

Angelo Lopez interview May 25, 2026 on Zoom
Political Cartoonist
De Anza College Spring 2026 quarter
Steve Nava interviewer
Spaces of Belonging Project: Hidden in Plain Site/Sight

Summary:

Angelo Lopez is a political cartoonist who has spent decades capturing important political events that affect vulnerable communities emphasizing social justice and human rights. His career was twofold, working in Santa Clara and Sunnyvale Public Libraries and as the political cartoonist for the Philippine News Today newspaper (2011-2023). In his retirement he continues to publish political cartoons highlighting current oppressions in the Philippines and in the USA among various marginalized groups that the mainstream media are not paying attention to.

In this interview with a focus on his sense of belonging over the lifespan, Lopez shares key formative reflections on his engagement with historical events and popular culture that continue to influence his social consciousness and that inform his current political cartooning. He shares what it was like growing up as the child of a military family that moved too often to develop lifelong childhood friendships and how his sense of belonging relates to his Filipino heritage. The topics range from popular culture and changing consumption practices and their effects on critical consciousness, generational understanding, San Jose's Japantown community and continuity, and what it means to be a nearly 60 year-old Left-leaning political artist in the age of global oppressions.

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00:00:03.140 --> 00:00:20.449

Steve Nava: All right, so, today is May 25th, 2026. It's Memorial Day, and I'm interviewing Angelo Lopez, a cartoonist, and I'm gonna allow Angelo to give a quick introduction, and then I'll go into some questions for this project called *Spaces of Belonging*.

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00:00:20.850 --> 00:00:36.660

Steve Nava: And just really briefly, the Spaces of Belonging project has been, I think it's the third year, and we've been collecting interviews from mostly people from the Japantown, San Jose, Japantown community, but it's been more expanded to folks that live in Santa Clara County.

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00:00:36.980 --> 00:00:40.159

Steve Nava: And it's part of the California History Center's archive.

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00:00:40.280 --> 00:00:46.780

Steve Nava: And it speaks to history, but also about the social forces of change that are happening.

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00:00:46.990 --> 00:00:52.069

Steve Nava: And, so some of the questions, will address, like, you know, some of the larger...

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00:00:52.220 --> 00:00:56.279

Steve Nava: social forces that have shaped the communities of Santa Clara Valley.

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00:00:56.790 --> 00:01:08.369

Steve Nava: So I will start with asking Angelo to share a little bit about himself. So, if you can share your birthdate, and your occupation, and your ethnicity?

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00:01:08.580 --> 00:01:16.710

Angelo Lopez: Okay, so my name is Angelo Lopez. I'm a Filipino-American. I was born in 1967.

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00:01:16.710 --> 00:01:32.390

Angelo Lopez: I worked most of my life in a public library, the Santa Clara Public Library, and then the Sunnyvale Public Library. But on the side, I would do editorial cartoons for a community newspaper called the Philippine News Today.

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00:01:32.410 --> 00:01:41.440

Angelo Lopez: That paper was in the, based in Daly City in, the San Francisco Bay Area. And I was in that paper for, I think.

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00:01:42.630 --> 00:01:52.119

Angelo Lopez: from 2011 to 2023, so I think that's... was that, 12 years? 12 years? Do I have that math right?

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00:01:52.120 --> 00:02:03.829

Angelo Lopez: So, around 12 years or so. And during the time in the paper, I tried to learn more about the Filipino American community and what's going on in the Philippines.

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00:02:04.320 --> 00:02:05.220

Steve Nava: Oh, great

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00:02:05.770 --> 00:02:13.800

Steve Nava: But that's perfect for an introduction. And so, my first question is, would you be willing to tell us a little bit about your family background?

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00:02:14.380 --> 00:02:32.099

Angelo Lopez: Okay. Well, my parents are immigrants from the Philippines, from [Naic Cavite](#). My dad went in the Navy in the early 50s, and I was sort of... at that time, there was a sort of program where Filipinos could go into the American Navy.

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00:02:32.110 --> 00:02:35.550

Angelo Lopez: And so my dad was in the Navy,

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00:02:36.440 --> 00:02:50.430

Angelo Lopez: I think from 1959 to 1979 and stuff, and that's, during that time, he went around the world and stuff, and he met my mom, and they eventually settled in the United States, and I think...

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00:02:51.390 --> 00:03:06.580

Angelo Lopez: 1965, but before then, my dad was in the United States, in the South, and stuff. So, I spent most... me and my siblings spent most of our early years going from one military base to another.

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00:03:06.750 --> 00:03:13.529

Angelo Lopez: And so, we lived in a very, multiracial,

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00:03:13.800 --> 00:03:27.069

Angelo Lopez: community of military families and stuff, and I basically had a nice childhood and stuff. It was very nice, but it was... it was tough, because every two or three years, we would have to move, so I would develop friendships.

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00:03:27.260 --> 00:03:39.370

Angelo Lopez: And then I... then we would move, and I would really miss those friendships and stuff. So, it was, it was a generally happy childhood, but I had my moments of anxiety whenever we would have to move.

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00:03:40.720 --> 00:03:45.999

Angelo Lopez: So, unlike some people, I know friends who've had childhood friends.

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00:03:46.210 --> 00:03:49.769

Angelo Lopez: from when the first grade. That's not been my experience.

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00:03:49.980 --> 00:03:50.710

Angelo Lopez: So...

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00:03:56.680 --> 00:03:58.550

Angelo Lopez: Oh, I'm sorry, I couldn't hear you.

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00:04:01.910 --> 00:04:05.050

Angelo Lopez: Oh, Steve, I think your, your mic is.

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00:04:05.050 --> 00:04:11.689

Steve Nava: Oh, sorry, I'm muted, sorry. I'm sorry. So my question was, in terms of that...

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00:04:11.830 --> 00:04:13.510

Steve Nava: Feeling of belonging.

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00:04:13.760 --> 00:04:23.320

Steve Nava: That you might have felt during certain moments. Could you talk about the certain moments that pop up when you think about your child... your young childhood? Like, great, you know.

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00:04:23.460 --> 00:04:25.680

Steve Nava: Kindergarten to fifth grade, like...

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00:04:25.810 --> 00:04:31.739

Steve Nava: Were there certain spaces that you felt that stick out to you as having, like, strong memories of, like, belonging?

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00:04:32.590 --> 00:04:38.550

Angelo Lopez: Yes, well, my second, third, and fourth grades, I really had fond memories of.

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00:04:38.730 --> 00:04:55.280

Angelo Lopez: I don't really remember my kindergarten, but my first grade was in Japan, but I was kind of bullied as a kid, so I don't remember that very well. I think I was blocking out some

memories and stuff, but second, third, and fourth grade, I felt a deep sense of belonging, both in my class.

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00:04:55.320 --> 00:05:00.049

Angelo Lopez: You know, everybody got along pretty well with each other, and

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00:05:00.140 --> 00:05:09.850

Angelo Lopez: you know, I developed some close friendships, so when I had to move, you know... and third and fourth... I moved... I four-doored in 1976 to Moffitt Field.

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00:05:10.040 --> 00:05:28.700

Angelo Lopez: And I really missed my third-grade friends, but I actually developed wonderful 4th grade friends, and I think part of it was that I really liked my teachers, the teachers that I had at that time, Mr. McGinnis and, my second and third grade teachers, Ms. Lathrop, I think, and

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00:05:28.850 --> 00:05:38.410

Angelo Lopez: I forgot the other teacher's name, but those... they were wonderful teachers and stuff, and because it was a military family, it tended to be close-knit, because

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00:05:38.410 --> 00:05:50.550

Angelo Lopez: You know, we lived in an area where everybody knew where everybody was. There wasn't that sort of, you know, enlisted people don't get paid... we get pretty much paid the... this...

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00:05:50.570 --> 00:05:54.170

Angelo Lopez: We were in the same socioeconomic level.

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00:05:54.210 --> 00:06:01.020

Angelo Lopez: And stuff, so... and, I don't remember, you know, I could stay up

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00:06:01.300 --> 00:06:18.709

Angelo Lopez: until late, and my parents wouldn't worry about me, and there was a... the same was true of my... the kids in the neighborhood. There wasn't that same sense of, worrying about people's safety as there is now. You know, kids, so I felt safe. I felt safe, and

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00:06:18.800 --> 00:06:23.879

Angelo Lopez: The bonds, you know, the friendships that I developed, I really...

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00:06:23.910 --> 00:06:39.840

Angelo Lopez: had fond memories of, and it was just a nice time, you know? I'd run home, and I'd watch, Batman reruns, or, you know, the Monkeys, and, you know, it was a... it was a nice time and stuff. You know, we, in Fort Ord, there was a,

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00:06:40.530 --> 00:06:46.330

Angelo Lopez: you know, when I... you know, there was a lot of playgrounds you could play at and stuff, and in Moffitt.

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00:06:46.330 --> 00:07:03.120

Angelo Lopez: you know, we would have these little courts, and all the kids in the court get to know each other, and we would play, you know, we would sometimes play baseball together, or, you know, not so much football, mostly baseball. In the 70s, baseball was America's game.

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00:07:03.390 --> 00:07:15.950

Angelo Lopez: And stuff, so, so we, you know, we knew all the, I don't think America's as passionate about baseball as it was in the 70s and stuff. I could be wrong and stuff, but...

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00:07:16.230 --> 00:07:16.940

Angelo Lopez: Yeah.

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00:07:17.590 --> 00:07:21.509

Steve Nava: Yeah, those things change over time, right? Like, in terms of what's the sort of...

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00:07:22.170 --> 00:07:31.020

Steve Nava: epicenter of culture, or the center of culture. And yeah, when I'm speaking to other interviewees, like, they talk about...

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00:07:31.200 --> 00:07:37.850

Steve Nava: you know, those changing trends and what's popular. But what I noticed, too, about the more recent,

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00:07:38.470 --> 00:07:44.969

Steve Nava: cultural, I guess, subcultures and cultures around youth culture.

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00:07:44.970 --> 00:07:59.290

Steve Nava: Is that they tend to be centered around trading, t-shirts and clothing and dance moves and things like that, you know? So, that's a way in which it... you kind of have that sense of, like, the material change of capitalism.

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00:07:59.450 --> 00:08:00.370

Steve Nava: Yeah.

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00:08:01.200 --> 00:08:20.769

Angelo Lopez: Well, pop culture in my time was important. I think everybody, you know, when Roots came along, you know, everybody in the class would talk about it. We all watched it. Or, in sports, if Muhammad Ali was in a fight, the next day, everybody in the bus would be talking about the fight.

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00:08:20.770 --> 00:08:21.200

Steve Nava: Oh, man.

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00:08:21.200 --> 00:08:24.899

Angelo Lopez: There were certain culture, you know, either sports.

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00:08:25.050 --> 00:08:34.889

Angelo Lopez: or television, or movies, we would all talk about and stuff. So, like, I knew... I... this is later than my, fourth grade, but I remember in...

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00:08:35.010 --> 00:08:45.690

Angelo Lopez: 6th, 7th grade, I knew friends who watched Star Wars, like, 50 or 60 times, you know? So there were certain pop culture moments.

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00:08:46.130 --> 00:08:51.169

Angelo Lopez: That... that kind of bound us together and stuff, that we had a point of commonality and stuff.

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00:08:51.170 --> 00:08:51.860

Steve Nava: So...

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00:08:51.860 --> 00:09:01.249

Angelo Lopez: Michael Jackson and the Motown 25 reunion. Every... the next day after that, everybody talked about it and stuff.

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00:09:01.900 --> 00:09:05.830

Angelo Lopez: So there were certain cultural milestones that we all shared.

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00:09:07.610 --> 00:09:10.559

Steve Nava: Yeah, yeah, I was just actually talking to my students in,

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00:09:10.690 --> 00:09:14.360

Steve Nava: winter quarter about the Michael Jackson moonwalk moment.

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00:09:14.470 --> 00:09:17.249

Steve Nava: And I guess it was that 25th anniversary, right?

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00:09:17.250 --> 00:09:17.830

Angelo Lopez: Yeah.

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00:09:18.160 --> 00:09:23.610

Steve Nava: Yeah, and I was talking about it as a kind of... Almost like a...

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00:09:24.630 --> 00:09:31.650

Steve Nava: almost like a kind of discursive shift or a cultural moment, right? That was, like, a signal of something changed.

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00:09:32.220 --> 00:09:34.760

Steve Nava: I'm not sure how to articulate what it was.

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00:09:35.250 --> 00:09:41.609

Steve Nava: But it was almost like a breaking through of racial and... And,

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00:09:41.950 --> 00:09:51.790

Steve Nava: sort of cultural spaces coming together, like, converging or integrating into the symbol of Michael Jackson, you know? I don't know how you feel about that.

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00:09:52.420 --> 00:10:01.910

Angelo Lopez: I kind of saw it and stuff, because, well, the Michael Jackson, Motown 25, that was my... that was high school, not... not grade school.

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00:10:02.120 --> 00:10:07.279

Angelo Lopez: I remember, like, you know, in high school, at least what I remember.

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00:10:07.360 --> 00:10:25.059

Angelo Lopez: for whatever... I don't remember why, but musical tastes were segregated. People who liked heavy metal tended not to hang around people who liked, soul or rap. You know, the people who liked country didn't hang out, you know. There was a sort of...

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00:10:25.350 --> 00:10:39.930

Angelo Lopez: musical segregation that... that, you know, led to people who loved the music having, you know, you know, they were their own cliques. But Michael Jackson, because of Van Halen, I think he was the one who did the guitar lead.

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00:10:40.230 --> 00:10:40.810

Steve Nava: It is.

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00:10:40.810 --> 00:10:58.889

Angelo Lopez: Beat It, right? And so a lot of the heavy metal kids would usually not listen to, kind of more soul music, love Beat It just because they wanted to hear the, the solo, right? I think Michael Jackson, I think he was, musically trained to cross

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00:10:58.890 --> 00:11:15.939

Angelo Lopez: cross musical genres and stuff. He was happy to do that, because a lot of his musical forebearers, I guess, did the same thing and stuff. He was sort of a cultural mix and stuff. You know, some of the other stars of that... like, Prince was great.

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00:11:16.070 --> 00:11:31.569

Angelo Lopez: But it was only later, with Purple Rain, that he broke into the mainstream, and it was the same thing with him. He was such a great guitar player. All of the heavy metal guy, rock and roll people respected him, because he would... in, Let's Go Crazy, he had that great guitar solo.

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00:11:31.570 --> 00:11:37.939

Angelo Lopez: And stuff, and so they respected him because the guy could play and stuff, and that broke some barriers, too.

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00:11:37.940 --> 00:11:38.700

Angelo Lopez: So...

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00:11:39.990 --> 00:11:42.849

Steve Nava: Yeah, yeah, I feel like that theme around

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00:11:44.390 --> 00:11:52.040

Steve Nava: Communities integrating is important, you know, to this topic of, you know, communities of belonging, and

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00:11:52.570 --> 00:12:00.599

Steve Nava: I don't want to leave out this important aspect in the interview, because I think that popular culture does have a role in social change, and

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00:12:01.230 --> 00:12:04.199

Steve Nava: For me, it kind of pivots around the issue of,

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00:12:04.920 --> 00:12:08.219

Steve Nava: Of commercialization, the level of commercialization.

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00:12:08.360 --> 00:12:15.170

Steve Nava: And... The way in which people consume that popular culture matters.

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00:12:15.400 --> 00:12:15.880

Angelo Lopez: Yeah.

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00:12:15.880 --> 00:12:20.060

Steve Nava: For example, the difference between 1980s watching a movie together

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00:12:20.310 --> 00:12:26.000

Steve Nava: like, say you went to CET, and you're with a community watching it, then you go to school.

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00:12:26.330 --> 00:12:34.460

Steve Nava: and you're talking to your friends about it, right? Yeah. So that is a particular way of consumption, whereas if you...

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00:12:34.700 --> 00:12:44.920

Steve Nava: Fast forward to today, some people will watch a movie at the theater, some will watch it at home, some will watch it on their phone, and it's not the same sort of shared experience.

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00:12:45.050 --> 00:12:51.149

Steve Nava: Yeah. And there's something qualitatively different about that, and the way it directs us, you know, consciously.

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00:12:51.490 --> 00:12:54.729

Steve Nava: And how we feel a sense of community or not, right?

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00:12:54.840 --> 00:13:03.020

Steve Nava: And so it really does matter in terms of spaces and how we belong to a space, and the role of commercialization as a social force.

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00:13:03.230 --> 00:13:05.270

Steve Nava: I don't know how you feel about that.

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00:13:05.640 --> 00:13:11.849

Angelo Lopez: Well, I think when I was watching... when I watched the movie in the 80s and 70s, if it was a popular movie, it was packed.

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00:13:12.470 --> 00:13:18.220

Angelo Lopez: You know, I just remember it, and if I would mention, like, something in...

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00:13:18.770 --> 00:13:30.249

Angelo Lopez: You know, people knew and stuff. People wanted to watch the movies in the theater. You know, you brought, you know, if I was to ask somebody on a date and stuff, I would take her to a movie.

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00:13:30.250 --> 00:13:30.650

Steve Nava: Yeah.

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00:13:30.650 --> 00:13:40.269

Angelo Lopez: That was a... it was just something we both wanted to do and stuff. So, I don't know if that's the same culture. I... because I'm... I'm in... I'm... I'm gonna be 60...

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00:13:40.620 --> 00:13:47.409

Angelo Lopez: You know, next year. So, I don't know how young people... I don't know, you know.

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00:13:47.750 --> 00:13:51.120

Angelo Lopez: since you're a teacher, you know more about this than I do. I just don't know.

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00:13:51.120 --> 00:13:51.620

Steve Nava: Oh.

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00:13:51.620 --> 00:13:57.509

Angelo Lopez: I don't know as much about the younger generation anymore. I don't want to have... I don't want to stereotype them and stuff, so...

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00:13:57.510 --> 00:13:58.169

Steve Nava: Right, right.

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00:13:58.170 --> 00:14:15.690

Angelo Lopez: I'm gonna say I don't know, but I just remember, there were certain... and also, some... but, you know, you were saying about how, pop, you know, when, things get too commercial. I remember most of the political music at that time was on the edges. So, like, in the...

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00:14:15.700 --> 00:14:27.499

Angelo Lopez: ska music, you know, the specials, or the clash, or some rap music. Most of the more political music that had some sort of strong, you know, critique of capitalism.

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00:14:27.710 --> 00:14:28.070

Steve Nava: Amazon.

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00:14:28.070 --> 00:14:30.960

Angelo Lopez: edges and stuff, not so much in the,

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00:14:32.780 --> 00:14:34.359

Angelo Lopez: You know, so, you know, the...

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00:14:34.360 --> 00:14:35.540

Steve Nava: the mainstream.

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00:14:35.540 --> 00:14:40.030

Angelo Lopez: Yeah, so some of the, I'm trying to think of a mainstream... .

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00:14:40.030 --> 00:14:42.920

Steve Nava: Well, Rage Against the Machine was in 1993.

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00:14:42.920 --> 00:14:44.470

Angelo Lopez: Yeah, that's the 90s, yeah.

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00:14:44.470 --> 00:14:51.129

Steve Nava: So that was a moment, I think, where mainstream was absorbing this critical critique of capitalism.

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00:14:51.130 --> 00:14:54.350

Angelo Lopez: Yeah, I think in the 80s, Public Enemy?

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00:14:54.790 --> 00:14:56.110

Steve Nava: Oh yes, that's true, yeah.

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00:14:56.110 --> 00:15:03.349

Angelo Lopez: Public Enemy, and yeah, but I'm... like, the Specials was a ska group from England.

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00:15:03.610 --> 00:15:03.930

Steve Nava: Yes.

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00:15:03.930 --> 00:15:12.539

Angelo Lopez: I guess England at the time, during the Thatcher era, was, you know, they were facing a surge of white nationalism.

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00:15:12.930 --> 00:15:17.830

Angelo Lopez: And the specials was created especially as a multiracial group.

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00:15:17.950 --> 00:15:21.380

Angelo Lopez: To fight against white nationalism through their music.

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00:15:22.810 --> 00:15:26.780

Angelo Lopez: The clash were very political and stuff, so... but,

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00:15:27.450 --> 00:15:41.640

Angelo Lopez: I'm trying to think of explicit... I think if you wanted to look politics, it was more sexual politics and stuff, you know, but The Clash... they're the ones that popped to mind, but I'm sure there are others. I know rap had some,

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00:15:42.060 --> 00:16:01.659

Angelo Lopez: political content in their work and stuff, because they were, they were ahead of their time in, expressing the, struggles of inner-city minority communities and stuff. They were one of the few people that were doing that, actually, at that time and stuff, and that, that was sort of,

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00:16:01.720 --> 00:16:09.250

Angelo Lopez: In terms of capitalism, the outsourcing of manufacturing jobs from the inner cities.

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00:16:09.340 --> 00:16:16.689

Angelo Lopez: to, other countries and how that affected, their communities and stuff. You know,

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00:16:16.930 --> 00:16:23.509

Angelo Lopez: You know, John Cougar Mellencamp, he did an album called Scarecrow. It was the same thing.

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00:16:24.130 --> 00:16:39.519

Angelo Lopez: how the farmers in the heartland were struggling because of Reagan's policies and stuff, so... there was political music, and that was a mainstream album and stuff, so... but I don't know how much of the politics seeped through and stuff, so...

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00:16:39.740 --> 00:16:45.289

Angelo Lopez: There were some main... Springsteen had some political songs, too, but,

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00:16:46.050 --> 00:16:50.230

Angelo Lopez: Yeah, I'm not an expert, but that's what I remember and stuff, so...

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00:16:51.430 --> 00:17:05.530

Steve Nava: Yeah, those are really good examples. I wasn't too... I wasn't too knowledgeable about the specials, because I came into music... interest in music, and then my interest was more strongly in the late 90s, and I didn't really, get a lot of the 80s influences.

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00:17:06.900 --> 00:17:17.890

Steve Nava: I was, like, you know, I was listening to, like, Paul McCartney, you know, or something in the 80s, and Michael Jackson singing a duet or whatever, and then listening to the Rolling Stones and things like that, but...

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00:17:17.890 --> 00:17:18.490

Angelo Lopez: Yeah.

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00:17:18.490 --> 00:17:20.149

Steve Nava: I didn't know the English stuff.

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00:17:20.150 --> 00:17:26.250

Angelo Lopez: 60s. In the 60s, the Stones were political, but I think by the time the 80s came around, they got commercial.

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00:17:26.530 --> 00:17:29.039

Steve Nava: Oh yeah, yeah, it was, it was more like,

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00:17:29.450 --> 00:17:40.949

Steve Nava: Can't Get No Satisfaction was kind of like a song that was popular in my head during that, because I was listening to the 70s music in the 80s, and I didn't have a political consciousness in the 80s, so I was more like,

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00:17:41.430 --> 00:17:44.469

Steve Nava: Just sort of listening to stuff that had a good groove, you know?

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00:17:44.730 --> 00:17:45.190

Angelo Lopez: Yeah.

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00:17:45.190 --> 00:17:56.060

Steve Nava: But, yeah, the role of popular culture is really important, and I think it does kind of go along with certain time periods. Like, middle school, you have your favorite songs and movies and...

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00:17:56.260 --> 00:18:01.790

Steve Nava: And then in high school, different, and then post-high school, it's different. But,

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00:18:02.450 --> 00:18:12.550

Steve Nava: In terms of your middle school years, did you find that you were becoming socially conscious in the middle school years?

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00:18:12.760 --> 00:18:16.309

Steve Nava: And did that relate to music and popular culture at all?

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00:18:16.740 --> 00:18:29.500

Angelo Lopez: Kind of, in a way. I mean, I've always been interested in politics. In fourth grade, my teacher, Mr. McGinnis, he would give extra points to anybody who'd read the news of the day.

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00:18:30.120 --> 00:18:42.739

Angelo Lopez: I... since I was a nerd and stuff, I wanted to, I wanted to get those points, so I would always read the paper and stuff. So, but also, I mean, that was just an interesting time, both,

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00:18:43.200 --> 00:18:46.240

Angelo Lopez: That was just an interesting time for me, because,

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00:18:46.590 --> 00:19:04.870

Angelo Lopez: so much was going on and stuff. I mean, it was sad in the sense that, you know, there were a lot of assassinations during those years and stuff. John Lennon, Harvey Milk, you know, Oscar Romero, you know, he got shot during that time.

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00:19:04.960 --> 00:19:11.829

Angelo Lopez: So my... when you say middle school, you're talking about 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th grade, right? Around then, and stuff?

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00:19:11.830 --> 00:19:14.649

Steve Nava: Yeah, like, 8th grade.

152

00:19:14.650 --> 00:19:29.390

Angelo Lopez: Yeah, so I was... I was... I was getting more political, but in a superficial sense. I can't say my politics was in depth, but I love reading comic strips, and Doonesbury was a comic strip I would read occasionally.

153

00:19:29.730 --> 00:19:48.100

Angelo Lopez: And, I think Bloom County... I don't know if I'm getting the dates right. Bloom County was occasionally political and stuff, but I remember [Doonesbury](#). In order to understand Doonesbury, you had to read the news and stuff, so that's... that was, that helped me, because it forced me to read, but also,

154

00:19:48.480 --> 00:19:58.629

Angelo Lopez: at that time, you're talking about pop culture, but religion played an important part and stuff, because at that time, there was still a vibrant Catholic left and stuff, so,

155

00:19:59.440 --> 00:20:12.390

Angelo Lopez: Because of the... because of my family's interest in the Philippines, the Catholic Church was very important in helping the opposition in the Philippines against martial law.

156

00:20:12.630 --> 00:20:25.790

Angelo Lopez: And, I knew what was going on in El Salvador, because I, you know, that was just in the news a lot and stuff, so I was Romero, and then the nuns who got killed and stuff, and, a lot of Catholic leftists

157

00:20:25.930 --> 00:20:39.490

Angelo Lopez: were still alive. Dorothy Day, Daniel Berrigan, and stuff. So, I, I, I knew sort of by osmosis what was going on, just because, it was in music, in,

158

00:20:39.720 --> 00:20:52.220

Angelo Lopez: popular culture, but also in religion and stuff. At that time, I had very mixed feelings about John Paul II, and he was clashing with more liberal Catholics and stuff.

159

00:20:52.230 --> 00:21:00.259

Angelo Lopez: But, you know, you had Catholics going to, anti-nuclear, you know, weapons protests.

160

00:21:00.620 --> 00:21:18.180

Angelo Lopez: or, you know, the sanctuary movement, the Catholic Church was a big part of. I... the Catholic left, the progressive side of Catholicism, had an... was an important influence on me and stuff. In terms of a critique of capitalism, the Catholic Church has its own

161

00:21:18.360 --> 00:21:21.720

Angelo Lopez: Critique of capitalism, too, and stuff, so...

162

00:21:24.330 --> 00:21:29.699

Steve Nava: Yeah, and that kind of relates a little bit, or directly to, with the Negroes 19, right, which is the...

163

00:21:30.030 --> 00:21:36.150

Steve Nava: the April 19th, 2026, killing of, 19...

164

00:21:36.720 --> 00:21:39.859

Steve Nava: Community activists that are supporting farmers.

165

00:21:40.080 --> 00:21:40.680

Angelo Lopez: Yeah.

166

00:21:40.680 --> 00:21:42.230

Steve Nava: Farm workers? Farmers?

167

00:21:42.880 --> 00:21:54.009

Steve Nava: And... Interestingly, the, the Google description makes it sound like it's a legitimate military action.

168

00:21:54.120 --> 00:21:58.040

Steve Nava: Against insurgents. In fact, it's calling them insurgents.

169

00:21:58.650 --> 00:22:07.939

Angelo Lopez: Yeah, but I mean, 9 of the people were civilians and stuff, and I have a feeling if they were to do a thorough investigation.

170

00:22:07.940 --> 00:22:08.320

Steve Nava: That would...

171

00:22:08.320 --> 00:22:11.040

Angelo Lopez: Whatever that Google thing is with change and stuff.

172

00:22:11.040 --> 00:22:11.640

Steve Nava: Yeah.

173

00:22:11.640 --> 00:22:27.789

Angelo Lopez: Yeah, so, you know, one of the calls for right now is to have an independent investigation to see what actually happened, and not just rely on the military reports of what happened and stuff, because,

174

00:22:28.090 --> 00:22:38.109

Angelo Lopez: You know, without any transparency and stuff, you know, who knows what the military may be covering up and stuff, so...

175

00:22:38.710 --> 00:22:39.310

Steve Nava: Right.

176

00:22:41.990 --> 00:22:46.690

Steve Nava: So... I guess this is just one example of where,

177

00:22:47.160 --> 00:22:51.210

Steve Nava: You know, we can go from popular culture to... you know.

178

00:22:51.400 --> 00:23:00.089

Steve Nava: political events, right? And there's a... there's kind of a smoother transition than we might suspect, right? But the surface, because

179

00:23:00.400 --> 00:23:06.269

Steve Nava: One of the reasons that's true, I think, is because of the way that our consciousness moves, right?

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00:23:06.430 --> 00:23:10.529

Steve Nava: And our attention moves, and one of the things I try to teach students is that

181

00:23:11.120 --> 00:23:17.309

Steve Nava: the reason that I think popular culture and reception of popular culture or consumption of it is important

182

00:23:17.540 --> 00:23:25.190

Steve Nava: It's because when we consume, our consciousness is focused on something Is meditating upon something

183

00:23:25.680 --> 00:23:29.030

Steve Nava: A particular, and then it shifts to a different object.

184

00:23:29.160 --> 00:23:32.790

Steve Nava: And that transitioned the way that our mind, our brain and mind

185

00:23:33.110 --> 00:23:35.939

Steve Nava: Moves from one topic to the next matters.

186

00:23:36.810 --> 00:23:42.409

Steve Nava: You know what I mean? Because if you're... if you're looking at TikTok or something, and you're looking at stupid animal tricks.

187

00:23:42.670 --> 00:23:48.560

Steve Nava: And then you immediately switch gears, right? Your mind is shifting towards You know, the, the...

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00:23:48.660 --> 00:23:52.750

Steve Nava: The killing of 19 individuals who are trying to fight for rights.

189

00:23:52.950 --> 00:23:53.390

Angelo Lopez: Yeah.

190

00:23:53.390 --> 00:23:57.329

Steve Nava: That... that has an effect on our consciousness. It doesn't just...

191

00:23:57.630 --> 00:24:01.619

Steve Nava: it isn't just, random facts here, right? These are...

192

00:24:01.970 --> 00:24:07.930

Steve Nava: The, the sort of juxtapositioning¹ of two different Realities, right?

193

00:24:08.100 --> 00:24:09.350

Angelo Lopez: It's pretty jarring.

194

00:24:09.350 --> 00:24:16.629

Steve Nava: Yeah, that we can be constantly just shifting from one idea to the next without any true contemplation.

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00:24:16.830 --> 00:24:25.190

Steve Nava: Yeah. That's designed by technology, right? That's technologists deciding that this is how we're going to consume.

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00:24:25.930 --> 00:24:34.659

Angelo Lopez: I think it's... I read somewhere that the attention span of younger generations is a lot less than older generations and stuff.

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00:24:35.010 --> 00:24:54.799

Angelo Lopez: Is that part of what you're talking about? Is that when you do these kind of jarring switches and stuff, it shrinks the attention span. And, you know, having a social conscience requires some sort of deep thought and reflection upon what happens. And you can't have that if your attention span shrinks, I guess.

¹ **Juxtaposition** is the act of placing two or more things—such as objects, ideas, or characters—close together or side-by-side to highlight their differences, reveal surprising similarities, or create a specific effect

198

00:24:55.690 --> 00:24:59.849

Steve Nava: Yeah, the shrinking of the attention span is huge for educators.

199

00:25:00.250 --> 00:25:04.920

Steve Nava: You know, and there's all... I'm sure there's all kinds of news articles that pop up in your feed about

200

00:25:05.110 --> 00:25:08.550

Steve Nava: The challenge of teaching during this time period where

201

00:25:08.690 --> 00:25:14.869

Steve Nava: you know, there's actually, I think Nordic countries are on the cutting edge of this idea of, like, removing

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00:25:15.260 --> 00:25:26.019

Steve Nava: technology completely from certain classrooms, right? Yeah. And just teaching, teaching using handwritten notes and things like that as a way to,

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00:25:26.300 --> 00:25:33.199

Steve Nava: recapture, I guess, the consciousness of our learners and ourselves, even, right? Like, as teachers, we have to...

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00:25:33.760 --> 00:25:38.090

Steve Nava: You know, to sort of recapture that ability to pay attention.

205

00:25:38.270 --> 00:25:39.959

Steve Nava: And sustain attention.

206

00:25:41.150 --> 00:25:41.660

Steve Nava: Yeah.

207

00:25:42.100 --> 00:25:45.259

Angelo Lopez: Yeah, I was... I guess I was lucky in a way, because,

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00:25:46.350 --> 00:25:50.630

Angelo Lopez: I came of an age where people... our generation, we still read books.

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00:25:51.280 --> 00:25:54.230

Angelo Lopez: And stuff. We, we did, social media what?

210

00:25:55.120 --> 00:26:07.980

Angelo Lopez: 90s, 2000s, mostly, and stuff, you know? So, I came of an age before social media and stuff, so... and people were complaining about television shrinking attention spans, but I think,

211

00:26:08.380 --> 00:26:15.359

Angelo Lopez: you know, there was always all in the family and stuff that, you know, where you, you know, you had... there were certain...

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00:26:15.420 --> 00:26:20.609

Angelo Lopez: was that still in the 80s, or 70s? I guess the 70s. All in the family, still...

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00:26:20.660 --> 00:26:35.819

Angelo Lopez: forced you to have a conversation and stuff, like, they take two opposing views, and it forces you to have a debate and stuff. And I think that's good and stuff, you know. Democracy is about the clash of different ideas, so...

214

00:26:37.160 --> 00:26:48.189

Steve Nava: Yeah, yeah, those reruns were playing, for me at least, and, you know, I grew up in Texas, we were watching the reruns of, All in the Family, Good Times.

215

00:26:48.190 --> 00:26:49.219

Angelo Lopez: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

216

00:26:49.220 --> 00:26:49.910

Steve Nava: Any of those.

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00:26:49.910 --> 00:26:51.930

Angelo Lopez: Norman Lear shows and stuff.

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00:26:51.930 --> 00:26:56.739

Steve Nava: Yeah, they were, they were, they were being repeated over and over again, so we must have seen each episode.

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00:26:57.620 --> 00:27:04.350

Steve Nava: Probably, like, 20 times, of a lot of those shows, you know, over the... The overall childhood.

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00:27:04.400 --> 00:27:05.130

Angelo Lopez: Yeah.

221

00:27:06.730 --> 00:27:11.269

Angelo Lopez: Yeah, I liked it, because they, they, they offered a view of, like,

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00:27:12.040 --> 00:27:16.650

Angelo Lopez: You can disagree with somebody and still see their humanity and stuff, so...

223

00:27:16.790 --> 00:27:21.469

Steve Nava: Yeah, yeah, because they showed you... most of the time, they showed you enough of their lives, right?

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00:27:21.970 --> 00:27:29.269

Steve Nava: That you can, you can see that they're human beings, and not just, you know, sound bites, embodied in human bodies.

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00:27:29.610 --> 00:27:35.569

Steve Nava: Yeah. So... Yeah, that speaks to how we consume...

226

00:27:35.830 --> 00:27:40.630

Steve Nava: Within these sort of, like, algorithmic bubbles, right, of our own...

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00:27:40.920 --> 00:27:48.919

Steve Nava: political ilk, right? We kind of stay within that space, and it kind of dehumanizes those people that don't agree with us.

228

00:27:49.970 --> 00:27:55.550

Angelo Lopez: Yeah, yeah, it's... my politics is pretty left-wing, but I try to be careful.

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00:27:55.900 --> 00:28:02.339

Angelo Lopez: To, you know, because I used to... even though I'm, you know, pretty liberal, I used to have conservative friends and stuff.

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00:28:02.870 --> 00:28:10.679

Angelo Lopez: I lost a lot of those friends, but I still remember, you know, they're more... they're not just conservative, you know, they're,

231

00:28:11.150 --> 00:28:15.740

Angelo Lopez: you know, I see... I saw their complexity as human beings and stuff.

232

00:28:15.930 --> 00:28:18.969

Angelo Lopez: And I, you know, because we were friends, I saw their good side.

233

00:28:19.640 --> 00:28:22.820

Angelo Lopez: And stuff, so it was painful to lose those friends.

234

00:28:24.070 --> 00:28:41.120

Angelo Lopez: So, yeah, I don't have much to... you know, during my young years, I would have arguments about politics with friends and stuff, but, you know, the depth of my knowledge of politics at that time wasn't as the same at that time, just because, you know, I was, you know.

235

00:28:41.340 --> 00:28:49.510

Angelo Lopez: you know, I was being a kid, you know? So, you know, you know, I remember we, you know.

236

00:28:49.610 --> 00:29:09.380

Angelo Lopez: what was my, you know, my first memory is the Carter-Ford elections, but the first important elections was the Democratic primaries, because I... I wanted... I didn't like... my parents didn't like Carter, and I... and I didn't like Carter, but I... so I was hoping for Ted Kennedy, but I remember,

237

00:29:10.040 --> 00:29:15.339

Angelo Lopez: He was controversial, but he was an influence on my politics and stuff.

238

00:29:15.460 --> 00:29:18.060

Angelo Lopez: I think the Ted Kennedy campaign.

239

00:29:18.290 --> 00:29:20.880

Angelo Lopez: the Jesse Jackson campaign, where both of.

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00:29:20.880 --> 00:29:21.350

Steve Nava: Mmm.

241

00:29:21.350 --> 00:29:24.490

Angelo Lopez: influences on my politics. Because both were...

242

00:29:24.670 --> 00:29:28.039

Angelo Lopez: more traditional, kind of, New Deal liberal-type

243

00:29:28.410 --> 00:29:32.010

Angelo Lopez: You know, not today's liberal, but a more,

244

00:29:33.760 --> 00:29:39.480

Angelo Lopez: What's the right word? Their liberalism was closer to the New Deal-type liberalism.

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00:29:40.140 --> 00:29:52.250

Angelo Lopez: So, they both wanted this coalition of working-class whites, minorities, and the poor. And that's been a big influence of my politics and stuff, is I... I see it as a goal

246

00:29:52.960 --> 00:30:00.640

Angelo Lopez: You know, how can we create those coalitions to... that, you know, to create changes that help all communities?

247

00:30:00.850 --> 00:30:02.010

Angelo Lopez: And stuff, so...

248

00:30:02.970 --> 00:30:06.530

Steve Nava: So, would you say... that those...

249

00:30:06.800 --> 00:30:13.029

Steve Nava: coalition-building campaigns were... were in response to this... response to the Southern Strategy?

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00:30:13.480 --> 00:30:30.789

Angelo Lopez: No, I think it was before the Southern Strategy. I think the Southern Strategy was trying to break up those coalitions. So, like, if you look at, throughout most... if you look at the liberal Democrat left, and if you look at the socialist left, both parts of the left were trying to build

251

00:30:30.990 --> 00:30:37.740

Angelo Lopez: a coalition of working-class whites, minorities, and the poor in the belief... one is that,

252

00:30:38.170 --> 00:30:42.840

Angelo Lopez: And during most of the 20th century, the left was fueled by the labor movement.

253

00:30:43.120 --> 00:30:48.419

Angelo Lopez: And stuff, and there was a... there was a theory, like, if you listen to,

254

00:30:48.980 --> 00:30:52.270

Angelo Lopez: you know, A. Philip Randolph, Bayard Rustin.

255

00:30:52.400 --> 00:31:00.339

Angelo Lopez: and a Paul Robeson, they were influenced by the labor movement and their belief that racial equality, you know.

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00:31:00.750 --> 00:31:13.510

Angelo Lopez: You know, racial equality needs to link up with, economic justice issues and stuff, so that we need a large enough coalition to pressure the political system to change and stuff.

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00:31:14.160 --> 00:31:16.979

Angelo Lopez: You know, and in order, you know, by itself.

258

00:31:17.550 --> 00:31:28.439

Angelo Lopez: you know, the civil rights movement, just doesn't have the numbers. Any minority group fighting for the rights just doesn't have the numbers and stuff, and so the theory was that you need allies.

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00:31:28.580 --> 00:31:35.899

Angelo Lopez: And the biggest segment of the left was the labor movement. You know, the labor movement was able to get the New Deal.

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00:31:36.360 --> 00:31:40.880

Angelo Lopez: And so, the theory of, like, A. Philip Randolph, Bayard Rustin.

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00:31:40.940 --> 00:32:00.519

Angelo Lopez: Paul Robeson was that the Black community needed to have white allies within the labor movement. They needed to find some way of creating a coalition where both communities were fighting for common economic interests and stuff.

262

00:32:00.640 --> 00:32:08.859

Angelo Lopez: So, that was sort of the basis of the New Deal, too, and stuff. So, I think the Southern strategy

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00:32:08.930 --> 00:32:27.970

Angelo Lopez: was trying to take away the white working class from that New Deal coalition, or, you know, that, that sort of leftist coalition. And I think they pretty much succeeded and stuff, you know? Whenever, whenever, whenever, right-wing Republicans were, you know, if you can find a strategy to,

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00:32:28.840 --> 00:32:32.470

Angelo Lopez: to break up that coalition that Democrats lose.

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00:32:32.830 --> 00:32:38.390

Angelo Lopez: Left, you know, left-wing causes, take steps back.

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00:32:38.670 --> 00:32:41.950

Angelo Lopez: Instead of steps forward and stuff. So,

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00:32:41.950 --> 00:32:42.410

Steve Nava: Yeah.

268

00:32:42.410 --> 00:32:51.450

Angelo Lopez: Any progress you have. The backlash comes when you're able to get the white working class to see minorities as the enemy.

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00:32:51.810 --> 00:33:11.619

Angelo Lopez: And stuff. Whereas in the coalition politics, you know, if you look at Jesse Jackson's campaign, he was able to tell inner-city Black communities and working-class white communities and rural communities that, you know, all three of you guys have the... all three of you communities have the same problems.

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00:33:11.730 --> 00:33:27.400

Angelo Lopez: And stuff. And, only by coming together can you, can you, you know, succeed in getting the sort of economic and racial justice that's necessary for this country to get better.

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00:33:28.240 --> 00:33:33.639

Angelo Lopez: So, that was his... that was his message, that was Bobby Kennedy's message in 1968.

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00:33:33.850 --> 00:33:39.110

Angelo Lopez: That was Ted Kennedy's message in 1979 and stuff.

273

00:33:39.170 --> 00:33:59.170

Angelo Lopez: So... but, you know, that's... my mindset is trapped in that ideological framework. I don't know if... I was mentioning, I feel like an out-of-date leftist. I don't know if that framework still works, because the white working class is so beholden to MAGA nowadays, I don't know if we can...

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00:33:59.170 --> 00:34:05.450

Angelo Lopez: I think, you know, I don't know if we can win them back and stuff, but Trump's policies hurt

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00:34:05.570 --> 00:34:11.900

Angelo Lopez: white working-class communities. It doesn't make sense for me that they're MAGA and stuff, so...

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00:34:12.449 --> 00:34:26.140

Angelo Lopez: So, but I don't have a solution to that problem. You know, I don't have a solution to that problem, but that's... that's sort of my... my opinion. I don't know if... I don't know how applicable it is for today's political climate.

277

00:34:27.060 --> 00:34:30.320

Steve Nava: How does this, in fact.

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00:34:30.620 --> 00:34:42.650

Steve Nava: possibly affect your cartooning work, in terms of the things that you cover in your cartooning work? And I actually have a painting that you did in the past in my own wall.

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00:34:42.830 --> 00:34:44.590

Steve Nava: Which I appreciate,

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00:34:45.020 --> 00:34:55.239

Steve Nava: Could you talk a little bit about that painting, and then maybe address the question around, like, how does the politics affect your work in general? And does the painting behind me have anything to do with politics?

281

00:34:55.520 --> 00:34:57.780

Angelo Lopez: Not really, but...

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00:34:58.230 --> 00:35:22.230

Angelo Lopez: You could if you want and stuff. I mean, like, the... it's just this cat disguised as a dog, trying to go through a crowd of dogs and stuff, so this is one of my first paintings I had for my illustration course when I was in college, the first one that I got an A in and stuff, so I redid that painting and stuff. I like it and stuff, but it's more a sense of isolation and stuff.

283

00:35:22.230 --> 00:35:33.870

Angelo Lopez: During my college years, I was not a very... I didn't have a lot of self-esteem and stuff, so I sometimes felt like an oddball in a crowd.

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00:35:33.870 --> 00:35:35.840

Angelo Lopez: And stuff, but,

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00:35:35.840 --> 00:35:41.240

Angelo Lopez: That was sort of more that emphasis. I think the way my politics affects my,

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00:35:41.700 --> 00:35:47.070

Angelo Lopez: my, cartoons, I'm always... in my cartoons, I focus on,

287

00:35:47.210 --> 00:35:52.920

Angelo Lopez: There's, there's a, there's a saying among cartoonists, what's the saying again?

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00:35:53.060 --> 00:35:56.029

Angelo Lopez: To comfort the afflicted, and to afflict the comfortable.

289

00:35:56.490 --> 00:36:11.139

Angelo Lopez: And my politics is more... the way my politics affects my cartoons is I always try to give, you know, this is what's happening to marginalized communities. Highlight the issues affecting them.

290

00:36:11.200 --> 00:36:23.890

Angelo Lopez: And, I try not to follow the headlines when I do my cartoons. Some cartoonists do. What I want to do with my cartoons, what's going on in the Filipino-American community?

291

00:36:23.960 --> 00:36:33.470

Angelo Lopez: what's going on in the Philippines among marginalized groups in each community that people are not paying attention to, and put a spotlight on it.

292

00:36:34.280 --> 00:36:49.589

Angelo Lopez: that's... that's sort of my, my influence and stuff, so... and my cartoons, I'm... I'm... I... I consider my cartoons a form of activism and stuff, so... Yeah, hold on, let me... let me turn off the phone for a second. Do you hear the phone? Do you hear the phone?

293

00:36:50.320 --> 00:36:52.900

Steve Nava: Yes, but I can pause. Let me pause.

294

00:36:53.270 --> 00:36:54.020

Angelo Lopez: Okay.

Part one ends here.

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Part II Transcript Starts here from May 30, 2026:

WEBVTT

00:00:00.000 --> 00:00:02.000

Let me know, and I'll remind you to...

00:00:02.000 --> 00:00:03.000

Okay.

00:00:03.000 --> 00:00:04.000

All right

00:00:04.000 --> 00:00:05.000

Okay, good.

00:00:05.000 --> 00:00:15.000

All right, so we're at part two of the interview with cartoonist Angela Lopez. And you talked a little bit about growing up, I guess middle school

00:00:15.000 --> 00:00:17.000

But

00:00:17.000 --> 00:00:24.000

In general, like, do you have a firm community? Did you have a firm community growing up that you felt connected to?

00:00:24.000 --> 00:00:25.000

Yes.

00:00:25.000 --> 00:00:42.000

And what were some places that you found yourself hanging out and feeling belonging

00:00:42.000 --> 00:00:43.000

Yeah.

00:00:43.000 --> 00:00:45.000

Well, as going into high school, I got, you know, I was kind of a nerdy kid who felt inadequate around kind of cool people, right? But I was lucky in the sense that I found

00:00:45.000 --> 00:00:47.000

A group of friends

00:00:47.000 --> 00:01:03.000

who were like me, we're kind of nerdy, we studied hard in school, you know, we took school seriously, you know, we basically, you know, we listened to our parents and stuff, and my neighborhood

00:01:03.000 --> 00:01:26.000

I mentioned before that my... I'm sort of a Navy brat, so my dad retired from Moffett Field. We moved to Sunnyvale, and a lot of, a lot of my friends were in a similar situation, where their fathers were in the military, and when they retired from Moffitt Field, they moved to Sunnyvale, you know, Mountain View

00:01:26.000 --> 00:01:33.000

nearby areas and stuff, so we still had that kind of foundation. Most of my friends

00:01:33.000 --> 00:01:46.000

Filipino-American, Mexican-American, Vietnamese American. Our parents were, you know, first, you know, first-generation immigrants and stuff, so we were second-generation

00:01:46.000 --> 00:02:02.000

Am I right? Is that second generation where, like, our parents came to America from the Philippines, Vietnam, you know, Mexico, El Salvador, you know, Germany and stuff, and we were all

00:02:02.000 --> 00:02:14.000

You know, we've all had to face that sort of that sort of difference between first and second generation where our parents were close to their cultural roots

00:02:14.000 --> 00:02:29.000

And we were kind of navigating between being, you know, for me, navigating between a Filipino identity and an American identity. But I was lucky in the sense that, you know, I found people who love comic books

00:02:29.000 --> 00:02:45.000

I found people who loved, you know, watching movies, you know? I found people who loved basketball. I was lucky, you know, in the sense. After seventh grade, I never really was bullied or anything, so

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You know, and I found that kind of nerdy subset of people. I don't know if they would consider themselves nerdy, but you know, we were all kind of, like, in that same kind of boat and stuff, and they were good friends and stuff. I was lucky to have them.

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Yeah, it sounds like a kind of earnestness that you're talking about too. Would you feel like you would characterize yourself as being very focused and earnest in your endeavors over your lifetime or did that shift in, did you ever feel cynical growing up like when you saw things happening in politics

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Or community changes and things

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Okay, a lot of worry

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I never felt cynical. I felt worried at times and stuff, but yeah, I mean, I came from different during the time I was growing up in the 70s and 80s, there was a ton of stuff going on and stuff. I mean, at that time, you know, I was

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You know, up until the early 90s, I was a Catholic. And there was a ton of conflict within the Catholic Church

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And, you know, so they're, you know, there was the

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Who was there? You know, in the Philippines, you know, the church going against Marcos or in Latin America, the anti, you know war movement. Not the anti-war. Actually, there was an anti-war movement

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activists against the U.S. involvement in Latin America, supporting right-wing dictatorships, or supporting Marcos in the Philippines. There were activists

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The anti-nuclear activists

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There was

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You know, during, I didn't mention this, but during the AIDS crisis, there was activism against Reagan and Bush administration silence on the AIDS epidemic and stuff. For the AIDS

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activist, I only really knew about that during college, because I was in the art department a lot, and there was a lot of people in the art department that were active in that movement. But

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I think the first... my first friend who came out as gay was in 1990 and stuff, so that came relatively late in terms of my young

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adult life and stuff. So, and I remember when he came out, the first two things that popped up in my mind were, you know, I hope he doesn't get beaten up, and I hope he doesn't get AIDS, and stuff

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So, but so that sort of personalized AIDS crisis for me, but I was not as knowledgeable about that and stuff, but what else?

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But I was never cynical and stuff, I think because

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Yeah, I was just worried, I guess, because I was always... I came from

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You know, the liberal wing of the Democratic Party was still strong and stuff. So Ted Kennedy, Walter Mondale, and especially Jesse Jackson

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You know, I was still hopeful. I think during the 90s, Bill Clinton and that kind of more centrist wing of the Democratic Party took over, but in the 80s, there was still a strong liberal

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you know, Paul Wellstone, you know, those type of more traditional liberals that were still close to the activist left and stuff. I think when Bill Clinton came along, there was a shift towards the more corporate Democrat and stuff

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So

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Yeah, I... at least as a young adult, I never, you know, I felt

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besieged at times, because... because the Reagan era was not a fun era if you were on the left, you know, but I never... I think if I was part of a different part of the left, so, like, if I was

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if I was

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You know, if I was involved in the AIDS activist movement, that would be more cynical and stuff because it was just at a time when people were dying and stuff, you know, a lot of social conservatives were really demonizing

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Gay people at a time when they were really hurting and stuff and you know so if I was more part of that part of the left, I think I would be more cynical but I don't think I was. My knowledge of that was more peripheral

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Does that answer your question or

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Yes, and you were part of the church from which years? Catholic Church?

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I was part of the Catholic Church until the early 90s and stuff. So my first 23, 24, you know, my first

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Early 20s.

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Yeah, until my early 20s. I'm trying to remember like 93, 92 and stuff. So

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And were your parents going to church as well or no?

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Oh

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They've always been devout regular church going members and stuff, but they were more concerned. Yeah, so they remain Catholic and stuff. And I think my siblings remain Catholic too. I think for me

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Hmm

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There was no, you know, even though I didn't like John Paul, I still, even now, I'm still influenced by the progressive side of Catholicism. It's just, in the early 90s

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And I didn't have to drift from the church, you know, there was no real reason, but... because a lot of progressive Catholics stayed in the church in spite of John Paul and stuff, but, you know, for me, I just,

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I just drifted away and stuff. It seemed like John Paul was successful in suppressing a lot of the more progressive side of Catholicism. But

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You know, that's one reason, but I didn't really have to drift away, but I just did and stuff

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Yeah.

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Yeah.

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It was around that same time, I think I also drifted away, but I started going and I was about 16 or 15

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Okay.

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To the Catholic Church on my own, and then I left around that age 21 or so, maybe 20

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Yeah.

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But one of the reasons was that we lost our pastor. So we had a gay youth pastor

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Yeah.

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Yeah

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And, you know, he was kind of the link between us and the community of Catholics, you know, and of course, my friend's parents went to the same church, etc.

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Did you see anything like that happen within the church where there was conservatism starting to show up in different spaces

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Well, yeah, I think because, well, I saw that in the 70s, there was a huge clash between when John Paul came, there was this feeling among more conservative Catholics that Vatican II was going too fast

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Hmm.

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Again, people weren't able to adjust and stuff and so John Paul wanted to, and like-minded Catholics wanted to, they didn't want to get rid of Vatican II, but they wanted to stop any further reforms and stuff.

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I tended to side with the Catholics who wanted to continue the reforms. You know, so... but, you know, in the 70s and 80s, there was still the liberation theology

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proponents. There were the more social justice Catholics who marched with the farm workers, you know, the labor priests and stuff. There were and you know the critique of capitalism

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You know, the

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you know the anti-nuclear activists, the the the the you know the churchgoers that that supported the sanctuary movement. There was a vibrant Catholic left

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That John Paul and Benedict pretty much stifled and stuff. But if I was going to a Jesuit church or something, I might have stayed you know because if there was Santa Clara University

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You know, which is nearby and stuff, was a more progressive Catholic Church and stuff. But my parents attended Our Lady of Peace in Santa Clara, which is a fairly more conservative church. But, you know, I never felt

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You know

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you know, there's the intellectual reasons, but, you know, there's also an emotional thing and stuff. I just... you know, in the early 90s, I'd broken up with my first girlfriend, I was feeling down on myself. There was no real, you know

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There was, you know, I was only a 15 min away for Santa Clara U. I could have attended their church instead of, you know, Our Lady of Peace, but there was no real reason why it drifted, it's just that I felt a sense of

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Yeah.

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disconnection from everything and stuff at that time, and so I drifted away, but you know but that sense of wanting, you know, your questions have to do with community

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That sense of wanting to belong to a community never left

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So the void that the Catholic Church felt

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I needed to fill somehow and stuff, so... and, you know, at that, I, you know, I left college, most of my high school and college friends were and moved to different spaces and stuff, like, different states. We're trying to establish themselves as young adults

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In high school, you see your friends every day. Once you become a young, you know, once you graduate and become a young adult and stuff.

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You don't see your friends every day anymore and stuff, right? So, you know, it... I think community happens when you see people

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On a consistent basis and stuff, and in my early 20s

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I had to make the effort, whereas in school, you don't have to make an effort, you're just there.

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Oh, yeah.

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Now, you mentioned that you had a teacher, McGinnis, I think, and another teacher that really created a sense of connection

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Yeah.

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Yeah, in my fourth grade, Mr. McGinnis, yeah, he was wonderful and stuff. He was in my fourth grade Wisman School in Mountain View. And then in seventh, I think eighth, eighth grade, Mrs. Bocker

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Yeah.

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in Madrone, in Sunnyvale. Those are my two favorite teachers. But, you know, I've always liked... most of my teachers I liked, you know, but those were my two favorite, Mr. McGinnis and Mrs. Bocker and stuff, and I think they... they... they made learning fun

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You know, you know, and I loved everybody in my, my fourth grade class, and I pretty much loved everybody in my, I think Ms. Bocker taught English and social studies and stuff in my

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My eighth grade class and stuff. I was, yeah, I liked everybody in both classes and stuff, so I enjoyed going to their classes, and they made learning fun and stuff, you know, so Mr. McGinnis, he was into, he loved science and stuff, and so we took field trips to hunt fossils

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Wow.

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He took us to... he lived in Lake Tahoe, which is weird because it sounds like he commuted from Lake Tahoe to Mountain View, so I'm guessing that during the week, he probably lived in a, you know, locally, and then during the weekends, he went to Tahoe and stuff. But

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He instilled in us a love of learning, and he made us feel, you know, he made us feel like a group and stuff, because I remember one time he treated the entire class to Chinese food for lunch.

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Right, and we just, you know, I just felt close to everybody in that class and stuff, and I remember the kids from the other classes would look at us kind of jealously as we were eating Chinese food, right? And it was

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Yeah.

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It was the same thing with Mrs. Bacher. She was kind of eccentric, but eccentric in a fun way and stuff, and so, you know, and she allowed us, you know, to be ourselves and stuff. That was... it's nice to be able to be yourselves and stuff

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And, you know, so I learned a lot from both of them

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Yeah, that kind of says a lot about belonging because I think there's definitely like a person that

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Directs the tone right of the space

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Yeah, yeah, yeah.

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And I'm not always just one person, but when it's a teacher in a classroom, there's definitely, like, a way in which they set the tone

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Yeah.

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I think it doesn't hurt that you loved learning, because that's what they do. They teach, you know? So it's like playing tennis with somebody who really wants to play with you, you know?

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Yeah, yeah, yeah.

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Yeah.

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Yeah. So that says a lot about, you know, why, why people belong to a space is that there's somebody kind of curating the space to some degree

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And when you were working in the library, you were there for about 30 years or so. You probably

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you know, you might have had a strong feeling about, you know, whether you belonged or didn't. How did you feel about working in that space, those two spaces

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I worked in two libraries, the Santa Clara Public Library and the Sunnyvale Public Library. I mean, in the Sunnyvale Public Library, just because I worked for a decade, every once in a while I would have my tensions with a coworker. But overall

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Yes.

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Yes.

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I felt very proud to be working in the library, but in terms of a community, I think it's my time working in the children's department of the Santa Clara Public Library in the 90s that I felt the closest, because I became very close friends

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with one of the librarians, Jan Lieberman. Jan and her husband, Don Lieberman, they were both, they were like 40 years older than me, but we bonded very... there was a moment in the 90s where every... once a week, I would drop by their house, and we would just

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Hang out and stuff, and they would

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They would take me to movies, you know, we both love movies, so we would go to the Stanford theater and watch old movies and stuff. On Wednesday nights, they used to have a silent movie night, and they would take me to the movies. And after we'd hang out, watch a movie, we'd go to their place

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Do we get scoops of our favorite ice cream, and we'd talk for hours about books

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and music and history. They loved both of us loved history, and so we would talk about history, we'd talk about the books that we read, we'd talk about the movies that we loved, and so I... from them, I gained an appreciation of jazz and classical music. Before them

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I didn't know anything about classical music or jazz and stuff, and I learned about Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington

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And Aaron Copland and all of that stuff that they didn't know before and stuff. And I think in my lifetime, until I met my wife, the Liebermans were probably my closest friends

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And through them, I learned about children's books and certain we would talk about history a lot and stuff. And that was a lot of fun and stuff. So

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You know, I think, you know, you gain community where people have like-minded interest, and you can just laugh

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You know, laughter, I think, is an important part of community where you laugh, you enjoy each other. Whenever I had personal problems, I would always go to them for advice and stuff.

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And you know the sense of vulnerability, I guess, where you can be vulnerable and be yourself and they would listen with empathy and stuff, you know? And I think they brought out the best in me, you know, and the 90s, especially, I kind of felt like a loser

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Because my art was going nowhere and stuff, and they kept on encouraging me, you know, you keep on, you keep on

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on

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you know, keep you know you're a good artist. Keep going and stuff. And my wife's the same way, you know. So I think that sense of, you know, you want somebody who you can feel yourself with, but who also

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bring out the best in you and stuff, and the Liebermans did that for me and stuff. So that so for them it was that close, really tight knit friendship

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With them

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that I loved and stuff. And I missed them. They both passed away.

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Yeah

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So with that friendship, did you have something like that when you were like in high school or later high school as you were getting into older teens

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Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

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Before going to college.

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Yes, there was a group of like eight friends, eight or nine friends and stuff that I was really tight knit with. And then my first girlfriend and stuff, all of us, we got along pretty well and stuff.

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You know, I think the last time we felt really close and tight-knit was around actually 92 and stuff, when I broke up with my first girlfriend. Those friends, they were worried about me, and so they... for about a year, they would call me up every week and just make sure I was doing something and stuff to make sure I didn't

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wallow and grief and stuff. And so, they were good friends. They were... it was from maybe junior high to

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my early 20s and stuff. They help keep me afloat and stuff during, you know, and it was the same thing. We would hang out, go to movies, you know, we were kind of a nerdy bunch, so we didn't do anything,

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You know, crazy or anything, we would just do normal things, you know, we would, you know, one friend, she knew how to do apple dumpling, I forget what it was

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soup and you know in my 20s and stuff, I didn't know how to cook. So she didn't want me to starve to death as I tried to live on my own. So she and her boyfriend at the time would invite me to eat at their place and stuff, and

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I would just have, you know, I just remember a lot of laughter, a lot of spontaneous outings where we would just, like, you know, during college, you know, one friend invited me to go to the beach with her and you know another friend and we would just

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Yeah.

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kind of, you know, study while sitting in the beach. So I just remembered... I just remember having a lot of fun and stuff, and

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Yeah, we would watch movies together. We would we would just do a lot of stuff together and stuff, but I think it's natural, I think, for anybody. And as you graduate, and as you go out into the world and stuff

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You know, you have those friendships, but you're trying to, you know, people move

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Or people get relationships or people... I think when that happens, you know, you're still friends, but they're no longer there. Their time becomes consumed with creating their own lives. And I think with me, it's the same thing with me

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You know, I had a lot of growing up to do in my 20s and stuff, so... and 30s and stuff, because

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You know, in order to in order to become

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to mature, you know, there were certain things I... there were certain things I had to do on my own, because

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the goals of my life were not necessarily the same as the goal in other people's lives. So, in my third 20s and 30s, I went to this Asian American church, and the first few years of that church, maybe the first 4 or 5 years, I developed close friends in that church

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That when my high school and college friends began in their own lives, I had a new community to go to

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And for the first few years, it was wonderful and stuff. But then after that, the same thing happened. They started the close friends from that church started getting married, or good stuff, and I think there were... there were sort of ideological problems, too

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Because I mentioned that I used to have conservative friends. A lot of those political differences that were not a hindrance

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In the first few years

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you know, they were not the primary reasons that I left the church, but, you know, it started to show and stuff, you know, so

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So

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When you left high school

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You left behind those sort of nine friends that you're really close to

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How did you

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You know, sort of cope with the transition to not being around them all the time. Or was there

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Okay, it went right into the church.

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Okay.

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It was the church friends. They filled that void. But then also my friend the Liebermans too and stuff.

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You know, and I think my the nineties, I was fairly close to a lot of people in Santa Clara Public Library, and I had a few friends in Sunnyvale, too, and stuff

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Yeah.

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Yeah, it's similarly, I think after high school, I was working at a video store and that created a kind of connection

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Yeah

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Yeah, yeah

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That it was almost like a little mini high school because you go in for like your seven hour shift and you would, you know bond with those folks, maybe go out afterwards with a couple of them

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So that the way in which we kind of, like, transition from having that constant interaction with friends to the sporadic, like, you know, work schedule or whatever it it really just kind of becomes a continuity that subconsciously, maybe we just kind of

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kind of re-engage in the way that we did in high school to some degree.

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Yeah, and you know I'm guessing that the people in that video store, were they similar in age to you?

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Okay.

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Yeah, there was a little bit of a range around my age, but there was definitely, there was the older uncle types that were like, oh, I'm, you know, 30-something and I'm working at this video store as a manager versus like the people that were the

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you know, the regular workers like me that were, like, you know, and their, late teens, early 20s

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Yeah.

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Yeah, yeah, yeah, I think my friendship with the Liebermans was unusual in the sense that, they were

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30, 40 years older than me and stuff, but my friends in the Chinese American church, we were all in our 20s and early 30s. So, and, you know, they were starting out their careers. Most of them had not been in relation, you know, all of us were still... most of us were still single

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Yeah.

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So it was almost like a transition into a different high school. You know, it was sort of, in the sense. I think what happens is when communities disperse is when you reach your needs, you get a relationships, you get, you know.

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Yeah.

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You get really deep into your job careers, and that's what splits up, at least in my experience, that's what split up

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different social circles and stuff. And then starting in the 2000, it became political polarization

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Hmm.

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destroyed former friendships and stuff, which was very painful and stuff. But up until the 90s it was not politics. It was more

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Just the facts of life.

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You know, when you enter a transition in your life, you just don't have time anymore. Or they didn't have time for me, you know, because they were focused on their jobs, or they were focused in... on their new marriages, or they just had a kid, and they were starting their families. And at the time, I felt

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heard at times not having enough time, but now that I'm older, you know, I have the maturity now to see that

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You know, that was inevitable, you know, that if you have a new relationship, you have to spend time

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Yeah

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nurturing that relationship. Or if you're in a job, and that... and especially if you have a job that you love and stuff, you spend time in that job because you want to, you know, those are just natural transitions in life

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And that now that I'm older, I understand it and stuff that, you know, things that I was hurt at kind of when I was younger, I realized now it's not their fault and stuff. You know, they're not trying to, you know, it's not a conscious thing on their part, it's just

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their transition to life made them realize put them in that direction and stuff. But I still have some I still have a few

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old friendships from that, you know, from that time, you know? But, my relationship, I'm focused now right now is my wife and stuff, and now I'm caregiving

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And stuff. And because I'm caregiving, I just don't have time to devote to certain friendships, you know, or

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My social circle has shrunk a lot just because I just, you know, you know, my, my, my mother-in-law and my father need me

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And stuff to do to do things and stuff. So

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And that makes me, you know, realize that life

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You know, there are certain times in life where you have the time to devote.

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But then there are certain times when other social, other relationship demand more time just because of health or just crisis or something

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I don't know if that makes sense or

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Yeah, it does.

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And you mentioned that political polarization in the 90s affected your relationships. How did how did the politics affect your cartooning work and

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Oh,

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Yeah, different periods

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Okay.

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Well, I started cartooning in 2008, my political cartoons.

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And

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Gosh, during that time

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you know.

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You know, I would always mention to my friends that, you know, I'm liberal and stuff and stuff. My politics is to the left

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And... but, you know, but

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They never dove too deep into that and stuff. What does it mean and stuff. Once my car, once I started doing political cartoons

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Yeah.

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Yes.

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My politics was no longer vague, you know? Once they saw what I was attacking, or what positions I was holding and stuff, it was pretty blatant in my cartoons. So something that was left unsaid was no longer left unsaid.

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and stuff. And so the the stark political differences I had with some of my friends that were once

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I guess, left unsaid, have now become obvious to them. And

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As the times got more polarized and stuff, in the 90s and 80s, and I would have... I had... I have friends from a wide spectrum, you know, from... I had Marxist friends, I had conservative Christian friends, I had libertarian

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You know, but the friendship was more important than the politics

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And stuff I something happened in the 2000s where quite a few of those relationships, the politics became more important than the friendship

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Does that make sense and stuff? Is that

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Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, I guess as you're doing the work, you're getting more

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Integrated with it and more, I guess, committed to those positions maybe

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For having the defendants

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Yeah, I get you.

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I guess I'll go, I may change my mind on that once I think

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Yeah, yeah, no, that's fine. I'm just trying to frame it just to kind of give us something to launch off of, you know, like

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Okay, yeah, so like you know like you know my my you know

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It became obvious I was pro-choice

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It became obvious that I supported same-sex marriage. It became obvious that my my take on on capitalism was a lot more. I'm a lot more critical than a lot of my friends who were pro-business, who owned the slope, who owned the business or

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Yeah.

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We're, you know, we're more fiscal conservative or than such or and some of those issues, you know, you can, you know, it used to be that with my friendships with people who I disagreed with, I would be able to say, you know, I agree with you in A, B, and C

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Yes.

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But I disagree with you indeed E and F. And even though we would disagree at certain points, there were still points of common ground. I think what would happen

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Especially with my conservative friends. And I blame Fox News for this, but I think I have a theory that as my more conservative friends begin consuming

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things like Fox News and right-wing media. There became a thing where if you don't agree with me 100% and stuff

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You're not, you know, this person's not going to like me

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That kind of attitude and stuff, and it's hard to have a friendship when, you know, because I don't agree with anybody 100%. I'm right some of the time, I'm wrong some of the time, and I think that's true of everybody. Everybody's right some of the time, everybody's wrong some of the time

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of the time. So if you expect me to agree with you 100% on anything.

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Right.

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you know, there's no hope for that friendship and stuff. It's... we're just gonna, because you know that's that's an impossible thing. I love my wife and my wife loves me, but she doesn't agree with me 100%. We disagree a lot on stuff, but

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Yes

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I still love her and stuff, and I think with her, our relationship works because we can agree to disagree

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In past, you know, with friendships with across the... when I had a wide diversity of

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You know, friendships across the ideological divide. You know, there was a sort of unstated agreement that, you know.

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You know, we, you know, our friendship is more important than our ideological differences, but we still... there were still areas where we had common ground and stuff. When you deny the idea of having common ground and stuff.

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It's a bad basis. The tensions will increase and stuff. I don't know if that makes sense and stuff. That's been... that's been my experience with, the loss of my conservative friends and stuff

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You know, my friends who are farther to the left than me, I haven't had that much... I have had some tensions and stuff, but that, you know.

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I don't think, you know, but nothing as bad as what has happened to my more conservative friends and stuff. You know, that hurt and stuff, so...

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I want to share this image here because I was thinking about free speech and how

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When the kind of movement in the right around alternative facts and sort of fracturing our sense of what's true and what's not, or what's possibly

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empirical evidence of oppression, so if you remove... if you change the rules of the game, then, right, there's no oppression, there's no

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Yeah.

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There's no basis for

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for, demand for rights

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Yeah.

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or demand for inclusion, if there's no, you know, reality. And so, I think that strategy has had a lot of negative effects on consciousness and mental health for a lot of our young and old

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Yeah.

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And so how does

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Can you talk about this piece a little bit in terms of like free speech

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Well, this particular cartoon has to do with the Philippines

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Hmm.

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Yeah.

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And so in the Philippines and stuff, and not just the Philippines, but all over the world and stuff is the sort of censoring and, you know, this has to do more with red tagging and stuff. The Tarte and Marcos

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tactic and of autocrats all over the world, you know, especially, you know, with Trump now and stuff, is the sort of disappearance of journalists, lawyers, activists, anybody who's critical of an autocratic government or right-wing movements

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They slowly, you know, they silence them. They get them to disappear and stuff. And so you know what red tagging is, right?

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So essentially labeling somebody as a communist or as somebody who's an insurgent when they're just protesting oppression.

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Yeah.

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Yeah, yeah. So anybody in, so this is similar to what happened in America in the McCarthy area era where you accuse somebody of being a communist subversive

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And, you know, that gives you the right to harass them, you know, to imprison them, to get them stuck in the courts, to get them to not be able to get a job and stuff. So in the Philippines

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You know, the Duterte had a directive. I forget what the directive was, where, you know, that allowed the military and the Philippine National Police to be able to

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You know, target certain groups, you know, journalists, lawyers, activists, church workers, you know, indigenous rights activists, anybody who criticizes the government, they can be harassed

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You know, first in social media, they put out, you know, posts accusing an individual of being a communist insurgent or you know and then so, you know, they get harassed, they can be put to jail

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Sometimes they can even get killed and stuff. And so this is a tactic not only of the Philippines, but all over the world. You know, Erdogan and Turkey

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You know, Putin and Russia, you know, Viktor Orbán in Hungary, I think, all of these places were right-wing

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Governments are in ascendants and stuff. It's the same tactic that Rodrigo Duterte used and stuff, and Marcos is the disappearance of critical voices, disappearance of

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professions that tried to act as a check and balance to autocratic power and stuff. They sort of disappear and stuff. And so the democratic right of free press, free expression, the right to dissent

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And stuff disappears along with these groups and stuff. So journalists, lawyers, human rights lawyers in the Philippines

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All of these groups have been targeted by both the Duterte and the Marcos administrations.

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Yeah. Does that answer your question or

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Yes, very much. And do you see parallels during the different Trump elections and the current Trump administration? Today it's May 30, 2026

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Yes.

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And we've already experienced two versions of that

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Yeah, well, I mean, I had a talk with an Indian political cartoonist, [Rachita Taneja](#). She'd won the 2025-2024 Courage in Cartooning Award because

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She had been put on trial by the, I think the Indian government because of her cartoons criticizing the government and criticizing Hindu nationalism. And she was telling me that comedians in India are being targeted

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Because they make fun of the government. They make fun of Hindu nationalism and stuff. And so in America

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It's not, you know, you have targeting by the MAGA people, you know, where they would troll and harass anybody who disagrees. But now Trump is using the government

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to, you know, he's using the [FCC](#) to target comedians. Jimmy Kimmel, Stephen Colbert. They're using the pressure from the

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the government to

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You know, if you have a contract with the government, and you know that a particular company needs that contract

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to maintain profit, they can use that as an extortion

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To leverage the private company to do Trump's will and stuff. And much like Duterte did in the Philippines for the Philippines Daily Enquirer, you know

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It was sold to a person who was friendly to Duterte and stuff, or he would use in the Philippines, there's something I'm not sure why they have this, but there's something, you know.

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In order to use the airwaves that's owned by the government, private companies need to renew their franchise

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So ABS-CBN was denied the franchise, and they were because Duterte was critical of them because of their coverage of extrajudicial killings.

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So

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The Duterte allies in the legislature denied ABS-CBN

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the franchise

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2019, I forgot when and stuff to so that and if you deny the government airways that severely reduced ABS-CBNs

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reach to the Philippine, you know, to the Filipino people. And so, without the franchise and stuff, they've had to do alternative means of relaying their shows, and their ability to reach out

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to a wider Philippine audience was severely cut and stuff, and so less people are able to see their critical coverage of extrajudicial killings, or anything critical of the

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to our Duterte government, and I don't think

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I'm not sure, but I'll have to research, but I don't think their franchise was renewed under the Marcos government and stuff. And so, I think with the Trump administration, they're taking the playbook out of the... of the

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Duterte government, and that the use of the government agencies to either blackmail or extort or

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Or

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harass

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Critics of the government

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So, I see... what frightens me about the second Trump term is he's adopting a lot of the tactics that Duterte used during Duterte's term of office.

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Yeah. And so

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Kind of taken together, we talked about, you know, growing up, we talked about your work and

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We talked a bit about the politics around

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oppressive politics around free speech

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In terms of national belonging, as your sense of national belonging, belonging to this nation changed over time, or how have you experienced all these shifts and changes in your own sense of belonging

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I think

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I first felt a sense of belonging as an American in 1976, because that was the bicentennial and stuff. But I think

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I've had my struggles and stuff. As a Filipino American and stuff, during junior high and high school especially, I

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Hmm.

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As I met Filipinos who came from the Philippines, and they would question me, you know, why don't you know the language? Why don't you know the culture? So I kind of struggled at that time with a sense of, you know, am I a Filipino or am

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American and stuff and

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So my sense of being a Filipino, I struggled with that until my freshman year of college

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And so I took that was a weird year. It was 1986. I took an Asian American class. Dr. Liu in the San Jose State where I read the book [*America's in the Heart* by Carlos Bulosan](#)

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And his sense of I think it sounds like he had a similar struggle and stuff

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But that book and that class and my classmates at that time really helped me. And that was also the year of the people power revolution

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Where the Philippines the Filipino people overthrew the Marcos dictatorship

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And I felt very proud of my Filipino heritage and stuff. And my first girlfriend was Filipina, and she accepted me for who I was. She never criticized me for not knowing the culture or not knowing the language. And so she just liked me and stuff

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And I liked her, and I liked her family and stuff, and I think all three of those things helped me kind of resolve the struggle I had when I was younger that I can love being an American, but I can also love my Filipino heritage

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and stuff. But also, there are figures in American history that struggled you

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Martin Luther King, in his last speech before he got killed, he said, you know.

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You know, we're fighting for America to be true to what it says on paper

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You know, in American high ideals and stuff, you know, the Soviet Union is not preaching about freedom of speech. The Soviet Union is not preaching about freedom and equality. America is preaching that and stuff, and we're here to say that

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You know,

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you know, as Americans, we want American, you know, you know, as African Americans, we demand that America be true to what it says on paper.

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If you really believe in freedom and equality and stuff, we're here to tell you that we want you to live up to your high ideals and stuff. And so I think the best in America is the best, you know, when, okay, as a Filipino American.

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I admire those Americans who were against American imperialism and the Philippine-American War

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So Mark Twain, W.E.B. Dubois, Ida B. Wells, all of them were Americans who were anti-imperialist who saw the wrong of the Philippine American War

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Or the anti-war protesters, you know, in the Vietnam War or those Americans who spoke out against the

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the genocide of the Native American population, or the abolitionists who saw the evil of slavery and stuff. All of them, in the sense, you know, the

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The AIDS activists who saw the evil of

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Of the response to the AIDS crisis and stuff or

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And, you know, the I think those activists are telling America that, you know.

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You know

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We want... we want America to live up to the values that it says it

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Yeah

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You know, so, so that's what makes me... that's why I'm in the left

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And stuff is that I always see the American left

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As you know

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Capitalism actually doesn't, you know, you can't have political equality without economic equality

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That's, you know, and if you if you

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you know why now do we see billionaires having so much more power over our democratic institutions than the average person?

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You know.

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You know, and

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You know, Eugene Debs, you know, the socialist American socialist or the New Dealers and stuff realized that

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You know, people who have power and

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financial interest

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Are so much better at

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that skewing the political system to

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What's the right word to

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to take into account their interest rather than to the interest of

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struggling working class or poor people

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Yes.

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Stefan, how do you, you know, and we need to... if we want... if we want America to live up to its highest values

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How do we

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act as a check on that so that

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poor and working class people can have their interest met and stuff

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Yeah.

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So I don't know, does that make sense or

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Yeah, totally. On a national level. And also going back to the local level, so the project spaces of belonging is also about

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Oh, okay.

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Okay.

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The sort of cultural aspects or cultural politics of belonging to a space, whether it's local or national. And I wanted to kind of juxtapose the national with the local by talking a little bit about or just having you talk a little bit about your understanding of Japantown or Pinoy town

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In San Jose where

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there's this street called Jackson Street, where there's plenty of

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community businesses that are local, but the question around whether they're tied to a long history of, you know Japanese Americans, you know, Filipino Americans, Chinese Americans

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Or if it's more of a gentrifying space like most spaces right in San Jose that are popular where wealthier folks are moving in and working class people or lower middle class people are having to move out. What is your sense of that as a kind

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space of belonging for Asian Americans, and even non-Asian Americans love that space, right? It was voted one of the most popular areas of San Jose, I think, in 2023, I think it was like the top neighborhood or something like that

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In terms of vibrancy and belonging or something like that. So, what is your sense of that, and what interested you in that space

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Well, I mean, I used to live in downtown San Jose in the 90s and stuff, and that's always been... I used to ride my bike around there all the time and stuff, but I think... I did a talk with, you know, Robert Ragsac and Tom Eason about it and stuff, and I love the history

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But I think part of the vibrancy is the sense that it keeps the history alive. There's quite a few museums there. There's, you know, so you can learn about the history

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Tom and Robert are making a concerted effort to keep the history of the Japanese American and the Filipino American communities alive and stuff. There's a Filipino community center there

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There is various murals there and stuff. And I think there's various markers where, like, if you go to this spot, it'll tell you a little bit about the history of Japantown

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Or, you know, Robert gives tours about the history of Pinoytown and stuff. I think that sense of the vibrancy, I think, comes partially from that. They keep history alive

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And stuff. There's a Buddhist temple there and stuff. And my wife and I and our nieces, when they were younger, I forgot the name of the festival. They would have festivals occasionally there

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And when they do and stuff, it was very vibrant and stuff. It was very cool. And a lot of people there were young and stuff that would go to these festivals. I would see people riding bikes

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coming there and stuff. And I think

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Part of it's accessibility, part of it is keeping history alive, and part of it is a sense of

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You know, the Buddhist temple... this is only a theory of mine, but I'm guessing that the Buddhist temple keeps a little bit of that history alive and stuff, that sense of connection to that community

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Hmm.

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I think one of the things about

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One of the dangers of gentrification is that

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You know.

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I don't know how many of the older generation of Japanese Americans are still there and stuff. And as they die off and stuff

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And as young people, young professionals come, I'm wondering, I think we mentioned this last time, but you were mentioning how housing prices can price out the working class people

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And part of the danger of gentrification is the sense that

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As housing... I think the same thing is... the same problem is happening in the Mission District in San Francisco, is that as rents, as housing prices rise and stuff, a higher income

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Group of people would replace the older working class people who live there. And the danger is that

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you know the the sense of a historical connection may be lost

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due to gentrification and stuff. The historical

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connection, the sense of a certain, you know, generation and a certain demographic of people who have a fondness for the historical ties may be lost for a newer

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residents who may not have that historical or I guess ethnic connection to Japantown or Pinoy Town and stuff. Like, I don't know how many Filipino Americans are still in that area and stuff, you know.

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We'll, you know, the Philippine Community Center

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still attract people to come there and stuff, or will it be all outsiders who don't live in the neighborhood and stuff, you know?

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What's the percentage of Japanese Americans who still live in Japantown and stuff? You know, will the Japanese-American connection be through the temple, or will it just be, you know, or, you know, will residents actually be going there, or will it be people who are outside the neighborhood be going there?

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And will the connection be through outsiders who are drawn into the area through festivals or museums or the temple

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I don't have an answer. I don't know and stuff. So, I'm not... I don't think I have the answer to your question about vibrancy, but I'm guessing

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you know, how gentrification happens and how it changes the demographic of Japantown, the Japantown area will have a lot to do with

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the vibrancy of the area and stuff

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Did you notice any changes when the COVID-19 struck and did you see any changes to the neighborhood or did you notice anything or did Robert Ragsac

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Or Tommy's gonna say anything about

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The effect of COVID on the community there.

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Yeah

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No, I didn't ask that question. I was mostly asking about what was their experience like maybe in the 30s and 40s about that neighborhood. I was especially curious to know how did Pinoytown react

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In 1930 during the Watsonville riots. So I was trying to connect more to the past. If I remember correctly, I don't think I... I might have asked, but maybe...

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I don't think I did and stuff, but I do

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You know, I admire their passion for keeping history alive and for giving tours and stuff. So I recommend to anybody to contact either one of them

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to give a tour and to get a spoken word history from people who actually experienced it and stuff, because I'm not sure how old they are and stuff, but when that generation passes away and stuff, that's a connection that's lost and stuff. I think one of the reasons I gave an interview with them is I wanted to be able to record

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You know, a little bit of what they were saying before they're gone.

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So the Watsonville Riots was essentially a racial motivated riot against Filipino farm workers

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Yeah, what happened in 1930 was there was a lot of anti-Filipino sentiment at that time. It was a general anti-immigrant

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The 20s was a very

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racist time, you know, the revival

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Yeah. A lot of it around industry, right?

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Yeah, and the sense that there was a resentment among white farm workers that Filipino farm workers were stealing their jobs and stuff. And they dared to fraternize

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with white women and stuff, which, you know, if you're not gonna allow Philippine women to migrate to America, you know, that's gonna happen and stuff. You know, so you put Filipino farm workers in an impossible situation and stuff, you know, and then

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You know.

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Yeah, Nature takes its course in a sense, right?

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Yeah, yeah, yeah, I mean, you know, so I learned, I did a talk and stuff. There's a thing called the [Tubera Project in the Watsonville](#) is in the heart initiative

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And, you know, there's a person named Roy Riccio who founded the Tubera project to try to preserve the memories of the Filipino Americans in Watsonville

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there sort of was generational trauma from the Watsonville riots and stuff, and that future, you know, later generations

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We're reluctant to talk about it because they knew of the prejudices against Filipino Americans and stuff. So

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But, you know, so for a couple of days and stuff, there was a group of maybe 500 white people who went around attacking Filipino Americans because there was a dance where Filipinos

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Dance with white women and stuff, and that incited a sort of

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You know, how dare Filipinos dance with fraternize and dance with white women and stuff. And so one person got killed Firman Tobera, I think his name was. And several people got beaten up badly

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And it spread. There were other places in the western coast where there were anti-Filipino attacks and stuff. But I think it was the worst in Watsonville and stuff. And so they tried to preserve that memory and stuff

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And, you know, it's not, you know, some people think of it as anti-white. It's not anti-white. We just want white people to not make the same mistakes again and stuff.

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So, you know, I'm married to a white woman from Watsonville, so, you know, I think I'm not against white people. I just think that in the same way that we want Germans and Japanese to learn about the mistakes of World War II

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You know, we don't want the Germans to go back to Nazism. We don't want the Japanese to go back to fascism and stuff, you know? We want them to learn the history so they don't make the same mistakes and fall back into fascism

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In the same way, we don't want white Americans to forget the lessons of the past and fall back into right, you know, right-wing, you know, our American version of fascism. And fascism means, you know, when Americans turn, you

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the Jim Crow South was basically

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You know.

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It was not a democracy if a large percentage of the population can't

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have citizenship rights

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So anytime, anytime any country moves towards right-wing, you know, towards fascism

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vulnerable minority groups

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get hurt and stuff. Our rights get taken away. We become targets of discrimination and prejudice and hate

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So in the

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In the 30s and stuff, it was Filipinos

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who are this target and stuff. You know, in the 40s, it was Japanese Americans and stuff. African Americans faced it throughout the entire country's history and stuff, right? We want progress. I mean, the reason we're called progressives is we want

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Right.

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to improve as a nation. We want progress. We don't want... we don't want to go through this again. You know, we... you know, we, you know, my parents came here because we... they wanted

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We... they wanted

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better opportunities and conditions than they had in the Philippines and stuff. And, you know, so

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No, not at all.

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I don't know, am I straying from your question? I forgot your question. I'm starting to rant, so I'm trying to rant.

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No, no. So in terms of the final question is like reflecting on the long haul of your life, you know, the

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the history of your own life

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How do you see your changing sense of community over time? Do you see that it's being affected by different

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Forces around you

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And as your sense of community more recently felt

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you know a sense of belonging

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Yeah, in the sense that, I mean, I'm closer to family now and stuff, especially as I'm caregiving, but a couple years ago, I went to my sister's wedding and I began to realize, I think because I'm 10 years older

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10, 15 years older than my cousins, I never really was close to them, just because of the age difference. It's only as an adult, when... at my sister's wedding, I realized, you know, I really like my cousins and stuff. And so I made an effort

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Hmm.

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Yeah.

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to try to hang out with my cousins more, and I've been organizing these family get-togethers where I get to know my cousins better. And the more I know my cousins, the more I like them and stuff. The cousin I was closest to is the cousin I'm closest to in age, my cousin Connie.

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She's only a year older than me and stuff, and I, you know, she... among my cousins and stuff, she's the one I'm closest to, but my other cousins and stuff, I really like and stuff. It's just... I want to get to know them now while we're still at a certain age, because I know as we get older and stuff.

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Yeah.

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We just won't have time and stuff. Like I like my uncles and aunts, but now they're in their 70s and 80s and stuff. I know there's a limited amount of time I have to get to know them and stuff because if I don't and stuff

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Yeah.

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You know, they're not going to be around, you know. A lot of my older friends and family members who I feel close to and I love have passed, you know, not a lot, but some of my closest friends and some of my mom passed away

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My friend the Lieberman's passed away. My wife's best friend passed away and stuff. My father-in-law passed away. So I'm realizing there's a limited amount of time

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to get to know people just because... or to maintain... and I've lost the, you know, I've lost some friends due to political polarization

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I've lost some friends due to

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You know, religious differences and stuff, or, you know, or this or that. And I've lost some friends, not so much lost friends, it's just, they have their lives now. They have their careers, they have different friendship circles and stuff

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And one friend who's a teacher, now she has a lot of close friends who are teachers and stuff, you know, and when we meet, we still have a wonderful time and stuff, but we meet, what, once a year, twice a year and stuff, whereas it used to be, I used to see an old

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A friend

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pretty much every day because of school or because of this.

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Yeah.

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Hmm.

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You know, I have to work a community now, whereas before I didn't have to work at it. So what are the things that I rely on now? I'm in a church now and I love the church. It's this Presbyterian church, but

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Most of the people were lifelong Presbyterians. You know, I've been in that church for 10 years, and I barely know the Presbyterian denomination. I go because a lot of times I stay in a church, right? I stay in... because I like the people

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And stuff

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Yeah.

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My closest religious ties, I still refer back to Catholic, you know, the progressive side of Catholic theology and stuff. And so I'm kind of lazy. In the 10 years, I could have learned more about the Presbyterian Church. I just haven't. I still don't you know what is a Presbyterian mean? I don't know

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But, you know, so, but, you know, like, you know, with you, I connected with you because I made a conscious effort to try to connect with Filipino American activists

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Yeah.

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So I can learn more about issues facing the Philippines and the Filipino American community and stuff. But I had to make that effort to get to know people better

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And stuff. But in terms of friendships and stuff, you know, most of you most of you guys are 10, 15 years younger than me. Being around you guys makes me feel old

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Yeah, I'm 53, turning 53 this summer.

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Yeah.

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Yeah, and you guys have your own lives and stuff. So in terms of close friendships, you know, I think because other things are drawing me and stuff, you know, I think friendships and community require time

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Yeah.

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Whatever you have the most time with, that's what you become closest to. And, you know, the people who have time for you, you become close to them, because they have the time for you and stuff. It's, you know.

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Does that make sense and stuff? So my sense of community

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Yeah, so more effort.

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It's just more effort and stuff, and who in life are in similar life circumstances as you so you know people who are my age

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all we... whenever we get together and stuff, the only thing we ever talk about is, oh, so what's happening with your parents? Well, my parent has dementia, so I'm taking him to a nursing home, or my parent now has, you know,

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this health problem, so I'm taking him to the more doctors

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90% of our conversations are how we're helping our parents

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Right, right.

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Yeah.

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You know, like, you know, if I was in my 30s and stuff, most of my friends would talk about, oh, my kid is 3 years old and, you know, you know what I mean? Life experiences shape community, in my opinion, and stuff

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You know, whereas before

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Yeah, go ahead

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So it seems like it seems like you're strategizing. Go ahead.

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I don't know if it's strategized, just life pushes you in a certain direction and stuff. So, you know, I think the reason I go to the Presbyterian church is I like the people, but also my politics

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closely aligns with the politics of that church, a fairly left-wing activist church and stuff. And that's what I'm attracted to.

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It's done

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Hmm.

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So whereas the Asian American church, it was more diverse and stuff. Some were Democrats, some were Republicans and stuff in the 90s. I don't know if that's the same now in an Asian American evangelical church and stuff, I'm guessing

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I don't know how Trump is... I know how Trump has affected white evangelical churches, but I don't know how,

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Trump has affected evangelical churches of color, because I know black evangelicals overwhelmingly supported Kamala Harris in 2024, so the Black Evangelical Church is very different than the white evangelical Church

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And I don't know if Latino evangelicals or Asian American evangelicals have a similar dynamic and stuff.

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But the Presbyterian Church, I don't have that problem. I'm not gonna... One thing I like about the Presbyterian, I'm not going to get into conflicts with conservative Christians that I got into in the 2000s and stuff, so I want to avoid that as much as possible. I don't want to get into that kind of emotional pain

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So

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Yeah.

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I don't know if it's strategy is just life pushed me in that direction and stuff

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Yeah, I tend to think in terms of strategy and tactic, you know, just because I'm a sociologist and I'm thinking at culture as kind of a space of change

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Yeah

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Or

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Yeah

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paralleling the sort of the culture is paralleling with the material changes that are happening, which are causing waves and social forces that affect us, you know, like gentrification is one of those forces that's material driven, but it's also

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the culture that reinforces it, and I think that's where I asked you the question around alternative facts and like how

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Oh, oh yeah, okay.

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the the manipulation of the culture and changing the the board game, you know, changing the game

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Yeah.

01:12:55.000 --> 01:13:05.000

So that... that it... it leans towards a more capitalistic view of the world, then therefore, you know, capitalists are the ones that have the right answers, and they're the ones that have the

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the plan, and that's why Trump is a good businessman, and he makes deals, and so I think that

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Yeah.

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Culture is kind of the terrain in which that a cartoonist is sort of

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If responding to these forces of change

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Yeah, you know, for misinformation, one of the things that affects it, it affects relationships in the sense that it becomes more difficult to have friendships from across the ideological divide

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Hmm.

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So, you know, in the 1990s and before, you know, we made, you know, I may disagree with, like, I think the reason that I... with my more left-wing friends, I'm able to keep those friendships, a lot more of those friendships, even if we disagree, we agree on the same facts

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And stuff. I think what happened in the 1990s, I was able to have conservative friends because we may disagree

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war starkly, but we agreed in the same facts. We just disagreed on the solutions

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And starting in the 2000s, there was more of a sense of, okay, conservatives who don't believe that climate change exists

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conservatives who don't agree... who don't think that racism is systemic

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Yeah.

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or that economic inequalities are systemic and stuff. And so if you don't agree with that and stuff, how can you... how can you agree on any solutions if you don't agree with the... with the facts and stuff? And so that... that

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And so it becomes harder to have a reasonable dialogue when you don't agree with the facts, and it makes friendships more fraught

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I don't know if... I don't know if that comes close to what you're saying, but I think on a personal level

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It makes that sort of

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friendships among different spectrum among different ideological spectrums more difficult because of that and stuff

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You know

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That makes sense.

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Yeah, so in a community that for democracies, it becomes more difficult just because

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You know, democracy assumed that no one group or person has a monopoly on truth, and that you need to have a debate of ideas and then when the debate reaches an impasse

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You know, you're able to compromise and find areas of common ground. When you don't have the same shared sense of facts, you don't have common ground

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Because, you know, without us, this is happening in the Philippines and stuff. And

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you know, you know, in the Philippines

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Was the martial law period the golden age? No

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Was the Philippines prospering during the Marcos dictatorship? No. Coney capitalism destroyed really destroyed the Philippines with the Philippine economy, 60%, 70%

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Poverty rate and stuff? That's terrible and stuff. In the 80s, the only country that was worse had a worst economy in Asia, the only Asian country that had the worst economy than the Philippines was, I think, Cambodia

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And the Cambodia had just gone through the killing fields and stuff, you know, so

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you know,

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Yeah, it's

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I don't know it. So, you know, you know, without a shared sense of facts

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democracy can't function. You know, [Maria Ressa, the Philippine journalist](#) was saying that and stuff. And I agree with her and stuff. You can't have a democracy, you can't debate a democracy requires debate

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And it's impossible to debate if you don't share the same sense of facts and stuff. And in the community, if you don't share, if you don't have the same sense, if you fall for propaganda instead of facts and stuff

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You become very vulnerable to groupthink and to autocracy

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It's easy to manipulate you if you don't have the same... if you don't... if you can't get facts, if misinformation

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Yeah.

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Yeah, I don't know what to say.

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Yeah, that makes sense. That's why, you know, alternative facts was

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an important sort of historical moment of cultural strategy from the right is to

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demand that their version of reality was the only one

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Yeah, yeah.

01:17:52.000 --> 01:17:53.000

Yeah.

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which is like gaslighting the nation, in a sense, right?

01:18:01.000 --> 01:18:02.000

Yeah.

01:18:02.000 --> 01:18:09.000

Yeah, it's still happening. It's still happening and it's happened in the Philippines. It's happening here. I'm guessing any autocratic country, it happens and stuff because

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Yeah, just because autocratic countries tend to be incompetent. And in order to hide their mistakes and their flaws and stuff

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they have to do misinformation because if people knew the facts and stuff, those governments would be overthrown

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You know

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Yeah.

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Yeah, and I saw your point about some of the same playbook being played out in the United States where there's kind of the attempt to create a kind of golden era with beautiful buildings and beautiful bills and beautiful this and golden that.

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You know, names emblazoned on, you know museums and

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Yeah

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Just all these sort of inappropriate things that are happening in an attempt to create a sense that

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that this is a good era for everyone in the nation

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Yeah, yeah. That's why I think like the Japanese American community is very much supporting immigrant groups now because of what they went through with their incarceration during World War II.

01:19:15.000 --> 01:19:25.000

Because there's that collective memory of discrimination against that group, and they see what's happening, what happens to the Muslim American community, what's happening to those communities

01:19:25.000 --> 01:19:35.000

that are being targeted by ICE, the detention centers. That's very... the Japanese American community has a collective memory of what happened

01:19:35.000 --> 01:19:45.000

During the those camps during World War II and stuff. And so as a group, they're very much an activist against ICE

01:19:45.000 --> 01:19:51.000

Because of that I'm Filipino Americans. If we don't remember what happened in Watsonville

01:19:51.000 --> 01:19:55.000

What happened in the 20s and 30s

01:19:55.000 --> 01:20:12.000

And stuff. We need to, you know, that's why history is important and stuff, so that, you know, when group... when this... when what happened to Filipino Americans in the 20s and 30s, what happened to Japanese Americans in the 40s, when we see that happening to

01:20:12.000 --> 01:20:18.000

Latino group communities today. We need to be in solidarity with them because

01:20:18.000 --> 01:20:25.000

You know, the injustices that befell us are befalling another group. We need to... we need to protect them

01:20:25.000 --> 01:20:26.000

Right.

01:20:26.000 --> 01:20:27.000

And stuff, so

01:20:27.000 --> 01:20:28.000

Right.

01:20:28.000 --> 01:20:30.000

So,

01:20:30.000 --> 01:20:39.000

So we covered a lot of ground, and I was wondering if there's any questions that you had for me about this interview or the process, or

01:20:39.000 --> 01:20:53.000

or the larger project before we end the interview. Or if there's anything you want to say in addition

01:20:53.000 --> 01:20:54.000

Yeah, thank God.

01:20:54.000 --> 01:21:01.000

Oh, no, just thank you. Thank you for asking and stuff. I'm a pretty opinionated person, so I don't... I really don't mind... I don't mind expressing my opinion, but also with the caveat that, you know, if you disagree with me, that's okay. I don't mind it

01:21:01.000 --> 01:21:02.000

Yeah.

01:21:02.000 --> 01:21:15.000

Only thing is, if you disagree, as long as you back it up with facts and stuff. I could be wrong and stuff, it's just, I'm basing this... since you're asking me about my experiences, these are my experiences again, Stefan.

01:21:15.000 --> 01:21:17.000

Yeah

01:21:17.000 --> 01:21:18.000

No, it helps

01:21:18.000 --> 01:21:29.000

But yeah, so like I thank anybody who listens to it, I thank you for being willing to listen to me. That's all. And I thank you for your efforts to

01:21:29.000 --> 01:21:46.000

to gather experiences of people so that, you know, hopefully your students will get something out of what I say and stuff. And if my... if your students disagree with me, that's okay. I'm... I'm

01:21:46.000 --> 01:21:47.000

Yeah.

01:21:47.000 --> 01:21:48.000

I'm right some of the times, but I'm wrong some of the time. So feel free to disagree with me. I could be wrong.

01:21:48.000 --> 01:21:54.000

No, no, that's my attitude, too. So I appreciate that that perspective. And I think students will benefit. I mean

01:21:54.000 --> 01:22:05.000

And my hope is that they'll explore your work, your award-winning cartoonists. I want them to see that as, you know, as activism, as journalism

01:22:05.000 --> 01:22:10.000

But also just art, too, you know, art and activism

01:22:10.000 --> 01:22:11.000

Thank you.

01:22:11.000 --> 01:22:18.000

So, and there's a lot of, you know, historical items that you mentioned that I think that could be good topics for research, you know. So

01:22:18.000 --> 01:22:29.000

My hope is that they'll look at this and they'll say, oh, I really want to follow up on what happened in the Watsonville. That's where my family's from, or, you know, what's happening in the Philippines and the parallels between

01:22:29.000 --> 01:22:35.000

you know, different sort of fascism that we're seeing around the world. You know, we can compare and contrast

01:22:35.000 --> 01:22:52.000

Their economic systems and their histories, etc.

01:22:52.000 --> 01:22:53.000

Yeah, yeah.

01:22:53.000 --> 01:22:58.000

Yeah, this has been really enlightening, and it's good to hear from somebody who has a relationship with Catholicism, too, because I do have a kind of place in my heart for Catholicism, even though I didn't stay there, you know, it's still kind of, like you said, a default, right? So when I'm in a church, I kind of look for

01:22:58.000 --> 01:23:16.000

When did we genuflect? You know, like... so it's nice to hear that, you know, there's that kind of nuanced relationship to religion that's not just, like, you either like religion or you don't, you know? It's like, I don't think life is that way

01:23:16.000 --> 01:23:17.000

Yeah.

01:23:17.000 --> 01:23:27.000

Yeah, I sort of have a mixed feeling towards Catholicism, but the progressive side has had a very positive effect on my life. I'm not a fan of the conservative side, but I see the Catholic Church as being nuanced

01:23:27.000 --> 01:23:38.000

Yeah, yeah, I do too. And there's so many different people that are different in the church in terms of their political positions and their cultural ways. So

01:23:38.000 --> 01:23:46.000

you know, we have to be, I think, in a way, more nuanced in how we see individuals and groups nowadays

01:23:46.000 --> 01:23:53.000

Within this alternative facts kind of culture where we're being misled and directed in ways that are not going to be in our interest

01:23:53.000 --> 01:24:04.000

So understanding people is really important, and generational connections between people is important too in history, right, and how we experience history.

01:24:04.000 --> 01:24:07.000

So again, thank you again, Angela Lopez.

01:24:07.000 --> 01:24:17.000

Oh, sure. Thank you. And I'm glad you I'm honored, I guess, that you asked and stuff.

01:24:17.000 --> 01:24:33.000

Oh, no, I mean, I'm lucky. I'm lucky to have this time with you. It's like, you know we've had like almost three hours total. So appreciate your time and I know you're busy with caregiving and a lot of my interviewees are busy with caregiving for children or other adults

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So yeah, thank you so much.

01:24:35.000 --> 01:24:36.000

Okay.

01:24:36.000 --> 01:24:38.000

I hope you have a good rest of your weekend.

01:24:38.000 --> 01:24:40.000

Okay, sure, you too. Thank you. Okay.

01:24:40.000 --> 01:24:43.000

Thank you.

Angelo Lopez Part 1 AI Summary:

This was an interview conducted by Steve for the "Spaces of Belonging" project, a California History Center archive focusing on communities in Santa Clara County. Steve interviewed Angelo Lopez, a Filipino American cartoonist born in 1967 who worked for the Philippine News Today from 2011 to 2023. The conversation covered Angelo's family background as children of Filipino immigrants, his childhood experiences living on military bases, and how popular culture including comics like Peanuts and Calvin and Hobbes influenced his artistic development. They discussed how Angelo's political consciousness developed through exposure to social issues, religious teachings, and political music of the 1970s and 1980s. The interview explored Angelo's cartooning work, which focuses on highlighting issues affecting marginalized communities,

particularly Filipino Americans and landless peasants in the Philippines. They examined Angelo's current challenges in building community as a cartoonist since losing his newspaper gig, his limited participation in local art groups due to caregiving responsibilities, and his reflections on the future of Japantown as a space of belonging for Asian American communities.

Next steps

Angelo

- Share the interview video on social media once it is posted online.
- Continue developing the [Substack page](#) to build readership and community following the loss of the previous newspaper platform.

Steve

- Post the interview video on the California History Center's YouTube channel and notify Angelo when it is available.
- Consider introducing Angelo to Brandon (owner of Minasan) and other community members for potential future collaborations or events.
- Inform Angelo about any future public engagement or interview opportunities related to the Spaces of Belonging project.

Summary

Japantown Website Content Structure

Steve and Angelo discussed the structure of a website featuring interviews, which is organized into two sides: one focusing on Japantown-specific content and the other on artists and activists, including both community members and those with peripheral connections to Japantown. Steve explained how he categorized the interviews, noting the challenge of distinguishing between community members who are also artists and activists. Angelo confirmed his placement in the artist-activist section and shared his perspective on being an artist activist.

Spaces of Belonging Project

Steve explained his project "Spaces of Belonging," which aims to collect interviews about personal and community experiences in Santa Clara County, particularly from the Japantown community. He described his approach of asking broad, non-leading questions to allow interviewees to share their perspectives while providing students with a variety of theoretical frameworks to analyze society. The interview with Angelo Lopez, a Filipino American cartoonist born in 1967 who worked at public libraries and created editorial cartoons for the Philippine News Today, was just beginning when the transcript ended.

Immigrant Family and Community Memories

Angelo discussed his family background as immigrants from the Philippines who served in the American Navy, resulting in frequent relocations during his childhood. He shared fond memories of feeling a strong sense of belonging in second, third, and fourth grades, particularly due to close friendships and supportive teachers. The conversation explored how popular culture, including events like Michael Jackson's Motown 25 performance and shared experiences watching movies together in the 1970s and 1980s, helped create community bonds across different musical genres.

1980s Political Music Evolution

Angelo and Steve discussed how political music and popular culture evolved in the 1980s, with Angelo mentioning bands like The Specials, The Clash, and Public Enemy as examples of political content in mainstream music. Angelo shared his own political awakening during middle school, influenced by reading news articles for extra credit and following political comic strips like Doonesbury, though he noted his political understanding was superficial at the time. The

conversation also touched on how cultural and political awareness changes during different life stages, particularly in middle and high school years.

Cultural Influence on Political Awareness

Angelo discussed how his family's interest in the Philippines and Catholic Church influenced his awareness of political events, particularly regarding opposition to martial law and the killing of 19 community activists in 2026. Steve and Angelo explored how popular culture and social media affect attention spans and consciousness, with Angelo noting that younger generations have shorter attention spans due to constant jarring content transitions. They discussed how shows like "All in the Family" encouraged viewing opposing perspectives with empathy, contrasting with today's algorithmic bubbles that can dehumanize those with different political views.

Political Influences on Cartooning Work

Angelo discussed how the political campaigns of Ted Kennedy and Jesse Jackson influenced his politics through their focus on building coalitions of working-class whites, minorities, and the poor. He explained that this approach was based on the labor movement's belief in linking racial equality with economic justice, contrasting with the Southern Strategy which aimed to break up such coalitions. Angelo described how his political views influence his cartooning work, which focuses on highlighting issues affecting marginalized communities rather than following headlines, and he shared an example of a cartoon about landless peasants in the Philippines that examines the conditions leading to their displacement and poverty.

Political Cartoons and Social Issues

Angelo discussed his political cartoons focusing on issues like aerial strafing and bombing in the Philippines, where military operations against communist insurgency kill innocent civilians and dehumanize poor and indigenous people. He explained that his political perspective is influenced by wanting to support underdogs and examine root causes of insurgencies, including poverty and government complicity in exploitation. Angelo traced his interest in cartoons back to childhood, starting with Charles Schulz's Peanuts and later expanding to superhero comics like Fantastic Four, which led to developing community connections through comic book stores and other passionate fans.

Comic Influence on Worldview Expansion

Angelo discussed his appreciation for comic strips like Peanuts and Calvin and Hobbes, praising them for their depth, originality, and imaginative qualities that expanded his worldview. He explained how these comics introduced him to concepts like philosophy and classical music through characters and storylines, noting examples like Charlie Brown specials featuring jazz music and Bugs Bunny cartoons with opera soundtracks. The conversation explored how popular culture, including The Beatles and experimental music, influenced Angelo by encouraging creative exploration and breaking genre boundaries.

Political Cartooning and Censorship

Angelo discussed the influence of historical political cartoonists like Herb Block and Walt Kelly who courageously criticized Joe McCarthy in the 1950s, and he shared how he draws inspiration from these pioneers to avoid self-censorship. He mentioned several cartoonists who have influenced him, including Eric Garcia and David Brown, who focus on specific communities, and expressed concern about high-tech surveillance being used by authoritarian governments to harass human rights activists both domestically and internationally. The conversation ended with Steve asking Angelo about the community spaces where he shares his work and builds connections with other cartoonists.

Career Transition to Content Creation

Angelo discussed his career transition from working at Philippine News Today, where his cartoons reached 20-25,000 people, to creating content on his Substack page after being let go in 2023 due to budget constraints. He explained his current challenges in building an audience and finding community, noting that caregiving responsibilities have limited his ability to attend in-person events like the Sunnyvale Art Club. Angelo shared his exploration of various platforms including Facebook, Instagram, and European cartoon websites, while expressing a preference for connecting with Filipino American audiences rather than Filipino audiences due to his American perspective.

Cultural Preservation and Community Connections

Angelo discussed his experiences connecting with online friends through Facebook and Zoom, emphasizing the importance of personal interactions and learning from people with different ideologies. He shared his collaboration with artist-activist Eric Garcia and his admiration for activists like Martin Luther King and [Yuri Kochiyama](#). Angelo also reflected on the historical significance of Japantown and Pinoytown in Santa Clara County, highlighting the need to preserve the culture and history of these communities for future generations.

Community Spaces and Belonging

Steve and Angelo discussed the Oban Festival and community spaces in San Jose, particularly focusing on a shop called [Minasan owned by Brendon Boon](#) which serves as a bridge between generations by offering both historical Asian American items and popular culture goods. Steve shared his research on "Spaces of Belonging" and highlighted how the shop creates a third space where people can gather and connect. Angelo described his own community spaces, including Chopsticks Alley Art gallery, Sunnyvale Art Club, and online Filipino cartoonist groups, though he noted his limited time for social activities due to caregiving responsibilities.

Japantown's Future and Cultural Identity

Steve and Angelo discussed the future of Japantown in San Jose, with Angelo suggesting that whether the community remains vibrant depends on whether younger generations of Japanese Americans stay due to affection for the community rather than necessity. Angelo shared his personal journey of reconnecting with his Filipino-American identity through political cartoons and activism, describing how college experiences and relationships helped him resolve earlier insecurities about his ethnic identity. The conversation explored themes of cultural preservation, gentrification pressures, and the balance between generational connections and capitalist forces shaping community development.

Angelo Lopez Part 2 AI Summary:

This was part two of a research interview between Steve and cartoonist Angelo Lopez about community, belonging, and national identity. The conversation covered Angelo's childhood experiences finding community among nerdy friends in high school, his religious journey from Catholicism to Presbyterianism, and how political polarization has affected his friendships over the decades. Angelo discussed his work in public libraries for 30 years and the close friendship he developed with older librarians Jan and Don Lieberman in the 1990s. They explored Angelo's evolving sense of national belonging as a Filipino-American, including his struggles with identity in junior high and how he ultimately found connection through progressive activism and Asian American studies in college. The discussion also examined current political challenges, including how "alternative facts" and misinformation have made cross-ideological friendships more difficult and how this relates to democratic functioning. They concluded by discussing the

importance of preserving historical memory, particularly regarding Filipino-American history in Watsonville and the parallels between authoritarian tactics used in the Philippines and the United States.

Community and Belonging Discussion

Steve and Angelo discussed the topic of belonging and community, particularly focusing on Angelo's experiences growing up as a second-generation immigrant navigating between Filipino and American identities. Angelo shared how he found a sense of belonging through friendships with other nerdy kids who shared similar backgrounds, including fellow second-generation immigrants from various ethnic backgrounds. The conversation touched on how these friends connected over common interests like comic books, movies, and basketball, creating a supportive community that helped Angelo feel accepted despite feeling inadequate around cooler peers in earlier grades.

1970s-80s Social Activism Experiences

Angelo discussed his political and social experiences growing up in the 1970s and 1980s, explaining that while he felt worried about various social issues, he never felt cynical. He mentioned his involvement in the Catholic Church during a time of internal conflict and his awareness of activism against U.S. involvement in Latin America and the anti-nuclear movement. Angelo also shared how the AIDS crisis personally affected him through a friend who came out as gay in 1990, though his involvement in the AIDS activist movement was peripheral.

Leaving the Catholic Church Experience

Angelo discussed his experience leaving the Catholic Church in the early 1990s, attributing it to John Paul II's suppression of progressive Catholicism and his own personal circumstances at the time. He explained that while his parents and siblings remained Catholic, he drifted away due to feeling disconnected from the community and experiencing personal challenges after breaking up with his first girlfriend. Angelo noted that the vibrant Catholic left, which included social justice and anti-nuclear activists, was stifled during this period, and he expressed that his desire for community never disappeared after leaving the church.

Influential Teachers and Community Experiences

Angelo shared positive experiences with two influential teachers, Mr. McGinnis and Mrs. Bakker, who made learning enjoyable and fostered a sense of belonging in their classrooms. He described working in public libraries, particularly feeling a strong sense of community during his time in the children's department at the Santa Clara Public Library in the 1990s, where he formed a close friendship with Jan and Don Lieberman. Through this friendship, Angelo gained new interests in classical music, jazz, and history, and found a supportive community of like-minded individuals.

Evolution of Close Friendships

Angelo discussed the importance of close friendships in his life, particularly mentioning a tight-knit group of friends from junior high through his early 20s who provided support during difficult times, including when he broke up with his first girlfriend. He described how these friendships naturally evolved as people pursued different life paths and goals, leading to the eventual dissolution of close connections. Angelo also shared about developing new friendships at an Asian American church in his 20s and 30s, though these relationships eventually faced similar challenges as friends married and their lives diverged ideologically.

Evolution of Social Relationships

Angelo discussed how his social circles evolved after high school, initially finding new friends through church and work at a video store. He explained that life transitions, including career focus and new relationships, naturally led to reduced time for maintaining old friendships, a perspective he gained with age and maturity. Angelo also shared how political polarization in the 2000s affected his relationships, particularly after he began creating political cartoons in 2008, as his liberal views became more visible through his work.

Political Polarization and Friendship Loss

Angelo discussed how political polarization in the 2000s led to the loss of friendships with people who had different ideological views, particularly with conservative friends who became more rigid in their expectations for 100% agreement. He attributed this change partly to the influence of Fox News and right-wing media, which created an environment where friendship was no longer valued over political alignment. The conversation then shifted to a discussion about free speech and censorship, where Angelo explained the concept of "red tagging" used by authoritarian governments like Duterte's in the Philippines to silence journalists, lawyers, and activists by labeling them as communist insurgents.

Trump's Censorship Parallels with Duterte

Angelo discussed parallels between Trump's administration and previous governments that targeted comedians and critics, citing examples from India and the Philippines. He explained how Trump is using government agencies like the FCC to pressure private companies to silence critics, similar to Duterte's tactics in the Philippines where ABS-CBN's broadcasting franchise was denied. Angelo expressed concern that Trump's second term might adopt more of Duterte's suppressive tactics against government critics.

Filipino-American Identity and Belonging

Angelo discussed his evolving sense of national belonging as a Filipino-American, describing early struggles with identity during junior high and high school, particularly when questioned about his lack of knowledge of Filipino language and culture. He explained how college, specifically an Asian American class in 1986, helped resolve these identity struggles through reading Carlos Bulosan's "America's in the Heart" and being influenced by the People Power Revolution. Angelo expressed his political views, explaining that his left-leaning perspective stems from his belief that true political equality cannot exist without economic equality, and he cited historical American figures who opposed imperialism and supported social justice causes.

Japantown and Pinoytown Gentrification Discussion

Steve and Angelo discussed the cultural significance and potential gentrification of Japantown and Pinoytown in San Jose. Angelo shared his understanding of the area's history, community centers, and festivals, while expressing concerns about how gentrification might impact the historical connection and demographic makeup of the neighborhood. They also touched on the role of museums, temples, and community centers in preserving the area's cultural heritage, though Angelo acknowledged uncertainty about the long-term impact of gentrification on the community's vibrancy.

Community and Relationship Evolution

Angelo discussed his changing sense of community over time, explaining that he now has to actively work to maintain relationships due to life circumstances including caregiving responsibilities and the loss of friends through political polarization and other life changes. He described how misinformation and different factual perspectives have made it more difficult to maintain friendships across ideological divides compared to previous decades. Angelo also shared his experiences with Filipino American history, particularly the Watsonville riots of the

1930s, and emphasized the importance of preserving historical memories to prevent future discrimination against minority groups.