

Audio File

Jui Jung Yang 0:00

It will be almost [the] same like last time.

Lola Yang 0:01

Yeah.

Jui Jung Yang 0:02

Okay. 又所將中文啲所講英文, 張可以嗎 (Yòu suǒ jiàng zhōngwén yō suǒ jiǎng yīngwén, zhāng kěyǐ ma)?

Lola Yang 0:07

Mhm.

Jui Jung Yang 0:41

So I have to look to you.

Lola Yang 0:42

Yeah.

Jui Jung Yang 0:44

Okay.

Lola Yang 0:46

So can you introduce yourself, like your name, your age, and where you're from?

Jui Jung Yang 0:52

Okay. My name in Chinese pronounce[d] is張瑞蓉 (Zhāng ruì róng). [In] English, I have Ahgong, my husband's, last name, so call me 張瑞楊 (Jui Jung Yang).

Jui Jung Yang 1:10

What else you want? Like, age?

Lola Yang 1:12

Yeah.

Jui Jung Yang 1:14

[A] few days later? No. Two days late[r]. I'll be 73 year[s] old. And what else?

Lola Yang 1:24

Uh, where you're from.

Jui Jung Yang 1:26

I'm from Taiwan. The small island.

Lola Yang 1:34

So what was it like for you to grow up in Taiwan, and do you have any stories that come to mind?

Jui Jung Yang 1:43

You say when- what?

Lola Yang 1:45

What was it like growing up in Taiwan?

Jui Jung Yang 1:48

Oh, I grew up in Taiwan- I was very happy to be there. When I was small. I was young. The place I [was] born- I was born. It's a very small town in [the] North- northern part of Taiwan. That time was very quiet and peaceful. And we're like- know, we know each other in the neighborhood. Because it's very small. I like- I like that kind of atmosphere. Compared with now that the town [has] now changed. [It is] not the same like when I was born.

Lola Yang 2:35

Yeah. Do you have any specific stories that come to mind when you were growing up in Taiwan?

Jui Jung Yang 2:45

Story? [laughs] Nothing special. But we, when I was like in the primary school, we always like to have a group of the friend, always together to go to like a field trip. [We went] with no adults, together. We only [went] for like- it's [a] very peaceful town. So it's okay. We go out without parents. I like that. But it's different now. The story? Nothing, nothing specific. [laughs]

Lola Yang 3:32

Moving on, did you ever see any signs of the former Japanese occupation when you were growing up, like in culture, in food, or like language?

Jui Jung Yang 3:47

The time when I was born, [at] that time [Taiwan] was not occupied by Japan. That was a long time ago, [that] was [during] my parents' generation. They have that kind of time when Japan occupied Taiwan. I didn't have that experience. And I don't know what my parents feeling [was] at that time. But, because of that- so in Taiwan, many people, like, [are] very used to eat[ing] Japanese food. And like my parents also. They- they don't cook Japanese, but we like to go out to the Japanese restaurant.

Lola Yang 4:32

Mhm.

Jui Jung Yang 4:33

Now [it] is very popular in New York, almost the same [level of popularity]. And so that I didn't [go] through- goes, went through that kind of period of time. So I don't have that. Any kind of feeling [of] that.

Lola Yang 4:49

Yeah. So, did your parents have to learn Japanese?

Jui Jung Yang 4:56

My, my-

Lola Yang 4:57

Did your parents have to learn Japanese?

Jui Jung Yang 4:59

Oh yes, they, they went to school, [where they] all speaks Japanese. So sometimes they don't want us to know what they are talking [about].

Lola Yang 5:10

Mhm.

Jui Jung Yang 5:10

So both of my parents they speak in Japanese. I have learned a little bit [of] Japanese too.

Lola Yang 5:18

Mhm.

Jui Jung Yang 5:18

So- but I don't understand what they are speaking or talking to [or about]. I know only a little bit. Yeah.

Lola Yang 5:29

Okay, so, is there any one memory of Taiwan that really stands out to you?

Jui Jung Yang 5:40

Taiwan, what-

Lola Yang 5:41

Is there one memory of Taiwan that stands out to you?

Jui Jung Yang 5:46

[sighs] The- most of the Taiwanese [people] are very nice, warm, and working hard at my time, but even now that if you- sometimes I go back to Taiwan, you can see the people. It's- it's very different from [what it is like] in the US, I think. They are very easy to- they're very nice. If you ask [about] something, they will let you know [the answer] directly and very nice[ly] to explain [it] to you. They have patience.

Jui Jung Yang 6:28

And when you walk on the street, it's- you can feel the- the atmosphere is very warm. Yeah, even now, it's the same. Sometimes, I fly back to Taiwan, when I just... [land in] the airport, [even] from that time you

can feel the people is very nice. Even when me and Ahgong, my husband, [when] we carry heavy things the people, the- some, like airplane people, they will come to help you to push the cart. That [has] never happened here. It's free. They don't charge you. They just like to help people each other. Many foreigners go to Taiwan, they sometimes... [on] TV, you can see somebody interview or ask them some question[s]. They always say I like Taiwan because the people are very nice. Not only to the foreigner, [but] to the people, the general, the ordinary people... [they have] the same attitude [too], when they're told before, right.

Lola Yang 7:42

Yeah.

Jui Jung Yang 7:43

So you have that kind of you should have that kind of feeling.

Lola Yang 7:45

Yeah, yes, definitely. So how has growing up in Taiwan, shaped you into who you are today?

Jui Jung Yang 7:59

[Do] you mean like the education I got?

Lola Yang 8:03

Just in general? Like-

Jui Jung Yang 8:05

Yeah-

Lola Yang 8:06

How did- yeah.

Jui Jung Yang 8:06

Yeah. The- the my parents they raise up... the[ir] children and like my brothers, sisters. [They made sure that] we are very nice to each other. We have to- it's not [like I'm] say[ing that we had to] obey... [our] parents.. [or] something [like] that, but we are very- I don't know how to say it- 順從 (shùncóng) **obay** in Chinese. What they said [and whatever] they asked for, we always [did what they asked with] no objection[s]. Always say, "Okay, I will do it." It's- it's not like [we had to] obey, but you [listened to them] from the heart. You [were taught to] think [that] you should treat [your] parents very nice[ly]. You don't want them [to] feel disappoint[ed]. So what they are asking, you will fulfill to finish them, let them feel happy, [and] then you are happy too.

Lola Yang 9:00

Mhm.

Jui Jung Yang 9:01

Yeah, in Taiwan, it's- it's like this kind of like, from the education or the habits, or usually [in] the traditional Taiwanese family. It's like this, but now it's changed.

Lola Yang 9:19

Mhm.

Jui Jung Yang 9:20

[laughs] Because the more like... global [media] from the TV, you will know everything [from around the world]. So the people- the young people changed. [They do] not... like, listen to the[ir] parents [all the time].

Lola Yang 9:35

Mhm.

Jui Jung Yang 9:35

Not like before.

Lola Yang 9:41

So, do you have any idea- why [do] you think that changed?

Jui Jung Yang 9:48

I just mentioned... [earlier. It's] because the young people now- it's from the TV [and] from the internet. They know everything worldwide [and media from around the world]. So they have more- too many [and too much] information. So they think maybe they should become like [what they see in the media]. Now the young generation almost the same [as what they see on TV and on the internet]. They should.. be like that. [They are] not like we [were] raised before. 50, 40 years ago, the people is very- how do you say that- in Chinese 純樸 **pure** (chúnpǔ), very- we don't- like [we did] not... notice the fashion [and] that kind of things. It's very 純樸 (chúpǔ).

Lola Yang 10:34

Yeah.

Jui Jung Yang 10:35

Yeah, you understand?

Lola Yang 10:38

Yeah, I think I do.

Jui Jung Yang 10:39

Yeah.

Lola Yang 10:40

Not necessarily following the trends.

Jui Jung Yang 10:43

Yeah, right. And the teacher, it's- they taught us. It's, we like that kind- I like the education I got in Taiwan. Yeah.

Lola Yang 10:56

Okay. So, I think, [that we're] moving on. [So] when and why did you come to the United States? And were there any culture shocks or was there anything that surprised you?

Jui Jung Yang 11:13

Yeah, in 1979, we- first we came to [the] U.S... Because Ahgong, my husband, he is an artist. He likes to see the art directly from the real work, not only from the book, so he has to come here [to New York City]. So then, me and my son, your father, Daniel, so we come together. Actually, Ahgong came first, then after a month, we came- we came here later.

Jui Jung Yang 11:51

And what do you ask? You mean? Do I get any shock- [because] of the culture, [was there any] shock? No. Because in Taiwan, Taiwan is very close [to the United States]. I mean, [Taiwan is] emotionally close to [the] U.S., America. So we can have we had everything the same like you have in here. So we listen[ed] to the American rock music, and like [in the] 1960s, we listen[ed] to a lot of that kind of music. And [we] always watch[ed] the [same kinds of] movie[s]. Yeah, so everything [was] almost the same that with the U.S. [in Taiwan].

Jui Jung Yang 12:36

So when we first came here, we just feel- not too much different. Only the people we are Asia[n] and America is [mostly made up of] white people. So it's only that kind of difference, only [that was different].

Jui Jung Yang 12:52

But at that time, when we first came, I couldn't speak English. Not much; [I] only knew a few words, because in Taiwan will learned English, [but we] only [learned how to] read and- and [we] listen[ed] to [what the] teacher said, and [we learned how to] read and write. But we didn't have the conversation. [We had] very little conversation class[es]. So we couldn't speak English well, so [we could] only understand, and we can read and write only, but cannot speak [English]. So, that's the- that's the difficulty for us when we first came and then learned little by little. Even now it's not so fluently, but I was- I'm better than before.

Lola Yang 13:43

Yeah. I think that's interesting to compare to me learning Mandarin.

Jui Jung Yang 13:48

Yeah.

Lola Yang 13:49

Because-

Jui Jung Yang 13:49

No, no, you learn Mandarin only [in] very little classes.

Lola Yang 13:53

Yeah.

Jui Jung Yang 13:53

Right?

Lola Yang 13:54

Mhm.

Jui Jung Yang 13:54

We had- we learned English since we were, [since] I was in the junior high school

Lola Yang 14:00

Mhm, okay.

Jui Jung Yang 14:01

Every week we have like a few hours, every week. So until the college [level]. So you see so many years that [we studied English, but] we still cannot talk, [we can] only read and write.

Lola Yang 14:16

Yeah, it's interesting that they just taught you how to read and write.

Jui Jung Yang 14:19

Yeah, yes. Right.

Lola Yang 14:21

Okay, so going back to the U.S., what do you feel like you sacrificed when you came to the U.S. and who did you do it for; did you do it for your son, your family, or like later generations?

Jui Jung Yang 14:39

Mmm, yeah, I in Taiwan, we have parents, sister brother. Oh, almost [all] there at that time. Now, most of my brothers, sister [have] move[d] to us. Right. But that time, I feel like it [was] like a big family. We have cousins, uncles, we all live[d] in the big, big house. So when we came here, [there were] only three of us, so I feel, like, very lonely.

Lola Yang 15:09

Mhm.

Jui Jung Yang 15:10

And because [we] cannot speak well English. So that's the difficulty. And but because I like here, I like the U.S., so and Daddy too. First- [the] first time he went to the [new American] school, I was so worried about because it's a little bit far from where we [used to] live. So I feel nervous. But the first day he came home, he smiled. I said, "Why?" Because, he said, because he has the lunch provided from the school. In Taiwan, we don't- we don't have that kind of system, at that time.

Lola Yang 15:55

Mhm.

Jui Jung Yang 15:56

So, and he doesn't have to have the whole day in the school, only [a] half-day, till noontime [in Taiwan]. So it's very easy for him. [There was] no [provided] lunch, he can come home to have lunch.

Jui Jung Yang 16:11

But here [in the U.S.,] he has to stay till like two or three o'clock- o'clock, right? So he was happy to have lunch at school. That's the [only] new experience for him. And- and what else want to know?

Lola Yang 16:26

Yeah, so, when you get into the US, do you think that it was for later generations or something like that?

Jui Jung Yang 16:41

For Daddy, right? He's like very- I never talked to him about this. I think he- he feels happy here. And because [he was] only one child [since he did not have any siblings]. So I'm- [it was] not too difficult to bring him up, grow up. So and Ahgong's work, it's at home. So I think I have [a] helper [when taking care of my son]. So it's- it's not too complicated [of a] family.

Lola Yang 17:15

So, when you were coming to the US, did you ever think that it would be helpful for say, a couple of generations down, that we would have better chances and opportunities in the U.S.?

Jui Jung Yang 17:37

Yeah, in the beginning, I didn't think too much about this. But when Daddy grew up, he should stay here because he couldn't speak Chinese well, and he has no friend[s] in Taiwan. So we couldn't move back there. Unless he [really] want[ed to]. But then he got married. So... [he] should... stay here. And I think [that the] U.S. is the best place to live, and to get your education here. It's- many Taiwanese [people], after [they] graduate from the[ir] college, they always want to choose the foreign country [to move to]. I think the America's the first choice for them to come. So I think you might- later generation to stay here is [a] very good [decision]. You have a big chance to learn something, to get something, right.

Lola Yang 18:38

So, I know you mentioned that it was hard to leave a big family and come with just three people. So

Jui Jung Yang 18:46

Yeah.

Lola Yang 18:46

So, I was wondering what it was like to have to leave behind friends in Taiwan, and how that was like when you first came to the US, and you had to leave behind friends as well as family-

Jui Jung Yang 19:01

Yeah. Yeah, in the beginning, were- I missed them a lot, right. But when I think of Ahgong's, the future, he [decision to] stay here was right, because he can concentrate to do his artwork. In Taiwan, that time- at that time. It's not like here, his work always people [in Taiwan] always think is too ad- too avant-garde, too advanced, nobody can understand what his work is.

Jui Jung Yang 19:35

But here, he can get galleries or some collectors, they- they liked it. So he feel[s] because we came here because of Ahgong. So I have to, like, let him feel- know-- what to say--we always support him.

Lola Yang 20:00

Mhm.

Jui Jung Yang 20:00

Yeah, to just stay here. And finally, I found here, it's very good for Daddy. And, and later on for you. Huh.

Lola Yang 20:14

So, I think you talked about this a little bit, but how was your experience when you first came to the US? And how has it changed since then?

Jui Jung Yang 20:25

[When I first came here was- of course we... [were not] familiar with... [these] surroundings, so you will feel a little bit nervous, right?

Lola Yang 20:37

Mhm.

Jui Jung Yang 20:38

But it's the life it's almost the same, like, if you don't think of about too much, then almost the same like [it was] in Taiwan. I listen [to] the classic music, and I can read. I also have a lot of Chinese book[s], I can-- you see the back, I have a lot of books, right? I still can get the book[s that I read in Taiwan]. So I feel very happy here.

Jui Jung Yang 21:05

So I don't have any sacrifice. Of course, in the beginning, it's like you cannot have so- the money, it's an issue because Ahgong cannot go to work. So we have to use the savings to support the family. And later on, Ahgong can sell his painting[s], and I also work a little bit [in] the part-time job. So we can have [enough money. And] then, later on, I went to a college to- to work because I was an accountant.

Jui Jung Yang 21:43

So I feel like I like this kind of life. So I don't feel like [I made any] sacrifice[s] or [had] any difficulty.

Lola Yang 21:53

Okay, so how does life in Taiwan compare to your life in the U.S.?

Jui Jung Yang 22:08

It the same like I said, almost the same. Because Taiwan's life, I have lived there that time already, the progress, it's high, little, little by little by little very good. So at that time Ahgong, in Taiwan, he- he cannot sell his painting[s] for [a] living, but he was a designer for the graphic design. He earned a lot of money.

Jui Jung Yang 22:41

So when we decided to come to us, everybody was doubt[ful, and they] said, "You have... [such a] good lifestyle here. How come you want to, like give up everything and go to come to New York [and the] U.S. But, he, Ahgong, still likes to do that. I support him. At that [time], when we came here, he bring[s] all the savings to here. It's actually- it's a lot. So we can have the few years, very, not too difficult life. And then I got [a] job. So it's- it's good. Compared to Taiwan, actually, in Taiwan [at] that time, I don't have to worry about the money [or] anything.

Jui Jung Yang 23:24

I- we lived a very good life. But we give up everything [to]come to here because of Ahgong, he wants to fulfill his dream to be a good artist that's only in here he can [do that]; that [it] can be true. In Taiwan, it's- [at] that time, it's not easy, but now it's different. Now it's- [the] art in Taiwan. It's very boom, boom, how do you say, booming? Booming. It's like everyone like[s] to buy art [now]. [laughs] It's different.

Lola Yang 24:03

Okay, so I think my next question is: do you think of yourself as Taiwanese-American or just Taiwanese, and why?

Jui Jung Yang 24:19

Oh, yeah, we- I think I am Taiwanese-American. Yeah, actually, we come from Taiwan, right? But... [we are] American. And I like- I like to be an American. And [when I] live here I feel very I like [it]. At [least] before- before the pandemic [it] was so good. Everything I like, and- and I have [a] son and [a] daughter-in-law and two granddaughter [s]. I feel very happy to be with you [and] so close [to you all]. And I like the life [I have] here. Yeah.

Lola Yang 24:58

Okay, so, what is one thing that you would like people to remember about your story, and your life story?

Jui Jung Yang 25:11

Remember my story? It's very- [sighs] I don't know it. I don't know [if] you- you American people know [about] Taiwan [or if] a lot have never heard. I don't know. If they- they are they know, Taiwanese people

before, then they should [get to] know the people from Taiwan [now as well]. It's very kind. Very nice. It's different.

Jui Jung Yang 25:52

I don't know.

Lola Yang 25:55

Okay.

Jui Jung Yang 25:56

It's hard to answer this question.

Lola Yang 25:58

Yeah, yeah. Is there anything else that you would like to add that we haven't talked about yet?

Jui Jung Yang 26:06

Can I mention this? Because of [the] pandemic? No, we went back to Taiwan this time last... [year], not because of [the] pandemic, [but] because we have something to- to settle down in Taiwan, we have to go back to solve the problem. So Ahgong and I went back, but we stayed there for one year.

Jui Jung Yang 26:28

Until last week, we came back, right? But before we came back most people, most- like Daddy, all [all of our] friend[s], [they] all ask us, "Don't come back now because of the race- the race- race problem, how do you say that?"

Lola Yang 26:48

Like Asian hate crimes?

Jui Jung Yang 26:50

Yeah, Asian- yes, that kind. I- I don't like that. Before, [we were]... so happy [to be] here, [to] live here. But, because of that, [when] we came back [this time], we feel like I'm afraid to go out. That's not good, right?

Lola Yang 27:07

Yeah.

Jui Jung Yang 27:08

That's only- I like [it] here, but because of that, we cannot go out a lot. [Since] we came back, [we] only went out one time. But [when we did, we] feel, like nervous. We have to watch [the] surround[ing] people.

Lola Yang 27:25

Yeah.

Jui Jung Yang 27:25

So that's the very 可惜的事情 (Kěxí de shìqíng) you know, how to explain that, 可惜 (Kěxí)?

Lola Yang 27:34

Yeah.

Jui Jung Yang 27:34

Yeah, it's a pity, right? Yeah.

Lola Yang 27:40

Okay.

Jui Jung Yang 27:42

Oh, you have another question to ask me?

Lola Yang 27:45

I was thinking just about- the Asian hate crimes. Do you think that it has something to do with the pandemic? Like do you think, you know, the pandemic has made people more upset or something like that?

Jui Jung Yang 28:02

Yeah, I think so. Yeah. Because you stay at home for almost one year. You will feel your "新心里的问题 (Xīn lǐ de wèntí)" from [that time inside]. Yeah, it's mentally- it cannot take it anymore. It's always stay at home like [being] put in the jail right? You cannot go out safely. You don't like to- to get the- the COVID-19, right?

Jui Jung Yang 28:32

So, some people, they are not so strong. Maybe they will have different thinking. Then when they heard that this is a- like "武漢肺炎 (Wǔhàn fèiyán)"¹ in the beginning, so they think all the Chinese people, they hate it [the Chinese people]. So, and then [they] include the [other] Asian people. So that's not right, but some people- they are weak- weakly for the heart- so they cannot control themselves. It's- it's not- this is not a normal thing. But I hope when- after July, if the- everything goes back to before, like before, then maybe this case [of Asian hate crimes] will be slowly, will come down. I hope so.

Lola Yang 29:23

Okay, so to those people who you're saying that they were, like, weak at heart-

Jui Jung Yang 29:32

Mhm.

Lola Yang 29:34

¹ In a followup call to confirm the Mandarin characters for certain words, my grandmother clarified that this was something that Trump had said, though she had forgotten to mention that in the interview itself. She further stated that she did not agree with this phrasing of Covid-19 since it is racist.

What would you want to say to them?

Jui Jung Yang 29:37

Just mention that COVID-19- I am not a scientist- I don't know where it came from, right? But if it's from 武漢 (Wūhàn), but that's only the place- some more- some disease. You don't know where it came from. [You] cannot, [just] because of that, then you hate all the Asian people. That's not right. Because then it spread to the other place.

Jui Jung Yang 30:06

Almost like a very long time ago has Spanish flu, then you- you won't. Because of that you- you don't like Spanish people, you won't do that, right? So that's nothing to do with the racial [identity]. It's the [type of] disease that everybody has to be very patient to overcome. [You] cannot just hate people, and you hit people, you hate people, but it won't come- it won't- because of that then become nothing, right?

Jui Jung Yang 30:42

So it should- I think -- I hope -- if the life goes back to like before, then the people [committing these crimes] will change their mind.

Lola Yang 30:54

Yeah.

Jui Jung Yang 30:55

Yeah. I hope so.

Lola Yang 30:57

Me too. Okay, I think that's it.

Jui Jung Yang 31:03

That's it?

Lola Yang 31:03

Thank you!

Jui Jung Yang 31:04

Okay. Yeah, we cannot hold each other. Right. Okay. No, cannot. Tomorrow I'm going to have a vaccine that- yeah. So, then after the second one, then we can [hug]. Okay. All right. So how, can you- okay.