiwanese.” Like, “No. I’m not Taiwanese. I was not born there, and I’ve never lived there, so I’m not Taiwanese.”

[0:40:30]

I said, “Well, fair enough, but your parents are from there.” And then, she goes, “Well, but Daddy’s mom is from China, and Daddy’s—Daddy’s dad is from China. But he—he didn’t call himself Chinese. He called himself Taiwanese. What’s wrong with that? So therefore, I’m Texan.” I said, “Well, the logic kinda makes sense.” ‘Cause my husband always identified himself as Taiwanese, even though his parents are from Mainland China. Um, so I don’t see any reason why my daughter couldn’t, you know, identify herself as Texan, then I guess even New Yorkers, or Chinese-American, and so forth.

And—and I was telling my husband. I said, “You know what? That’s the strength of America. You know, you—you can be anybody you want to be. You know, if you identify yourself as Texans, then you can be Texans. Nobody’s going to say “No.” Whereas, um, in Asian countries, maybe not. Um, like, you know, I’ve known Chinese who live in—in, uh, Japan for 5—50, 60 years and marry a Japanese. And they still—they’re not—they’re not allowed to be called a Japanese citizens. They don’t have the citizenship, stuff like that. So, there—that to me is not an open society. Whereas, uh, I think America is, you know, you know, immigrant society. So, you—you—you—you want to be a Texan, you can be a Texan. [phone vibrates]

CW: Sorry.

DL: Okay.

CW: [overlapping] Yeah, I think that’s very true.

DL: [overlapping] So does that answer your question?

CW: Yeah.

DL: Okay. [laughs]

WT: So what was the biggest culture shock for you coming to America?

DL: What is the biggest culture shock? Actually, you have to re—yeah, I was 17, okay? So, um, I have to think. [laughs] It’s a while ago. I was 17 years old, the biggest shock. Um, you’re gonna think this is funny. [recorder moved] I think the biggest shock I have was that—the fact that, um, you can change your major in college. In other words—or you—you can even change jobs. To me, that’s a

culture shock. Or that, um, you can actually drive. [laughs]

Does it make sense to you? Um, I think in Taiwan, in those, uh—in those years, um, you basically had to decide if you're gonna be a science major or a humanity major by the time you're 15, basically, a second year, sophomore year in high school. And you—you—you differentiate very early. If you want to change your major in college, you—probably you have to be held back one year. And I—I think most parents will not, um, allow you to do that because they would think that you're a failure or that they—they won't pay an extra year of tuition—or most of them cannot.

Um—I remember coming here, uh, applying for college, and, they say, “Uh, why don't you—you know, just put any major down! But you can change it, you know, next month if you want to.” I said, “Huh? What?” I mean I don't have to—as a matter of fact he said, “Oh, you don't have to—you don't have put down your majors.” “*What?* [WT laugh] Are you kidding me? Seriously? Can you go to college without a major?” Um, that was a big culture shock.

And I think the second culture shock I had was, like, um—I'm going to say this, but it's going to sound very, very stupid—is that, um, there's, um, uh ... You know, okay. There's, uh, this divorce. You know, like your mom and dad divorce, and then your mom and dad marry somebody else, and you have sister and brother who's only half sister and brother. And so, to me, that was a culture shock too. I said, “Well, I haven't heard of like you—you have the same family with different sets of siblings or stepsisters, and—and you eat at the same table, like nobody will kill each other?” [laughs] In other words, um—that kind of represent, in many ways it's a freedom for women. I didn't realize it at the time.

Because in Asia, if a woman is divorced, either by choice or been divorced by her husband, she was gonna have a very hard time, um, to find another, uh, marriage, um, especially having kids. So it wasn't an equal society, um, in Taiwan at the time. Okay? Divorce is unheard of. You know, men have second families, probably, but, um, you know, illegally. But, um, no woman will voluntarily divorce a husband, um, unless he's in jail or he was in jail. And—and therefore, um, there's certain security of being married, uh, whether you're happy or not.

[0:45:08]

When I first came here, realized, you know, the women were so proud. “Oh, this is my husband. This is my stepdaughter, stepson.” And I was like, “You tolerate that?” You know, like you can have that? And—and that's a big culture shock for me too, as a 17 year old, knowing that, um, you know, you know, there's a lot of unhappy—unhappily married uncles and aunts [laughs] who stay in the marriage because, you know, you—for your children's sake, and then—and—and somebody who's so unfortunate have a stepbrother or stepsister. “Oh, something wrong with her. She's so sad!” And uh-uh, none of that, uh, in America. And then—and—and now as I'm little older I realize that it was really, um, a freedom, you know, for—for—I think for women.

CW: That's really interesting. Well I guess since we're talking about marriage, how did you meet your husband? [overlapping] Or?

DL: [overlapping] Uh-oh. [all laugh] Uh, you know, the funny story, uh, is that, um, we both were born in the same city, and I grew up basically 15 miles or less away from each other in two different

cities. Um, I first heard of my husband when I was 14, and he was 19 years old. And, um, he was the hotshot, um, of the violinist. He was world famous at the time, and he went back to Taiwan. He basically—I—I told my daughter, you know, he was the One Direction of our generation. [CW and WT laugh] You know, every classmate of mine had a crush on him. I didn't have a crush on him because my best friend had a crush on him, so, you know, I had to be supportive.

CW: The loyalty.

DL: So, yeah, yeah. She already claimed him first, so I was like, "Okay, he's yours" you know, um. So—but she did drag me to hear his first performance in Taiwan in 1979, I believe. It was really a long time ago. Um, but it wasn't until, uh, 1993 when I met him. So it—it really is, you know—and by then, you know, he—he went through a bunch of girlfriends, and I graduated from med school and you know. [laughs] We're all grown up, [laughs] none of this, you know, teenage crush things. And, um, he—he—he came to Atlanta, Georgia, uh, for a concert and I was a medical student at Emory University at the time. Um, so, um, my best friend, or, one of my best friends, uh, was the page-turner for the pianist. Um, she was a piano major herself. And I still remember it was, uh, October 25th. I remember that day because—

WT and CW: Awwww

DL: It's really very cute because I was—that day—it was today?

WT and CW: Yeah!

DL: Oh my god! Oh, yeah it was today! [CW laughs] Oh my gosh, uh, many years ago.

CW: [overlapping] That's cute!

DL: So I remember that—it was—so vividly. Um, my friend got a—a very timely, timely flu. She had a fever—

CW: [laughs] Timely.

DL: —of 103, uh, uh, exactly like less than 48 hours prior to the concert. So she couldn't turn the pages, so—and it happened to be a long weekend, like a midterm weekend or something. So the, uh—all the students were gone except the poor medical students, right? I mean they were stuck there forever! [CW and WT laugh] So I was one of the—I was the only one who was really around, and I was off that day, so I—I didn't have to take off. And, so I was drafted [WT coughs] to turn pages, uh, for my husband's pianist.

And because I was so nervous—I play piano, but I don't play that well, and, um—and this is not exactly a piano recital, so the pieces were violin pieces. So I was very, very nervous. So I said, "You know what? When you rehearse, can I come and practice?" First of all, they probably never hear of anybo—page turner need rehearsal, okay? So I'm only one who actually has to rehearse page

turning.

So I did. I went there. And, um, and then—then there was like two and three hours between the rehearsal in the afternoon and the performance, which is at 7:30 at night. So, I—it was, you know—it was too far to go back home, and there was nothing to do in the concert hall. And, um, they were just sitting in the back stage, and—and so I was sitting there and looking at the drinks [laughs] and—and, you know, [laughs] you know, eating the food. And [indistinguishable several words].

[0:49:43]

And so, finally, you know, this guy just keeps looking at me, just keeping looking at me. And, you know, finally, he—you know, was like I knew who he was! But I was so nervous. I was like, “I’m not talking to him.” [WT laughs] And then also because I thought he was either—no, I thought he was married ‘cause I cannot imagine a guy who’s in his 30s and not married, you know, and being famous. So I kinda assumed he was married. So I was like, “Okay, I’m staying away. You know, this is, uh, my best friend’s teenage idol. This—he’s a married man.” Like I just like don’t get too close. You know? Um, but—but then he was bored so he was talking, and, you know. And we had, you know, a few talk and And, um, you know, he asked me what I was doing. I said I was medical student and everything and then—and then the pianist—so, you know, there was three people. There’s not just two. So we were, you know, having a conversation, you know, relaxed conversation.

And then the concert came, um, and, um, there were a lot of, uh—lot of friends, um, in the audience. I was—I had a ticket, all right? You know, I mean [CW laughs] I was supposed to be in the audience. And—and I—I met—and I knew a lot of, uh, uh, uh, doctors who were sitting in the audience. Um, I guess from a doctors’ orchestra [laughs]. They were quite a few of ‘em! They were knida amateur musicians themselves, and so I knew a few of them, professors there as well.

And so there was a reception after the concert. And, um, long story short, so he probably, you know, asked around like, “Who’s this girl? Does she have a boyfriend?” And so—so—so he found out I was single and available, so he decided he wanted to ask me out.

But, um, and this is a very funny story. So I was ready to go home and, um, one of the professors was hosting a dinner. And he was like “Oh no, you’re—you’re invited. You’re—you’re—you were one of the performers.” I said, “I wasn’t a performer. I was a page turner.” [all laugh] Oh my god! What is this? And then, so, “No, no, but, you’re invited” I was like, “But it’s 10:30 at night! I—I have class tomorrow morning at 8.” “Oh no no! You know, it won’t take long.”

So I—so I—because of that, I was the—the last one to arrive at dinner. There were dinner about twenty and a long table. And there were three seats left. It was a long table, right in the middle, [gesturing two seats across from one another] this and this and one at the sort of the end. And so I kinda figured I’m not gonna take the one at the end because this is for the pianist and the violinist, right? I mean seriously! So I was sitting there and—and the pianist was just basically sit there and said, “Oh, this is my seat.” I was like “Huh?” The—the—you guys, the—the—“You know, you’re [indistinguishable]” “Uh-uh, that’s my seat.”

And—and so—so I had no choice! So I was sitting right across the table from my husband, or to be.

CW: [overlapping] Aww.

DL: And that was the very first time—first day we met. And, uh, this is a true story. It was 10:30. I mean, seriously wasn't hungry, and there was Chinese food coming in and—and, you know—and he keep giving me food, keep feeding me food. I'm from a—uh, I'm from a middle class family. We do not leave food in our plate. I mean, that's a big nono. If—if—if you leave a—a grain of rice in your bowl, you're going to wash dishes for like, two weeks, right? So—so this guy keep giving me food, I have to eat it because it's just the way I am. And so I ate so much. I—I—I was just like about to get sick.

And—and somehow, he got a hold of my phone number. And he called me that night! And, of course, you know, he call me and—and I was like, "What?" So he said [WT coughs]—I think this is what he said, if I quote it correctly, "Doctor, doctor, my head hurt." I think it's probably a quote from, uh, uh, the *Oz*, right? *Wizard of Oz*. I think one of those. And of course I have no sense of humor. I—I said, "Oh, you have meningitis." You know, hang up. [all laugh]

And, oh, of course, that was the beginning of—then we met a month later, you know. I don't he keep calling me, so I finally said, "Okay, you know, maybe you're—maybe you're serious" But that's—that's the day we met, and that's the day I diagnosed him with meningitis. And that's the day he decided he wanted to marry me because he said that, "I've never seen a woman eat so much. [CW and WT laugh]" I said—he said, "I can't—I just cannot date any—anybody who only eats salad and is constantly on diet." And—and I was like so, "You marry me because I eat a lot? I have a good appetite?" Yeah. [CW and WT laughing]

But I—I—but that's besides that. I think that the reason why we—we marry was because we have a similar, um, background. We both, uh, left Taiwan as a teenager. We both, um, sort of you know, came to America and make our own—um, reinvented ourselves. Um, he had to do it in—in a, uh—even harder, um—under much harder circumstance. His father died when he was 11. So—and—and being a musician in Taiwan, there's no music school! [laughs]

[0:55:06]

So he had to leave the country. So he—he went to Australia when he was 11 and then came to, uh, United States, New York City at the age of 15, all by himself, without a family. So he really had a tougher time. And, um, he—every bit of success, uh, he had, he basically, uh, had earned it, in a very early age.

I, at the same time, uh, had similar, uh, experience. I came here as a 17 year old. My brother was 15—no 14 and 11 or something. My parents didn't speak English, so we basically had to grow up overnight. I was a translator overnight. And my parents, uh, didn't drive, so I had to drive them around and then my brothers around. So, you know, we kind of had to—all of a sudden become a adult at a very young age, um, which is the kind of experience that, as I said, my daughters—my daughter and my niece and nephews may not have because they're so pampered. Like I'm—I'm not gonna rely on my—my—my, um, daughter right now, um, because mommy doesn't speak English, or mommy doesn't know how to open an account in the bank. Um, mommy doesn't know how to drive. Um, that kind of situation will make, uh, a young person grow up very fast.

And so I really—I can identify with my husband because of my—again, my background, um, similar background and similar experience in America. Um, if I stayed in Taiwan I will always be

somebody's daughter 'cause my father worked in a hospital, uh, as a—he represent the hospital as a, uh, attorney. And, um, whenever I go home I would be so-and-so's daughter, always. Even when I went home as an intern—uh, externship, um, they didn't call me Doctor So-and-so. They called me so-and-so's daughter, even though I was already a MD, but that's just the way it is. Whereas here, uh, uh, every bit. I—you know, I don't have any legacy. Every bit of success that I have, I have earned it myself. And now, that kind of opportunity is—is golden. I think that kind of opportunity makes a person, and, um, I was very lucky to have that.

CW: Definitely. So how did you decide to become an MD?

DL: Oh, that's actually by, uh, elimination. [laughs] Again, you know, I came here, uh, as a senior in high school. Um, purely, um, my, um—my parents', uh, ignorance, I think. There's such a thing as applying for college. My parents maybe (?) say, "Oh, well, you know, if you can go to college in Taiwan, you probably can go to any college in America." Not, right?

And, secondly, um, I didn't speak English. My second language was actually German 'cause I like, um—I like music, so I wanted to speak the language that Beethoven spoke. Right?

CW: The big composers. Yeah.

DL: So ... English? Yeah, yeah, I have some, but I, you know, really didn't speak English that well. So I first came here, um, that was the first time I heard there was SAT. And—and so my—my brother said, "Well, you have to take SAT." Uh, I said, "What's that?" "Oh that's like the college entrance examination." I said, "Wait a minute! My parents told me we moved here so I don't have to take the college entrance examination." That was a big deal in Taiwan. Um, so, you know, given once a year, you make it or you die kind of thing.

Um, so I was like [sighs], "Uh, what do you do?" "Oh, there's—don't worry. There's only English and Math. And if you write your name down, you get 200." That's what my brother told me, [laughing] the 14 year old. I said, "Really?" "Yeah! And math, everybody from Taiwan is good at math, so you'll get 800." "Really?" And so, "So that'll make 1000." "Yeah?" "Yeah, 1000's enough to go to—" You know, in those d—no, no, no. It's a very—this is 30 years ago. This is a long time ago with the—the—

CW: —out of 1600?

WT: It's out of 1600?

DL: It's out of a 1600. So if you make a 1000, that's a minimum requirement for [laughing] going to a state college. Okay, so my brother, basically—"You still (?) make a 1000 and then he—and then we'll deal with that later." Okay? So [WT coughs] I was like, "Are you—you're just telling me that I'm going there and do all math correctly, and then write down my name in English, and put 'B' on *everything* in English, and I can somehow manage?" He said, "Yeah." And so, I said, "Okay." [recorder moves].

So I did that. [laughs] More or less. I mean, there were a few English I know, okay? I mean,

I'm not exactly dumb. After a year, you know, you learn *something*. But—but I think most of 'em really were B. And—and—and that's exactly what I did. I think I got—I swear to God, I got 16—uh, 1062. I still remember this. So I—I got 62 out of the 800 English I suppose. [laughs] Um, but then—then I—with that I went to apply, um, college.

[1:00:06]

But I play piano, so—I kind of said, “Oh shoot, you know, like let me—let me—let me see. You can, I can get a piano major first.” At least I could go to college right? So I—I—I got a high school diploma, equivalent of a piano high school diploma. So I—I studied that and I applied, got a scholarship at the University of Georgia, in—major in Piano. So—so I was happy.

Then, with the 16—1062, whatever [all laugh] the SAT score. Then I went to apply for Georgia Tech. And the reason why I applied for Georgia Tech because the tuition was cheaper. And, um, it was a technical school, and it's right next door to my house basically. And my mom says, “Oh, you can stay at home and you—we don't have to pay your room and board.” And—and then (?) my brother goes, “All the smart guys go to Georgia Tech. Like all the smart guys, get it? Like if you're smart, you go to Georgia Tech. You're dumb, you go to UGA.” That's not the case, but that's what he said. From a 14 year old. All right. So I said, “Okay.”

So I applied for, uh, Georgia Tech. I went there, and, um, I went to a very, very good high school in Taiwan, so there were a lot of graduate students who also went to that—that high school. So, when I went there, they—they kind of look at my grades from high school in Taiwan and look at my score, then realized that I just came here, um, basically, uh, 14 months prior to my, uh, [sniffs] admission to the university.

They said, “Well, okay, if—if you take TOEFL, if you [laughs] can pass that TOEFL thing, we won't count your 262 English.” [laughs] And I had to take the remedial English course if I passed that, so I—I did that. Did the TOEFL. I did the English. And—and I—somehow I managed to, uh—to, uh—to stay in that school.

But because it was a technology school, and, um, you know, um, all the smart kids will go to, um—a choice of chemical engineer, electrical engineer, and mechanical engineer, and [CW laughs] the rest is like whatever, okay? [laughs] Or aerospace (?) engineering (?). I don't—I don't know. I remember this is—have to remember this is a 14 year old boy's version of what is cool, all right? It's—it's—had nothing to do with the reality. Okay? And I was 17 year old; I have absolutely no idea what's going on. [CW laughs]

So, um—so I—so I said, “Okay.” So I majored in chemical engineer because quote, quote that was the toughest one. So I said, “You know. Let's go for the tough one.” Right? Um, I think I stayed in chemical engineer for about a year and a half, until I have to, uh, I guess—first of all, [laughing] I have to pass—have to pass the engineering course, which I hated it. And then secondly, um, I was not allowed to wear skirt or high heels when I go to the, uh—the plants to do some kind of experiment, or the field trip. And I love my heels 'cause I'm short. So I love my heels. I love my skirt. I was like, “I—I have to wear my—I have to wear my hair with a hard hat? And I [laughs]—I cannot wear a skirt?” [laughs] So, I think engineering's out of question.

So, so, then that left with me chemistry. [laughs] I was like chemical engineering to chemistry. So I went to Chemistry and—and—and then there's organic chemistry. There's, you know, physical

chemistry, you know. And, the bottom line, it's okay. I was like [sighs] And chemistry is a little dry almost on the side for me, I mean, I like it. Mostly, you know, it's minimum English, so, you know, formulas, easy.

Um, so I—by then, I—I kind of more or less realized I'm a people kind of person. I like to—to talk to people, and I'm—you know, I wish I would (?) be a lawyer like my dad, you know, argue, you know, my component—opponent to death I guess, you know, whatever. But, um, at that time, I thought the—the best combination for my interest in people and my two years of hard work in chemistry would be premed. So—so I, you know, switched to premed, um, in the second year—uh, second semester of second year in college. And somehow managed to, uh, graduate and got into medical school. I don't know how it happened, but it did, so—so, here we are.

CW: Cool, very cool.

DL: Yeah I was not—it was really by elimination. All the humanity—all the—anything you had to do with English was out of the question, so I get it. Not with a SAT of 262, right? I was like [sound effects] out. [WT laughs] So, you know, basically science. And engineering [sound effect]. Then, it—it really is just by process of elimination.

But I'm happy, um, that, um, I got a really solid education here, and also I think, um, there's so many applications in medicine. Um, I know a lot of people, um, not only, um, good in medicine, but—but because of the background they can—you know, we interpret it, the life experience differently. We have, you know, contact with, uh, patients in different situations and that kind of, you know, enrich our lives in many other ways also.

[1:05:07]

CW: Interesting. So how do you think it's been kinda being a minority, I guess, not so much now, but in the past in the medical field?

DL: Well, yes, good and—and—and scary. Okay, the good part is I remember when I was, uh, interviewing, um, again this is 1980, uh—1987, okay, um, interviewing for medical school. Um, one of the interviewer was a cardiologist. I mean she was one of the earliest graduate from Emory University. She was smoking cigarettes. She had never been married. And she take a look at me, you know, [low] and was like, “You want to be a doctor.” Yeah. Cardiologist smoking, okay? Get it? And—and, uh, I was like, “mm-hmm.” I (?) said, “You think you're tough, huh?” I said, “Mm-hmm” [all laugh] And—and say, “You ready for all the sacrifices?” I was like, “I don't have any boyfriend. Yeah, uh-huh.” [all laugh] And this was—and—and I was probably one—there were 110—there were 110, uh, students in that class. Um, I think there were less than 20 girls, um, at the time.

There were one Chinese girl. That was me. There was one, um, Japanese girl. Um, and there were 8 other girls I guess. [DL laughs] And there were some minorities, but not too many. Um, we didn't have, uh, any saying of like, um—we have to be—we have to prove ourselves. Uh, we had to be tougher than the men. Um, there's not much support. Like we—we didn't feel like we can, um, band together, then form a girls—and then—and—and still be taken seriously. So—and—and our role models were like she—or, she-men. I guess. I don't know what you call them. [DL laughs]

[indistinguishable] scare the heck out of me.

So none of us feel, uh, secure enough. Swear to God, none of us feel secure enough. We—we're just like, "Okay. Men take calls; we take calls. You know, men sleep in the room; you know, we sleep in the room." Like, we're not gonna ask for a girls room, right? Because it's whatever. We just do it.

Um, now that they're 50-50. They're—they're half and half. When I, um, went back home—uh, went back home? I went back to Emory for 20th, uh, anniversary, I realized that there were just as many girls, um, in the—the medical school class, and then—and boys. And—and girls have so much more support, which is, um—is wonderful, um, but at the same time, it could be scary. I think that, um, the scary part is that, um—it's very funny. The scary part is that you have so many women, and so therefore, um, you have so much more competition. Get it?

It's, um—it's like, for example, if I—if I wanted to take some time off, and the guy probably gonna say, "Well, she's gonna take some time off? What are you going to do with her?" Okay, so she—she would take off 'cause she's pregnant. She's—she's having a baby. She's gonna take off. Like what are you gonna do, right? But now, like if I said, "I'm gonna take some time off," I know that I'll be replaced. So that's the scary part, like, um, for you for example, you—you probably would feel like you—you—you—you don't—you—you—you feel like the pressure is not coming from men, but the pressure will become from girls.

CW: Yeah, and from yourself, too.

DL: From yourself.

CW: Hmm. That is very interesting.

DL: Right?

CW: Yeah, no that's true. That definitely is true. Hmm. Okay. Well let's see. ... Oh, what's the food like in Taiwan—

DL: [overlapping] In Taiwan?

CW: —versus America?

DL: Okay. Okay. [CW laughs] This is very interesting, all right? I think the food capital—there are—there are few food capitals in the world: um, Paris, New York, perhaps, perhaps, uh, Tokyo, perhaps, and definitely Hong Kong, Taiwan—Taipei. All right? That- these are the food capitals. You cannot have good food in London. Okay? Um, you cannot really have good food in Los Angeles either, you know? And Houston, you can—yeah, you can have certain good food, like Tex Mex, maybe Vietnamese. But, in terms of food capital, means you have to have the best of *every* types of food in the world that you—you become a food capital. And the food capital, I would—not even Shanghai, okay? Not even Beijing.

CW: [overlapping] Yeah, I was gonna ask ...

DL: None. They—they don't, okay? The true food capital, seriously, Taipei is one of them. Okay. It's amazing, okay? Everything you can think of it's—it's—it's just there. You know, uh, uh, Italian, forget it. You know, like, you know, Spanish, uh, French, um—

WT: Indian

[1:10:28]

DL: Indian. Uh, even—they even have Mexican food in Taiwan. And, um, um—Taiwanese—Chinese food, the best. Japa—best Japanese food, and, you know, even, uh, Hong Kongnese, you know, or Cantonese food. Um, they're better in Taiwan than in Hong Kong. So—so the only place I can think of is better than Taiwan is probably Paris and New York, in that they just—they just have more. It's bigger city. It have more, uh, talents there as well. And—and, um, because of weather, um, so a certain type of food is—taste better [laughs] in that kind of environment, food—or, weather. Um, Taiwan is very unique in that.

And took me a long, long time to realize why Taiwan has such a wonderful food tradition. I think, again, has to do with the fact that, you know, 1949, all the best cook fled, uh, China, and then came to Taiwan. Um, well—well, they—they're clients, the rich people were there, so, you know, they come here and open the restaurants and serve them. And, um—and that kind of, uh, has started a good tradition.

And secondly, and most important is that, uh, Taiwan is a beautiful green island, and, um, produce comes easy. It's almost like Costa Rica. You know, so, you put—put something down and then three months later you have the best food: fruits, vegetables. You can imagine. It's how beautiful that is. And so, you have extremely fresh food. So the—the—the—the—the ingredients are fresh, and the tradition is there. You—then just have the wonderful—and then you have the money. You have the clients who has the—the taste for the type of food. So it's a combination. It's really, you know The—the—the cook—the—the chef from mainland China usually come to Taiwan to learn how to cook. And then the best restaurants in, uh, Shanghai and Beijing are the chefs from Taiwan, so that just tell you—it's—it's just the tradition.

Um, have that said, sometimes I think the best Chinese food could be found in New York. It just, you know, because you—not only you have the technique, the Chinese technique, you also are exposed to other cultures. So it's a fusion. So you—it's not just traditional. If you [indistinguishable]—you're talking about traditional way of cooking and fresh food and everything, Taiwan, yeah, great. But if you're looking for, um, some kind of new idea, some kind of a new way of mixing different types of cuisine, types of cooking ingredients together, then I think New York is actually better than Taiwan. Okay.

But then I have the best Italian restaurant I have recently, I have, actually, in Taiwan. And so—and then, I was—my—my husband and I, we just like couldn't believe how delicious the Italian food was. And so we went to the kitchen and talked to the, um—the chef, and said, “You must have learned, like, you know—you must have apprenticed in Europe or something.” The guy said, “No, my master is from Japan.” So it was a Japanese chef who trained a Taiwanese guy who never left Taiwan and made

the best Italian food that Jimmy and I had for a long time. Globalization.

CW: Yeah, it made me really hungry too. [All laugh] That sounds awesome. [All laugh]

WT: And like even—it was—I heard that it's not only like chefs who come to Taiwan to learn, but like even like a lot of the customer service? Like I know like Taiwan has like really perfected it in a way, and it's just like—I think it really adds to like why it's such a big food capital?

DL: [overlapping] Meh. Okay. Taiwan's, uh, the—the—you called it, uh—what do you call those? Uh, service indu—? Nah. The—what do you call this? Uh, hospitality industry? [quietly] I guess, whatever. [laughs; normal volume] All right. Taiwan has a very strong influence and tradition from Japan. Okay. You know how Japanese are very neat and everything and very polite? So Taiwanese have that, okay? They may not have the service tradition like, um, I would say, Thailand or Philippine. 'Cause they're—they're really good. You know, they're—they make the best servants in the world. [laughs] You know, they kinda look—before you sit down, your towel's in your swimming pool chair, you know. And—you know, you know, what I'm talking about there. They're jus—they're—it's ingrained in them.

[1:15:07]

And Taiwan may not have that, but what Taiwan has is, uh, uh, uh, uh, professional, uh, organization, and, um, eyes to detail, and also, um, the very polite, um, um, the Japanese way of, um, serving, okay? Um, which is different from, again, the Philippines or Thailand, okay? I think they're even better, but in a very strange way, if you know what I'm talking about. Sort of like, you're the—you're the royal; we're the servants. Like total—Japan—Japanese is not—Japanese is more even. Like, your servants and service more even. Taiwan has that, okay?

Um, Taiwan has the—the—the cooking, the—the tradition. Taiwan has the—the—perfected the infrastructure of having to—to, you know, make the restaurant clean and, uh, efficient, and make a hotel clean and efficient. They have the history of ser—of service in a very, um, orderly way. Um, China doesn't have that.

I can tell you this, um, airplane experience. For example, there's EVA Airline from Taiwan, and there's, uh, perhaps, uh, AirChina from China. Um, totally different, um, animals. You go to—you go to EVA Airline, the stewards, even though they wear the very ugly green, they'll be standing there, and they would, you know, do this, you know, 90 degree bow, like Japanese women, very submissive and, you know, makes you—I mean, I—I'm Americanized. I don't have to have a beautiful woman, you know, do a 90 degree bow for me to make me feel better. But, I don't mind it. [WT coughs] Um, but then, you know, when we sit down, they—they give you the menu, but they would say, you know, "Would you like to have breakfast or lunch?" You know, they'll ask you. And so forth.

China Airline. Uh-uh. You go in there—they—first of all, their—their voice is like octave too high. And then, secondly, um, they're treating me like army recruit. It's like, "Do you want to eat?" [WT laughs] Like, uh, like "Huh?" Like, you don't have to yell at me. Right? It's really weird. You have that experience? It—they're frightening. Don't you feel like you're—you're the army recruit, right? And it's—it's like—

CW: It's very aggressive. It's like, "We're serving breakfast now. Like here's your food." It's like, "Whoa."

DL: [overlapping] Uh-huh, uh-huh. It's—it's just—it—it makes me feel like, "Oh my gosh! Why am I paying this money and sitting here and being tortured, you know, like electric chair or some sort. So.

CW: [laughs] So how did you guys move from New York to Texas? Okay so you went—you guys came to Georgia.

DL: I moved—I—I moved to Georgia because my uncle, who lived to Georgia for many years, and then, um, my mom's brother. So when we moved to United States, then, you know, that was a pretty natural, obvious choice for us. And I met my husband when I was a medical student, actually, first year intern, in the transition. And, um, then we dated for two years and then we got—after that, I got married, um, I moved to New York City. I worked in Cornell Presbyterian, hmm, hospital until 2008. And my husband, um, got a professorship here in Rice University, so here we are.

CW: Very cool

DL: And I still commute. So I still, um, my husband—I still have position in New York, in Manhattan. I—you know, my mother-in-law still lives there. So she's over 85 and, you know, we want to kinda keep an eye on her. And, uh, my—my husband still teaches at the Juilliard School. So we still are New Yorker in many ways. And both. That's why, uh, it was very cute when my daughter said that she's a Texan. And then we told her that, "Okay, your parents are New Yorkers, but you can be Texan." You know? [laughs] But we're—we're, you know, have the best of both worlds.

CW: Very cool.

WT: So where is your favorite place to live?

DL: You know, it's a funny story. Um, or question. Is it just regarding the funny story I'm gonna tell you. And so, I only have one daughter, and so—and then she's about to go to college in four years. Okay, great. So I thought, "Crap. You know, like, what am I going to do? You know, if I don't have to live in Houston, where do I want to live?" And it may not be the same as what's your favorite city, right? Is that your question?

WT: Or like what was your favorite place to live?

CW: [overlapping] Favorite place to live.

WT: Place to live, uh-huh.

[1:20:07]

DL: Um, I think I would be—that would be kind of like—it would be what—right now, would be New York City. In other words, I’ve lived there. Even though I want to say San Francisco, but I’ve never lived in San Francisco. You see? There’s a difference. You can have ideas, “Oh, San Francisco would be my favorite place to live.” But, I’ve never lived there. So, even if—if I have lived there, then I might not like it, okay?

I never thought it was gonna like New York City. As a matter of fact, when I was applying for medical school, I applied *every* single school [indistinguishable] from *Maine* to Florida, all on the East Coast—you know, skip a few of course—except New York. ‘Cause I went to New York City, uh, with my godparents. Um, my godfather graduated from, uh, Columbia University, so he was the one in charge of taking me to see the Big Apple.

And—and—and—and I still remember my mo—my godmother and I were walking—you know, following him. And we’re in Times Square and I saw a huge rat. I said (?) bigger, bigger, than a rabbit. And it was right in the—it was in the 80s (?)—right in the middle. And—and I was thinking, “Okay, I’m walking this way. The rat’s walking this way. One of had to move.” [WT laughs] And, I was actually thinking, “When is that rat gonna move?” ‘Cause I’m a human. Um, like, until very, very, very last second I moved. I bo—uh, I just budged (?). The—the—the rat go that way. And—and so I—I—I talked to my godmother, who goes, “I—I—I think even the rat in New York City can beat me.” You know, like, I’m not so sure if I can survive here. So—so—so I skip all the NYU, Albert Einstein, United, every hospital in the—medical school area. It was like, I’m not so sure if I can survive, so I—I—I was afraid of New York City.

And, um—and in 90—95 when I, uh, first moved to New York City, uh, I work in New York Hospital. Um, right now, it’s called New York Presbyterian Hospital and affiliated with Cornell. And I still remember the first night, I—I—I was taking, you know—be—I had my beeper. I was taking calls. And—and—and I was calling. I said, “You know, this is Dr. Ho. Um, like, I was paged.” And [indistinguishable], “What do you want.” It’s like, “Uh, I was paged.” You know? [all laugh] Whereas—I was like—24 hours prior to that call I was in Emory University. I was calling. I was dictating, and, uh—and I turned my beeper. And so I called, you know, [overlapping] services, said, “Oh, this is Dr. Ho. This is my last day here. I’m moving to New York City tomorrow.” And—and—and they had like—like an hour conversation with the—you know, the person who ne—never bad, of course. And—and it’s, “Oh, good luck! [CW and WT laugh] You know, it’s Saturday (?). You’re getting married next month! This is so wonderful!” It’s like—and—and—and, you know, I—I—.

So my—my—my experience of New York—my love for New York is—is very—it’s gradual. It’s not—it’s really not the love in the first sight, for sure. I was afraid of it. And then I was intimidated by it when I first moved there.

I—I still remember the first month I was there, uh, there was one day it was raining so hard. I came down my apartment and I was trying—I was standing there for like five—10 minutes, trying to get a taxi to go to work. And, um—and, because it was raining, so there was very few taxi. And then, finally, there was one taxi here. I was standing there. And then a guy, six feet tall man rushed right behind me and took the taxi away from me. And—and—gone. You—you were talking about, you know, like, you know, [laughs] I guess. What is called? Rat eats rat? Is that a word. And, I was like—I was—I was so angry I was shaking. You know? I mean, that was—I was late. I was thinking, “Okay, so even if I weren’t a woman, I were here five minutes before you did. Like how you can just do

this?” [CW laughs] I couldn’t—I—I—I told my husband. And said, “As much as I love you. [indistinguishable] I don’t think I can live in New York City.” But, “Oh, give it time. Give it time.”

But, but, I—I became a true New Yorker after 9/11. Um, I was working—again, my office was about, uh, mile and a half from ground zero. And I was actually, uh—I was on a subway, um, going to work. And—and in the middle of it. I still remember that was a, uh, uh, primary day—primary election day. They would—they would give you flyers. I remember there was a—and, um, gotten this flyer. And also remember I had a—a huge textbook with me. And I was kinda happy. I’m always late. I’m always late. And then, that day, I was early. I said, “Oh, I’m gonna go to work early today. I’m not late today.” I was very happy. I had the textbook with me and very happy, very happy that day. And then the—the—and the subway got stuck for like an hour and 45 minutes. And the subway gets stuck all the time in New York City. No big deal. So I was waiting, and no big deal. And then it’s like 40 minutes was—I was like, “Okay. I’m not even early anymore. I’m late.” [all laugh] You know, I was getting depressed.

[1:25:07]

Um, and then there was somebody. Said, “Oh, oh there’s a lot of police activity, uh, above ground.” I said, “What police activity?” Oh, like, um, whatever. “Oh, there’s some, uh, airplane fly into a building.” That’s what they said. And somebody said, “Ugh, not again.” Because there was a [laughing] airplane flew into a hospital building and—and—and destroyed one apartment, uh, about a year and a half ago. And—and both pilot died, but—but nothing happened. I mean, in other words, airplane fly into a building is normal for New York City, okay? So, they said, “Oh, there’s a—there’s, um—airplane fly into the building.” And I was like, “[sighs] Okay.” And then there was no, uh, um, the phone reception there at the time.

So, okay. Now I’m gonna be late. Now I’m gonna be *really* late. Now, people are gonna say, “What happened to you?” late. And that’s like, okay, maybe they know that I’m, you know, buried—[laughing] buried alive in—in the subway. So, um, about an hour later, um, we started lose the air con—uh, the air condition. The air was starting to get really bad, and, um—and then there was a pregnant woman. I still remember this. Uh, sit across the street—uh, uh, uh, aisle from me and—and—and she was having an asthma attack. And I happen to have a filter with me because that was the day I was organized. I have my textbook, and I have my—actually a sample I was gonna show the—the medical students how to use. I mean it was one of those days. And so I said, “Okay. I’m gonna, you know, pump everybody. Just open your mouth big and only have one, you know?”

Um, so we were there for another ... 45 minutes. I was there altogether less than two hours. And then by the time I got out—I got out in, uh, city hall area. And I was not really not far away from, uh, ground zero. And there was covered with dust. White dust. It was like a snow storm just passed, except the—the snow is grey? And—and I still remember, uh, seeing shoes. Like bended high heels everywhere and the footsteps on the top of the dust. It was like a—like a—a bomb went off and—and—and the air was—you know how the, um Have you been to, uh, uh, uh, uh, a big moun—uh, high mountains where the snow? It’s like, uh, skiing. You know, you—your voice, the—the sound waves does not transmit because, uh, the air density changed. Yeah. You can’t even talk to each other without your voice being cut off. You cannot see that in the, uh, news or, um, if you’re not there.

‘Cause I remember. I remember the footprint. I remember the voice. The dust, I can’t breathe,

I remember. And then, I also remember everybody was so disoriented and—and I didn't know what happened. Nobody knew what happened. And I went to the, uh, there's a—uh—

CW: Oh, no. The SD card is full.

WT: Okay. It's okay you have that.

CW: Okay. All right.

DL: I'll make it short. Um, but I—I—I—I ended up uh, volunteer at the, uh, downtown hospital, um, um, for a whole day And—and it was no survivor. You know, of course there was [laughs]—there was nobody survived. Basically, either you made it or you didn't. There was no—no—nobody to—to—to treat. Um, but there was no panic. Okay.

Um, I—I still [laughing] remember, it—it was the downtown hospital. One—one end was a wind—big window, and the window was always dark because that was—really the window was facing them uh, one of the World Trade Center. And the World Trade Center would be *so* tall and then—and cast such a high shadow. So that window is—basically, it's a dead window. It's like, you know, you never see sunshine and all of a sudden, there was sunshine in the window. [laughs] And—and I remember, I was so like out of it. I was like, "Wow! The sunshine! You know, how come I've never seen that before?" And then I realized something's not right. Like why is there sunshine? And then I realized, World Trade Center collapsed.

CW: Hmm.

DL: That was weird. Nobody knew.

CW: Yeah. That's really ironic too. The day that you see sunshine was like a day of—

WT: Darkness.

DL: Yeah, yeah. But what made me become a New Yorker in that day is that I realized, even though under the very, very rough, uh, very, um, um, coarse exterior, I think there is a still underneath. All the New Yorkers, okay, nobody panicked. Okay. Um, we're in the hospital. Nobody panicked. We—we treat—we send the patients home. We did everything. I was assigned to 10th floor, which is geriatric. I'm a pediatrician. I'm like, "What am I doing here?" And—and—and then—one patient keep saying, "Where am I? Where am I?" I was like, "I don't know [laughs] because I—I have the same question where am I?" You know?

CW: [overlapping] "I don't know where I am."

[1:30:00]

DL: Um, um, then I was there. And then finally, after eight hours, I realized there was nobody to triage.

And then—and we're *eating* the food, okay? So doctors will all—they say, “Doctors, you're not needed here. You go home. Like we don't want to eat our food. [laughs] There's no—you know, there's no car coming.”

So I went out. I had to walk from, um, pretty much, uh, ground zero all the way to Chinatown. It's about like an hour walk. And—and, um, being a good Chinese, I walk around and I sort of collect all this food. [laughs] I was like, you know, like, uh, uh—fried dumplings and, you know, um, you know, the—all this, you know, meat baos, you know. I'm buying all these things because I was thinking, “What if, um—what if I get hungry? What if I have to walk all the way to Upper East—West Side?” It was like eight miles walk. So I—I'll be hungry, and—and food is cheaper here. So I'm starting to collect all this food. And it was street vendors selling, so I—I bought this food.

And—and so I was walking, by the time I walked to SoHo area, there was a—a bus that was picking up people just randomly 'cause they were already sending the bus, um, to pick up people who had been displaced. So I—I saw this Lincoln Center, I waved my hand and I went there. And every—and—and there was a bunch of people in the—in the bus. And people said, “You selling your food?” [laughs] I was like, “No, no, no. You can't have!” I was like—I was sharing my medicine in the subway, and now I'm sharing my dumplings [still laughing] and advice.

And I, you know—and I walk home and there was no riot. There was, um—there was no panic. And, um, there was a lot of disbelief. There's a lot of sadness, but everything worked, okay? There's no like gridlocks or anything, not like Washington DC [laughs].

My brother actually worked near, uh, Pentagon. And—and he called me. He said, “Are you ok?” I said, “I think I'm okay. Are you okay?” “Well they told us to evacuate, so I took my car and went half a block and sat for 3 hours 45 minutes. I couldn't get out because all the cars were bl—So I kind of figure, I can't evacuate because the traffic jams. So instead of waiting another 3 hours, I went—I make a turn, go back to the parking lot. [laughing] Go back to my office.” [CW and DL laugh] and I just thought, “Well, we're—we beat you. We have free bus service! Okay?”

So in other words, um, at that moment I realized that, um, you know, underneath it all this—the—the kind of competency and—and—and—also the togetherness, um, you know, um, made me become a New Yorker. So, it's very funny from being like scared of the rats in the Times Square to be, you know, intimidated by the—the call service lady [laughs] to actually become a true New Yorker. Um, it took a while, but it's a journey. And I really like—and—and, you know, and now be, you know, in Houston. It's just—you know, it's interesting.

CW: Yeah, that's very cool. Okay, well I guess, so we're reaching the end of the interview. Thank you so much for your time and stories. They've been really fantastic.

DL: Well, thank you for having me. I hope that will make up for my husband's absence! [laughs]

CW: No, yeah, that was fantastic. Is there anything else you want to say in your interview?

DL: [overlapping] No, no good luck for your, uh—your, uh, project.

CW & WT: Thank you

DL: Yeah, um—

[1:33:19] End interview