

Jen Masuda Oral History interview

March 12, 2024

De Anza College Winter 2024 quarter

Tom Izu and SOC 14 student interviewers: Alisson Cortes; Andrew Kaung Myat;

Spaces of Belonging Project: Hidden in Plain Site/Sight

NEH Grant

<https://youtu.be/P6ismjQaA4Y>

Summary:

Jen Masuda shares how she started working as the Executive Director of Yu-Ai Kai Japanese American Senior Care Center and Japantown itself after discovering the center when her grandmother became ill with Alzheimer's dementia. She explores the role of community as she moved from place to place and through serious health struggles. As a person of being of "mixed race" Japanese and white, and as a member of the LGBTQ+ community, she grappled with identity and belonging as her family moved from place to place. As an adult she survived cancer while caring for her grandmother as she navigated rebuilding a career and a new longterm relationship. Masuda shares how important the Japantown community as a space of belonging and support continues to shape her life today.

Transcript:

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00:00:03.910 --> 00:00:18.000

Tom Izu: That famous voice comes on and tells us in words, us so, Jen, why don't you just introduce yourself? Who are you, and a little bit about your job right now, and maybe how you got there just to start us off.

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00:00:18.120 --> 00:00:25.520

Jen Masuda: Okay, name is Jen Masuda. It's actually Jennifer Masuda. I usually just go by Jen Masuda.

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00:00:25.590 --> 00:00:34.910

Jen Masuda: I am the executive director here at Yu-Ai Kai, Japanese, American senior center. Here in San Jose, Japantown.

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00:00:35.530 --> 00:00:42.540

Jen Masuda: I found out about Yu-Ai Kai. I didn't know about Japantown actually, in San Jose

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00:00:42.780 --> 00:00:46.899

at all, and it came about because

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00:00:48.950 --> 00:00:54.100

I, my grandmother, who lived in San Mateo on the Peninsula.

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00:00:54.120 --> 00:00:59.649

She was diagnosed with Alzheimer's dementia and

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00:01:01.600 --> 00:01:03.370

and she came to live with me.

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00:01:03.380 --> 00:01:24.089

Jen Masuda: and she was sitting at home watching TV. And a relative of mine had said, Hey, there's this place called Yu-Ai Kai. It's a senior center, and Grandma probably would be able to benefit from their activities and their offerings. And that's how I discovered, Yu-Ai Kai.

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00:01:24.180 --> 00:01:24.925

Tom Izu: Wow!

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00:01:25.950 --> 00:01:29.289

Tom Izu: That shows how outreach can work, huh!

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00:01:29.350 --> 00:01:36.709

Tom Izu: Not only did they get your mother, as somebody that they can work with, they got an executive director out of it, too. That's pretty...

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00:01:36.760 --> 00:01:46.242

Jen Masuda: Yeah. Yeah. So, and you know, I guess that was a little unusual. (It's actually my grandmother, not my mother.) Yeah. So yeah, that was my grandmother. So

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00:01:47.200 --> 00:01:51.501

Jen Masuda: you know that I think most usually is it is the

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00:01:52.310 --> 00:02:00.042

Jen Masuda: children of the person with dementia who usually becomes the primary caregiver. But in this particular case,

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00:02:01.010 --> 00:02:04.270

Jen Masuda: you know my grandmother. She was 88 at the time.

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00:02:04.724 --> 00:02:14.055

Jen Masuda: When I was asked, or proposition for this to care for her and I. The reason why I ended up

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00:02:15.000 --> 00:02:16.627

Jen Masuda: with her is

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00:02:17.490 --> 00:02:23.359

Jen Masuda: you know. Maybe this is a *Japanese thing*, a cultural thing. But she had three sons

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00:02:23.670 --> 00:02:32.320

Jen Masuda: and I'm also the oldest grandchild, but I'm also the first girl. I guess so, it kind of

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00:02:32.320 --> 00:02:56.670

Jen Masuda: fell on me. I think my father actually, though, would have been happy to care for his mother. But I think you know he was located in Los Angeles, and you know my mother and my grandmother necessarily didn't get along the best. And so my grandmother actually had voiced and said that she actually wanted to live with me.

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00:02:56.750 --> 00:03:19.820

Jen Masuda: I see. So, plus I worked in sales, and although my headquarters was in Orange County, down in Southern California, I did work at a home office here in San Jose, and I was also new to San Jose as well as I moved to the area in 2004.

Tom Izu: So how long have you been at Yu-Ai Kai? Now.

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00:03:23.700 --> 00:03:28.319

Jen Masuda: UH, what is it, 20, I mean, so 13 years. Wow.

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00:03:28.380 --> 00:03:40.509

Jen Masuda: okay, 13 years. So you know. But my grandmother started at Yu-Ai Kai in 2009. So I'll explain all these dates. How they fall into place.

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00:03:42.180 --> 00:03:48.469

Jen Masuda: I don't know if that was with the next question or not.

Tom Izu: Oh, that's okay. Yeah.

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00:03:49.695 --> 00:03:52.500

Jen Masuda: Oh, it's okay, this is free flow.

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00:03:53.000 --> 00:03:59.190

Jen Masuda: my grandma came to Yu-Ai Kai, and then I was approached by the wellness nurse.

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00:03:59.970 --> 00:04:04.149

Jen Masuda: At the time. So, this is 2009

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00:04:04.740 --> 00:04:10.370

Jen Masuda: and you know just so, you know, when I moved up here in 2004

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00:04:10.460 --> 00:04:23.553

Jen Masuda: I had met someone I had met my spouse, or now an ex-spouse. But that's the whole reason for my move to come to San Jose and

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00:04:25.290 --> 00:04:37.929

Jen Masuda: So I came up in 2004, and I work from home. So just imagine, day in, day out, you're new to an area and you work from home. You really don't meet anybody.

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00:04:38.470 --> 00:04:41.800

Jen Masuda: you know. So I got myself a dog

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00:04:42.380 --> 00:04:47.355

Jen Masuda: which for company which I think most people do. But but

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00:04:47.820 --> 00:05:10.940

Jen Masuda: yeah, I really didn't create any kind of real friendships or connections. Luckily, I do have family up in the area. So that did help with me for social needs. But yeah. So my grandmother came and lived with me and my husband at the time 2009. And

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00:05:11.100 --> 00:05:22.380

Jen Masuda: so we started. I took her to Yu-Ai Kai, and then I was approached by the Wellness nurse and to join the support group.

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00:05:22.960 --> 00:05:38.050

Jen Masuda: It's a caregiver support group. And so this group helped me immensely in caring for someone with dementia. It's a very high stress kind of situation.

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00:05:38.180 --> 00:05:42.010

Jen Masuda: and I had no idea really what I was signing up for.

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00:05:42.840 --> 00:05:44.209

Jen Masuda: you know it.

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00:05:44.230 --> 00:05:46.790

Jen Masuda: It sounds kind of cruel.

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00:05:47.205 --> 00:05:54.930

Jen Masuda: you know, when I when I think about it. But you know, at the time she was 88 years old, and I was really thinking like, well.

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00:05:56.260 --> 00:06:03.050

Jen Masuda: how much longer or like, how long would I have to do this? It might only be a few years. And so, I thought, this is totally doable.

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00:06:03.930 --> 00:06:08.799

Jen Masuda: and little did I know that she was going to actually live 10 more years.

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00:06:09.240 --> 00:06:14.020

Jen Masuda: and she declined during that time. So to the point

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00:06:14.865 --> 00:06:17.085

Jen Masuda: where she ended up

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00:06:17.950 --> 00:06:26.779

Jen Masuda: needing so much care that I ended up having to leave my job, which at my career. I was an associate publisher

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00:06:26.850 --> 00:06:28.340

Jen Masuda: for a

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00:06:28.390 --> 00:06:30.759

Jen Masuda: a corporate magazine company.

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00:06:31.252 --> 00:06:42.719

Jen Masuda: So that that ended my career pretty much right then and there. And especially with my age, you know. And if you think about that ten years later.

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00:06:44.230 --> 00:06:53.720

Jen Masuda: you know, would put me in my fifties. And who wants that. You know that I mean part of it. And to be realistic is to think about

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00:06:54.190 --> 00:06:56.499

Jen Masuda: how viable am I?

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00:06:57.001 --> 00:07:04.670

Jen Masuda: In my career, in my fifties to someone, so that that was a huge concern for me.

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00:07:05.211 --> 00:07:15.050

Jen Masuda: But and I also. I also ended up getting sick myself. I ended up. In two thousand...fourteen...

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00:07:17.660 --> 00:07:23.019

Jen Masuda: Two thousand....I didn't know. I'm sorry. 2015. I ended up being diagnosed with cancer.

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00:07:23.140 --> 00:07:26.809

Jen Masuda: And so I went through treatment for a year.

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00:07:27.180 --> 00:07:28.000

Wow!

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00:07:28.270 --> 00:07:31.820

Jen Masuda: So that kind of put things

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00:07:32.010 --> 00:07:34.719

Jen Masuda: to a sharp halt.

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00:07:35.510 --> 00:07:36.740

And

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00:07:36.820 --> 00:08:01.539

Jen Masuda: you know my grandmother was still alive, I mean to that point was, I was just like, Oh, my gosh! She might outlive me! So, you know, and they say, you know, it's like they talk about that in caregiver support group that due to the stress that most caregivers do themselves end up becoming ill.

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00:08:01.730 --> 00:08:12.800

And so yeah, it became like one of those statistics. And yeah, it. It had a profound effect on me, for sure.

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00:08:13.070 --> 00:08:14.750

Tom Izu: Wow! That that's a

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00:08:16.130 --> 00:08:17.697

Jen Masuda: It's crazy, right?

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00:08:18.280 --> 00:08:47.289

Tom Izu: Wow! What a story!

Jen Masuda: So, and in 2011, so here I am. Yu-Ai Kai had actually needed a substitute driver. So now it's 2011, they said, like, hey? You know, we heard you're not working anymore. But you know your grandma comes to daycare. Would you consider substitute driving? And I was just like, you know

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00:08:47.340 --> 00:08:54.920

Jen Masuda: the organization of the services that they're providing to. My grandmother was excellent, very like

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00:08:55.110 --> 00:09:21.570

Jen Masuda: what a warm and caring place it gave me the freedom to really rest and spend my time like to shop because they're taking care of her. I didn't have to worry about it. They were also providing me with a caregiver support group at no charge. And so I was just like, absolutely I can. I can subdrive for you.

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00:09:23.550 --> 00:09:24.540

So

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00:09:26.230 --> 00:09:31.719

Jen Masuda: So I was a subdriver for a while, and then actually

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00:09:33.650 --> 00:09:47.679

Jen Masuda: To be honest, sometimes I'm called upon now, just to substitute if we're if we're really shorthanded but also probably a short while after that I was approached to become an attendant.

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00:09:47.680 --> 00:10:04.794

Jen Masuda: So that means, like for rentals, Yu-Ai Kai rents out rooms to help offset their expenses. So this gives us a little bit of income, and but they need somebody to open and close the buildings. And so I became an attendant. So I used to work at

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00:10:05.250 --> 00:10:28.219

Jen Masuda: Akiyama Wellness Center during the afternoons, and then on Monday evenings here at Yu-Ai Kai. So it actually gave me a chance to become familiar, not with just the front desk services that they provide, but also the activities that they were providing. And I got to meet the members as well. So that was kind of nice.

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00:10:28.260 --> 00:10:35.780

Jen Masuda: and I think shortly after that they asked me to become the receptionist on Thursdays.

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00:10:36.830 --> 00:10:42.450

Jen Masuda: So I was sharing 3 type of positions with Yu-Ai Kai at that time.

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00:10:43.220 --> 00:10:55.879

Jen Masuda: So it was a receptionist on Thursdays which was actually really wonderful, because I got to meet a lot of the members and other people within the community.

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00:10:57.750 --> 00:10:58.760

Alison Cortes: That's that's

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00:10:58.800 --> 00:11:03.636

Alison Cortes: that's nice. That's why everything you mentioned is like wonderful.

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00:11:04.220 --> 00:11:17.530

Alison Cortes: So, Jen, I know you mentioned a little bit like in the beginning of the interview. But what was it like growing up during the time and place of your childhood? I know you mentioned you were born in San Mateo.

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00:11:18.040 --> 00:11:22.009

Jen Masuda: Actually, I was. Yeah. I was actually born in in San Francisco.

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00:11:22.497 --> 00:11:25.240

Jen Masuda: I was born in San Francisco.

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00:11:25.735 --> 00:11:31.970

Jen Masuda: And then see but my parents, we moved to Foster City.

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00:11:34.560 --> 00:11:38.559

Jen Masuda: and Foster City was not what it looks like today.

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00:11:38.590 --> 00:11:40.569

Jen Masuda: It was just a bunch of dirt

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00:11:40.720 --> 00:11:51.876

Jen Masuda: back then. And you know that that city is actually landfill. And you know it was a very controversial at the time, because everybody was saying,

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00:11:52.350 --> 00:11:54.750

Jen Masuda: it's going to sink in an earthquake.

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00:11:55.140 --> 00:12:07.969

Jen Masuda: But anyway, my parents took a chance, but they bought a town home out there, and so I ended up going living in Foster City, and I went to Audubon Elementary School, there

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00:12:08.310 --> 00:12:13.219

Jen Masuda: in Foster City and up until 5th grade.

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00:12:13.510 --> 00:12:15.400

Jen Masuda: Okay? Great. So

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00:12:16.530 --> 00:12:20.899

Jen Masuda: In my time. I think your question was, how was it growing up there?

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00:12:21.710 --> 00:12:22.655

And

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00:12:23.960 --> 00:12:30.950

Jen Masuda: you know. Honestly, when I look back at that time? It was actually difficult.

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00:12:31.000 --> 00:12:38.790

Jen Masuda: I had a I had definitely had an identity crisis. You know, at the time I don't think I realized it.

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00:12:39.897 --> 00:12:42.540

Jen Masuda: And what I mean by that is

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00:12:42.740 --> 00:12:50.820

Jen Masuda: back then in Foster City there are very few Japanese, Americans or Japanese people and

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00:12:50.980 --> 00:13:03.599

Jen Masuda: to kind of give you some perspective, you know. Like, when you're a kid, you just hang out with other kids right? You do see that some kids are Asian. But I didn't even know, like the difference between Japanese, Chinese.

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00:13:03.630 --> 00:13:23.059

Jen Masuda: Korean, Vietnamese, and so I couldn't even identify other Asians in my school. But or class like what were they. I just assumed that they were like me, and I knew I was Japanese, but I didn't know what that meant.

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00:13:23.170 --> 00:13:27.590

Jen Masuda: And then the rest of the kids that I went to school with were white.

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00:13:28.100 --> 00:13:29.220

and

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00:13:29.390 --> 00:13:30.350

but

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00:13:31.200 --> 00:13:33.589

Jen Masuda: a majority of them were Jewish.

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00:13:34.830 --> 00:13:41.619

Jen Masuda: And the thing that I learned I probably maybe about like 3rd grade.

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00:13:42.325 --> 00:13:45.150

I started discovering more differences.

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00:13:45.581 --> 00:13:57.879

Jen Masuda: You know that they were Jewish, but all my friends were Jewish, and I remember going to the grocery store with the Japanese grocery store, Takahashi's, which is still there today in San Mateo.

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00:13:58.540 --> 00:14:00.660

Jen Masuda: And my grandparents knew the owners.

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00:14:00.700 --> 00:14:08.060

Jen Masuda: Yeah, because they used to own the Japanese restaurant, Kiddie Corner to to that market. They used to own a Japanese restaurant.

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00:14:08.400 --> 00:14:10.030

Jen Masuda: Fuji Sukiyaki

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00:14:10.170 --> 00:14:14.109

Fuji Sukiyaki way back in the day. It was like the only Japanese restaurant here

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00:14:14.573 --> 00:14:22.800

Jen Masuda: Fuji Sukiyaki in San Mateo, and they also had saimin [soup], which was from Hawaii, because my parents are both grew up in Hawaii.

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00:14:23.190 --> 00:14:23.865

But

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00:14:25.030 --> 00:14:35.550

Jen Masuda: The owner at that time had asked if I was *hapa*, which means, are you half? Are you half Japanese, half white, or half something else?

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00:14:35.560 --> 00:14:36.180

And

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00:14:37.420 --> 00:14:39.789

Jen Masuda: I didn't really even know what *hapa* meant.

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00:14:40.370 --> 00:14:42.970

Jen Masuda: and I said.

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00:14:42.990 --> 00:14:45.829

Jen Masuda: I replied, saying, "I'm Jewish."

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00:14:46.556 --> 00:14:55.077

Jen Masuda: and my grandmother had a cow. My grandma was very like, "Oh, my gosh! What are you talking about?"

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00:14:56.050 --> 00:15:01.799

Jen Masuda: And it was very interesting, because, following that remark.

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00:15:01.960 --> 00:15:10.340

Jen Masuda: next thing you know, my parents were dragging my sister and I to the Japanese, *American Sturge Presbyterian Church*

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00:15:10.540 --> 00:15:12.590

Jen Masuda: Presbyterian Church.

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00:15:12.700 --> 00:15:16.249

Jen Masuda: So that way I could meet other Japanese people.

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00:15:18.180 --> 00:15:25.960

Jen Masuda: But that didn't mean that I learned what being Japanese was, or Japanese. American. Yeah, very interesting.

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00:15:25.970 --> 00:15:27.089

Jen Masuda: Yeah, really.

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00:15:27.751 --> 00:15:36.529

Jen Masuda: And but I did, you know. And the people at the church, we weren't. We weren't a religious family. So it just felt very

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00:15:37.325 --> 00:15:47.409

Jen Masuda: strange. It felt like a strange place to me. And the other thing that was strange to me was just like, wow! There's a lot of Asian people at this place

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00:15:47.440 --> 00:15:48.320

Tom Izu: And I'm sorry that this church is. Was it in Foster City, or is it

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00:15:49.380 --> 00:16:05.660

Jen Masuda: you know, they had a different. They're different. They're just different, you know.? Oh, I'm sorry it's in San Mateo. Oh, San Mateo, yeah, Sturge Presbyterian, I mean, the people are very nice, very nice people.

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00:16:06.257 --> 00:16:08.762

Jen Masuda: But yeah, I just felt like,

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00:16:09.260 --> 00:16:11.880

Jen Masuda: like I was on a different planet, you know.

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00:16:13.500 --> 00:16:17.489

Jen Masuda: And I think a lot of it is the lack of connection.

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00:16:17.560 --> 00:16:19.989

Jen Masuda: I just didn't feel tied to them at all.

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00:16:20.680 --> 00:16:24.170

Tom Izu: So so, Andrew, did you want to take the next question

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00:16:24.640 --> 00:16:25.430

is

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00:16:27.040 --> 00:16:38.819

Andrew Myat: I heard you said something like negative stuff about Foster City, but I think you spent your childhood there, so like, how was your childhood there. And did you feel connected to any places

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00:16:39.090 --> 00:16:41.130

in Foster City?

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00:16:41.730 --> 00:16:48.010

Jen Masuda: Yeah, when I look back on it? No, no, you know I had.

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00:16:48.280 --> 00:16:53.509

Jen Masuda: I had like a couple of friends. But like I didn't I? It wasn't like.

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00:16:53.640 --> 00:17:10.450

Jen Masuda: you know, you read stories, or you know, you know, people who maybe were friends from when they're like in in kindergarten or elementary school. And I just don't have that. I have a lot of like acquaintances. You know. And

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00:17:10.460 --> 00:17:20.019

Jen Masuda: you know I'm not saying that if I went to school with a bunch of other Japanese Americans, would it have been different? I really don't know. There was maybe

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00:17:20.210 --> 00:17:34.560

Jen Masuda: just a handful of us, not in my grade. They're actually younger than me, so maybe like a grade younger than me. But I knew of their families, but I you know I didn't know them.

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00:17:35.750 --> 00:17:53.770

Jen Masuda: And but one of them actually the aunt, one of the students, Stephanie. She was my neighbor are kind of like around the block, and her aunt actually is here at Yu-Ai Kai, who teaches a class who knew me when I was in elementary school, which is kind of amazing. I was like, oh, my gosh! Didn't you? There?

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00:17:54.410 --> 00:17:58.590

But that was probably the closest

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00:17:59.685 --> 00:18:07.044

Jen Masuda: like Japanese American like relations from that neighborhood. But

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00:18:07.870 --> 00:18:11.620

Jen Masuda: yeah, you know. But I remember my parents signing me up for

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00:18:11.700 --> 00:18:14.549

Jen Masuda: like a Sports League like softball.

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00:18:14.965 --> 00:18:19.090

Jen Masuda: And yeah, I didn't feel I didn't feel like I belonged.

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00:18:19.420 --> 00:18:20.230

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00:18:21.250 --> 00:18:32.020

Tom Izu: So Alison, did. You wanted to ask the next question.

Alison Cortes: Yeah. So, Jen, would you please tell us about like your teenage years. And what was it like to navigate that period?

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00:18:32.840 --> 00:18:34.330

Yeah, when oh.

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00:18:35.240 --> 00:18:47.340

Alison Cortes: I was like, I know, like you said you had like trouble feeling a sense of belonging. Were there like any particular groups that you identified with and like you connected and developed your identity?

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00:18:48.110 --> 00:18:52.460

Jen Masuda: Yeah. So something major happened after 5th grade

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00:18:52.490 --> 00:18:56.253

Jen Masuda: at the end of my school year in 5th grade.

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00:18:57.250 --> 00:19:18.429

Jen Masuda: my dad worked for the airlines and we got word that we're getting transferred to Hawaii to Honolulu, Hawaii, and that's where both my parents grew up where they were from, and every year since I was born. So, before I was even one every summer I would go back to Hawaii for 3 months out of every year.

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00:19:18.500 --> 00:19:24.639

Everybody's like, Oh, my gosh! You went to Hawaii, but you know it's like hanging out with your cousins and your family.

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00:19:24.690 --> 00:19:29.870

Jen Masuda: and you know, when I look back at that those were probably my happiest times

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00:19:30.020 --> 00:19:31.070

Jen Masuda: back. Then

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00:19:31.110 --> 00:19:32.759

Jen Masuda: you know it did, and

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00:19:33.140 --> 00:19:43.338

Jen Masuda: you know part of it. It's their family, right? So you kind of maybe have a common thread amongst you like, how you grew up, or how

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00:19:43.970 --> 00:20:04.329

Jen Masuda: the expectations and a lot of the values that maybe that you share. We were kind of all in it together. So the my cousins and I, we remain close to this day. But a lot of it, I think, is because of that this time that we had when we were younger

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00:20:04.480 --> 00:20:12.400

Jen Masuda: together. But that's probably the most free, or that feeling of belonging

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00:20:12.410 --> 00:20:15.860

Jen Masuda: that I felt as a youngster. So.

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00:20:17.510 --> 00:20:19.810

Jen Masuda: yeah, those 19.

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00:20:20.570 --> 00:20:23.440

Jen Masuda: We moved in 1978.

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00:20:24.400 --> 00:20:26.420

Jen Masuda: I'm dating myself right now.

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00:20:26.690 --> 00:20:28.570

Jen Masuda: So, but

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00:20:29.236 --> 00:20:51.869

Jen Masuda: but yeah. So we moved to Hawaii. So imagine this: Now, I've moved from an area that was predominantly white or and Jewish right? And then I got dropped into now an area rich in AAPI, Asian, American, Pacific Islander type, cultural

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00:20:53.159 --> 00:20:57.319

things and identities, and

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00:20:57.560 --> 00:21:02.090

another very different way of being.

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00:21:02.160 --> 00:21:13.929

You know, my cousins were there, so I still had, you know this, this sense of belonging. But again, this is through friends not. This is family, not friendships right?

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00:21:13.960 --> 00:21:20.690

Jen Masuda: But while all of a sudden I'm dropped into an area where I am now the majority

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00:21:21.390 --> 00:21:23.870

Jen Masuda: because everybody else in my class

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00:21:23.980 --> 00:21:28.629

Jen Masuda: we're Japanese, American or Asian, and maybe they're.

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00:21:28.650 --> 00:21:31.069

Jen Masuda: you know, one white kid.

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00:21:31.890 --> 00:21:34.579

Jen Masuda: one Caucasian kid. And

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00:21:35.780 --> 00:21:38.090

Jen Masuda: you know, and I kind of actually felt for that

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00:21:38.750 --> 00:21:42.689

Jen Masuda: Caucasian kid like, wow, they're like a fish out of water.

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00:21:43.110 --> 00:21:45.100

Jen Masuda: and to see

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00:21:45.160 --> 00:21:48.559

Jen Masuda: the difference was I wasn't accepted right away

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00:21:48.700 --> 00:21:52.550

Jen Masuda: by the other kids. A lot of it was because of the way I spoke.

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00:21:52.610 --> 00:21:57.200

Jen Masuda: which is English, and they because they speak pidgin English there.

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00:21:57.470 --> 00:22:03.050

Jen Masuda: And so there's, you know, there was like these little nuances there like oh, you're different.

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00:22:03.280 --> 00:22:09.360

Jen Masuda: But I I did notice I was accepted a lot quicker than I was

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00:22:09.950 --> 00:22:13.020

Jen Masuda: then my classmate, who was white.

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00:22:13.330 --> 00:22:17.648

Tom Izu: So I think, Andrew, you had another question. And

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00:22:18.330 --> 00:22:19.710

Tom Izu: if I got this right?

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00:22:20.605 --> 00:22:21.460

About

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00:22:21.700 --> 00:22:25.489

Tom Izu: about this transition period. So yeah, do you? Wanna

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00:22:26.130 --> 00:22:30.919

Andrew Myat: yeah, yeah. Yeah, I have a question about how like?

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00:22:31.270 --> 00:22:40.780

Andrew Myat: How you transitioned, and how easy was it to transition from being a teenager to an adult in like the communities you were part of like when you growing up

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00:22:40.880 --> 00:22:42.670

in Foster City, and

188

00:22:43.180 --> 00:22:46.999

and also like you should mention, I think, yeah.

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00:22:47.260 --> 00:22:52.909

Andrew Myat: I would also like to know, like what changed and like what stayed the same like? Mainly those. Yeah.

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00:22:53.910 --> 00:22:54.580

Jen Masuda: Hmm.

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00:22:56.560 --> 00:22:57.590

Jen Masuda: So

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00:22:57.690 --> 00:23:13.349

Jen Masuda: I think he comes back to family. That's the one thing that stays constant in your life right? You can't change that. And that became very key, I think, for me, because we ended up moving a lot. So

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00:23:14.750 --> 00:23:22.370

Jen Masuda: I would say, the next major thing is, I went to school. I went to a college prep school in Hawaii

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00:23:22.570 --> 00:23:26.161

Jen Masuda: and in Honolulu. And

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00:23:27.080 --> 00:23:32.550

Jen Masuda: yeah. So that's where I think I became more comfortable

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00:23:32.710 --> 00:23:36.109

Jen Masuda: with myself in terms of okay.

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00:23:36.190 --> 00:23:41.799

Jen Masuda: I'm starting to now learn the differences between. Like I am Japanese.

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00:23:42.701 --> 00:23:54.260

Jen Masuda: I know who like what are Chinese names or Korean names. I'm starting to notice differences culturally. But in Hawaii it's really nice, because

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00:23:56.410 --> 00:24:13.960

Jen Masuda: I think they call it a melting pot. And it's a blending of cultures. And the thing that's nice is the kids there local kids there. It's you're very accepting of one another's cultures and enjoy each other's cultures.

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00:24:13.990 --> 00:24:20.519

Jen Masuda: you know, like the food and the people, and they make fun of each other in the most like.

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00:24:21.180 --> 00:24:22.430

Jen Masuda: probably

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00:24:22.920 --> 00:24:28.550

Jen Masuda: politically incorrect way. Why will be considered here? Very.

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00:24:29.196 --> 00:24:38.143

Jen Masuda: Not PC, but there, it's like their sense of humor. There's a little bit of truth to everything but everybody

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00:24:38.700 --> 00:24:53.479

Jen Masuda: gets along and can laugh about it. Yeah, I think I think you have to develop this like sense of humor to live in Hawaii, or you cannot survive. I mean, if you if you're too serious about anything.

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00:24:54.870 --> 00:24:57.057

Jen Masuda: I think you end up becoming

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00:24:57.850 --> 00:25:13.830

Jen Masuda: It's very hard to get along there. Yeah.

Tom Izu: And now, Allison, you had a question about Yu-Ai Kai. But Jen already kind of explained part of it, except for the big, maybe. What do you want to ask about her? Yu-Ai Kai career?

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00:25:14.100 --> 00:25:19.724

Alison Cortes: Yeah, I was just like I was I was actually thinking, like how to word it differently. But

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00:25:20.480 --> 00:25:23.050

Alison Cortes: I know you said you were a driver in the beginning.

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00:25:23.485 --> 00:25:25.189

Alison Cortes: Do you feel like.

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00:25:25.720 --> 00:25:32.769

Alison Cortes: did you know much about San Jose Japantown before you decided to become the center's executive director

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00:25:33.310 --> 00:25:55.139

Jen Masuda: a little bit. So for driving, I mean. So growing up in Hawaii, my my mother's parents owned a flower shop, so as kids, as soon as we could drive, we were put to work, we had to deliver flowers. Wow! And you know. So actually, since you know, being kids, we've always worked.

212

00:25:55.330 --> 00:26:08.620

Jen Masuda: We had greenhouses, hot houses on the property. So, we had to take care of the plants. Basically, we learned how to run a business. We didn't know it at the time.

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00:26:08.750 --> 00:26:19.909

Jen Masuda: but I think we all learned how to hustle what you had to do to present your business in the best way, and how to deal with the public.

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00:26:20.090 --> 00:26:25.890

Jen Masuda: And so you know these. These things are preparing us for the future, my cousins and I and

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00:26:26.211 --> 00:26:29.950

Jen Masuda: you know. So those are things that I think that that help

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00:26:30.660 --> 00:26:40.259

Jen Masuda: definitely. Huh! But and then also the positions that I held previous to becoming the director, because after

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00:26:42.230 --> 00:26:44.270

Jen Masuda: after can- after

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00:26:45.110 --> 00:26:51.229

Jen Masuda: I had finished my cancer treatments, I ended up taking a position as the Akiyama Wellness

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00:26:51.450 --> 00:26:55.810

Jen Masuda: Center, which belongs to Yu-Ai Kai.

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00:26:56.240 --> 00:27:20.410

Jen Masuda: They have another building, and I became the facility and activity manager there. So it gave me an opportunity to kind of practice, being like a mini ed right? Because I was managing this other other site on my own, with the guidance of the executive director of Yu-Ai Kai. So I think that really helped prepared me.

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00:27:22.520 --> 00:27:35.770

Jen Masuda: But just to kind of add, when I started at Yu-Ai Kai as a subdriver. I would have never imagined ever in my wildest dreams that I'd be the executive director of this place. Just so, you know.

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00:27:36.895 --> 00:27:37.750

Alison Cortes: Yes.

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00:27:38.950 --> 00:27:39.790

Andrew Myat: yeah.

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00:27:40.150 --> 00:27:43.650

Andrew Myat: stuff. And I had another question about like

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00:27:44.030 --> 00:27:48.169

Andrew Myat: you, like high like, you're executive director right now and

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00:27:48.640 --> 00:27:50.459

Andrew Myat: and like, how is

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00:27:50.590 --> 00:27:57.809

Andrew Myat: working there like, how's the work? Ethic like and like, How how does it compare to your previous job as a subdriver?

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00:27:58.190 --> 00:28:01.039

Andrew Myat: And yeah, I'll let them know more about it.

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00:28:01.980 --> 00:28:15.911

Jen Masuda: Yeah. Yeah. So you know as I was kind of joking about it earlier today, you know. Subdriving. Yeah, it's a it's a job. It's I enjoyed it. I love driving.

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00:28:16.710 --> 00:28:30.079

Jen Masuda: you know, but after a couple weeks it gets boring because it's the same routine day in, day out. So it depends. You know, there's people who enjoy that. Yeah. But I think for me.

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00:28:30.080 --> 00:28:54.550

Jen Masuda: you know, I kind of enjoy a little bit more of a challenge, and I do like, you know, socializing with other people and engaging with people and connecting. And when you are a driver, you really only have blips of time with people. And you really don't get to really create a like, a real relationship with people. You get to kind of know them. But it's really just kind of, hey? How are you doing today?

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00:28:54.670 --> 00:28:57.309

Jen Masuda: Do you need help with anything? But that's about it.

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00:28:57.890 --> 00:29:08.690

Jen Masuda: So work ethic, though. I think I've all I've had that since I was young. My, you know, my grandmother would say,

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00:29:09.560 --> 00:29:15.959

Jen Masuda: you know, we used to kind of joke saying, you guys have kids. So, you know, we could provide free labor. And she's like.

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00:29:16.940 --> 00:29:29.658

Jen Masuda: And it was. It wasn't that at all, you know. You realize that later on in life that they are actually preparing you for real life.

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00:29:30.250 --> 00:29:40.500

Jen Masuda: but also helping and contributing, you know, to the greater picture of what we're doing. And, you know, put food on the table and paid for our school, and

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00:29:41.440 --> 00:29:42.230

yeah

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00:29:43.570 --> 00:29:51.730

Alison Cortes: so could you like talk about like Japan, the Japantown community you are now a part of, and the process you went through to develop

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00:29:51.900 --> 00:29:54.460

the sense of belonging to it.

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00:29:56.310 --> 00:30:11.314

Jen Masuda: Yeah, you know, so that I have to say has been I guess the silver lining, you know, from having this this position. Or just joining Yu-Ai Kai, I would say, just joining Yu-Ai Kai

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00:30:13.970 --> 00:30:18.209

Jen Masuda: getting to meet the people of this community and then to meet

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00:30:18.871 --> 00:30:37.038

Community organizations within the community and members of those community organizations. Like, including Tom [Izu] here. You know I just feel so so grateful to have this opportunity to meet all these other people and

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00:30:38.380 --> 00:30:39.310

that

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00:30:40.100 --> 00:31:04.150

Jen Masuda: it's the people. And in this community that makes this job so awesome, I have to say, it's probably my favorite part of this job is to be able to interact and to meet and connect with these other people. And you know it's kind of really created a mind shift for me, I think

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00:31:04.370 --> 00:31:18.430

Jen Masuda: you know, leading and working as a director of Yu-Ai Kai. First and foremost is my responsibility to keep Yu-Ai Kai going. We're like the largest employer here in Japantown, I believe.

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00:31:18.450 --> 00:31:19.480

And

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00:31:20.730 --> 00:31:31.819

Jen Masuda: that's my job. I have to take care of all these people and the people within this building, but also the people who come to this building the services that we're providing. It is very important.

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00:31:32.400 --> 00:31:35.133

Jen Masuda: But I have to say,

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00:31:36.280 --> 00:31:40.780

Jen Masuda: now you know, the mind shift that has happened for me is

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00:31:41.182 --> 00:31:47.150

Jen Masuda: to think on a grander scale, I mean, Yu-Ai Kai is Yu-Ai Kai. But Yu-Ai Kai is

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00:31:47.170 --> 00:31:49.770
is a part of this bigger

252
00:31:49.840 --> 00:31:50.880
entity.

253
00:31:51.000 --> 00:31:58.510
Jen Masuda: right? This this community. It's only a part in this community. So you have all these other community partners.

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00:31:58.630 --> 00:32:05.749
Jen Masuda: And it's when you work with these other community partners. So you create these partnerships? Right?

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00:32:06.200 --> 00:32:13.010
Jen Masuda: I mean, you can talk, partner, but you also have to walk the talk. So you actually have to truly

256
00:32:13.620 --> 00:32:16.679
Jen Masuda: partner with them in a very authentic way.

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00:32:17.670 --> 00:32:23.600
Jen Masuda: and I think my mindset is, if

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00:32:23.890 --> 00:32:30.190
Jen Masuda: you know, if we, as a community, if our all the organizations are strong.

259
00:32:30.620 --> 00:32:36.780
Jen Masuda: you know and stable that this, this that makes this community strong and stable?

260
00:32:38.200 --> 00:32:38.656
Yep,

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00:32:40.740 --> 00:32:51.729

Alison Cortes: I like that. I like the perspective of that of what you just said, Yeah, and is there any particular space or place in Japan you feel connected to

262

00:32:53.510 --> 00:32:57.390

Alison Cortes: just like you feel like relaxed, or anything like you like to hang out.

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00:32:58.460 --> 00:33:02.349

Jen Masuda: Well, I think I think everybody hangs out at Roy's [Station].

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00:33:02.750 --> 00:33:04.290

Jen Masuda: just a coffee shop.

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00:33:05.200 --> 00:33:31.969

Jen Masuda: right? I think that that's a it's like the natural community watering hole, right? That people people go to but you know this community has has grown and changed over time. My father had gone to San Jose State University, and when he came down to visit me in this area, he was amazed at the changes that he has seen, and for the better.

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00:33:32.340 --> 00:33:37.069

Jen Masuda: And but you know, that's the thing

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00:33:37.560 --> 00:33:48.250

Jen Masuda: that I think this community sees right like they've seen a change over time, and they know the history of this area, and you know it's getting better and better.

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00:33:48.440 --> 00:33:55.170

Jen Masuda: And but we see that it's not just one person making a happen, and we have to do it all together.

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00:33:55.330 --> 00:33:56.130

270

00:33:56.240 --> 00:33:56.950

hmm.

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00:33:57.480 --> 00:34:03.299

Alison Cortes: and has your experience in Japan had an impact on how you now view your own identity.

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00:34:05.190 --> 00:34:06.690

Jen Masuda: Oh, yeah, yes.

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00:34:07.065 --> 00:34:11.190

Jen Masuda: you know it. It, you know. I don't know if it's a thing of aging

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00:34:12.120 --> 00:34:13.999

Jen Masuda: or not, but

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00:34:15.540 --> 00:34:22.449

Jen Masuda: you know it's and a lot of it is, I think, because you meet the people within this community.

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00:34:22.719 --> 00:34:40.069

Jen Masuda: And so these are the people that you end up spending your time with. I have a home in San Francisco, but that's quite a commute. So I did purchase a place here in San Jose, too, which enables me to stay

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00:34:40.646 --> 00:34:47.103

Jen Masuda: in in the vicinity and makes it more convenient. And I actually

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00:34:47.620 --> 00:34:56.919

Jen Masuda: love that I have a place down here, because then it enables me to participate more in a lot of the events.

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00:34:57.442 --> 00:34:59.859

Jen Masuda: Community events that are happening on the weekend

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00:35:00.143 --> 00:35:04.820

Jen Masuda: because without it I'd have to really give it some thought, do I want to drive all the way back?

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00:35:05.140 --> 00:35:05.680

Hmm.

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00:35:07.560 --> 00:35:09.510

Jen Masuda: so that it does make a difference.

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00:35:12.030 --> 00:35:14.860

Jen Masuda: So the community's worth driving back for though.

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00:35:19.540 --> 00:35:20.310

Jen Masuda: Yeah.

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00:35:21.560 --> 00:35:27.479

Andrew Myat: yeah, since you have worked like 13 years. And you have seen lots of changes. And like, what is like.

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00:35:28.785 --> 00:35:29.510

the

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00:35:29.560 --> 00:35:34.969

Andrew Myat: the change that impacted Japantown the most and also was Covid.

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00:35:35.180 --> 00:35:37.830

Andrew Myat: like, yeah, was Covid a part of it?

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00:35:37.900 --> 00:35:39.340

Jen Masuda: And yeah.

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00:35:40.980 --> 00:35:42.532

Jen Masuda: so okay, so

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00:35:43.060 --> 00:35:46.210

Jen Masuda: when I, when I was

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00:35:47.140 --> 00:35:56.910

Jen Masuda: asked to become the executive director here, there, you know, you're talking about identity. Also, there's a lot of changes going on in my own personal life.

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00:35:57.030 --> 00:36:15.510

Jen Masuda: So I don't actually have a spouse any longer. I'd like to share this with you. So at 50 years old I've decided that I am.... I had to be honest with myself, and come out as gay.

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00:36:15.970 --> 00:36:19.330

Jen Masuda: Which is a long time, I think, to

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00:36:19.640 --> 00:36:20.360

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00:36:20.650 --> 00:36:23.669

Jen Masuda: you know I think everybody else knew, except, you know, I never said.

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00:36:24.050 --> 00:36:37.790

Jen Masuda: but during that time, and then also. So, I took this job. I also had a partner. I have a partner, this partner, though we've known each other since we're 12 years old.

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00:36:38.290 --> 00:36:50.069

Jen Masuda: We went to school together. So this new relationship I moved to San Francisco. And then I've also took this job as E.D. [Executive Director]

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00:36:50.330 --> 00:36:53.950

Jen Masuda: And then I learned that my dad had a brain tumor.

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00:36:54.759 --> 00:37:01.020

Jen Masuda: You know. And then, right after that, the pandemic started. So

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00:37:01.080 --> 00:37:08.740

Jen Masuda: these were a lot of major changes that like took place in my life all at one time.

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00:37:09.563 --> 00:37:10.550

um.

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00:37:11.590 --> 00:37:16.100

Jen Masuda: But you know I look at that. And

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00:37:17.444 --> 00:37:20.340

Jen Masuda: think about what

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00:37:20.840 --> 00:37:22.670

Jen Masuda: one other challenge

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00:37:22.760 --> 00:37:32.679

Jen Masuda: could be thrown my way. You know, that's a lot to deal with. It's a lot to deal with at one time, and you know, when the pandemic

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00:37:32.740 --> 00:37:36.770

Jen Masuda: started, I was just like, Oh, my gosh! What else could happen?

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00:37:37.100 --> 00:37:48.109

Jen Masuda: Because that it was all a lot at one time. So but the lesson that I learned from that is that I can survive.

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00:37:48.330 --> 00:37:56.862

Jen Masuda: and I'm resilient, you know, and but I think people are in in general, but a lot of it, too, is to

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00:37:58.080 --> 00:38:06.050

Jen Masuda: it, major, major, change not just for me. But everybody in the world was the pandemic.

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00:38:06.120 --> 00:38:17.340

and that the difficulty there was it's not like I could call Tom [Izu] as a past executive director, and say, Hey, "Tom, what did you do in the situation?"

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00:38:17.843 --> 00:38:25.889

Jen Masuda: You know there was. There was nothing that no information to rely upon. So you know it.

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00:38:26.600 --> 00:38:28.769

Jen Masuda: You have to think on your feet

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00:38:29.750 --> 00:38:37.319

Jen Masuda: and scramble. You have to think of what is best for the organization as a whole. Not that you know you have to keep your staff safe.

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00:38:37.410 --> 00:38:51.079

Jen Masuda: but you also have to protect the seniors as well. So there was a lot to consider. But I'm really proud of the staff, but it also proved, I proved to myself

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00:38:51.940 --> 00:38:53.569

Jen Masuda: that I could get through this

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00:38:55.110 --> 00:38:58.380

Jen Masuda: and make the right and make the right decisions also.

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00:38:58.700 --> 00:39:07.330

Jen Masuda: So it you know that when you have these types of challenges in life, and you're able to get through them.

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00:39:07.440 --> 00:39:10.380

Jen Masuda: You know, you can take that as a lesson

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00:39:10.780 --> 00:39:13.520

Jen Masuda: of resilience and strength.

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00:39:13.570 --> 00:39:17.810

Jen Masuda: and you know it gives you the confidence to move forward

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00:39:18.090 --> 00:39:19.590

Jen Masuda: and to handle.

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00:39:21.830 --> 00:39:25.919

Jen Masuda: You know other difficult situations that you will come upon in life

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00:39:28.980 --> 00:39:36.840

Alison Cortes: Has your experience at you? I kai changed. How you understand what belonging to a community means to you.

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00:39:37.779 --> 00:39:42.450

Alison Cortes: Has the experience changed? How you look at other places besides Japantown?

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00:39:44.350 --> 00:39:45.270

5.

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00:39:45.590 --> 00:39:46.620

Jen Masuda: Yes.

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00:39:48.200 --> 00:39:50.380

Jen Masuda: You know, this community is very special.

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00:39:50.410 --> 00:39:51.630

Jen Masuda: I have to say.

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00:39:51.720 --> 00:40:00.510

Jen Masuda: you know, like I've lived in London Valley, Blossom Valley, even for Potrero Hill up in San Francisco.

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00:40:01.270 --> 00:40:05.550

Jen Masuda: you know. But I think the key thing is.

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00:40:05.640 --> 00:40:10.479

Jen Masuda: if you want community. You have to be part of that community. And what

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00:40:10.620 --> 00:40:17.190

Jen Masuda: being part of that community means means being active in that community.
So

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00:40:17.220 --> 00:40:23.039

Jen Masuda: you can't sit back and hope that community comes to you.

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00:40:23.180 --> 00:40:24.880

Jen Masuda: you have to seek it

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00:40:25.960 --> 00:40:27.340

Jen Masuda: and because

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00:40:28.260 --> 00:40:34.130

Jen Masuda: once you do something for your community, be a neighborhood cleanup or

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00:40:34.180 --> 00:40:39.170

Jen Masuda: bench cleaning or join an organization within your community.

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00:40:39.360 --> 00:40:41.889

Jen Masuda: That's what's going to give you the connection.

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00:40:45.190 --> 00:40:50.680

Jen Masuda: And I, you know, that's where my connection is, because of the people.

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00:40:51.460 --> 00:40:54.489

Jen Masuda: (Excuse me) and organizations that I've connected with

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00:40:54.640 --> 00:41:01.719

Jen Masuda: and cause. I don't think I would. I would feel the same way, and you know I look at it because in San Francisco, where I live now.

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00:41:02.484 --> 00:41:05.339

Jen Masuda: There, I don't. Do.

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00:41:05.350 --> 00:41:13.300

Jen Masuda: You know, community type events, and you know it's a no wonder I don't have that sense of community there, and it's because.

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00:41:13.690 --> 00:41:16.979

Jen Masuda: you know, I'm not connecting in the same in the same way.

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00:41:17.410 --> 00:41:18.990

Jen Masuda: you know, and

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00:41:19.550 --> 00:41:29.090

Jen Masuda: you know, volunteering, volunteering people are just like volunteering, but volunteering will give you that sense of community and connection I think people are looking for.

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00:41:29.540 --> 00:41:30.290

Oh.

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00:41:34.250 --> 00:41:34.930

here.

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00:41:38.050 --> 00:41:39.970

Tom Izu: Oh, Andrew, you're muted.

351

00:41:42.470 --> 00:41:47.426

Andrew Myat: I bet. Yeah, since you've worked in Japantown for so long.

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00:41:48.592 --> 00:41:50.120

Andrew Myat: How would you like?

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00:41:50.270 --> 00:41:53.020

Andrew Myat: Do you have any concerns about the future? Or

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00:41:53.050 --> 00:41:59.079

Andrew Myat: Yeah, and do you want it to be? Stay the same or like, do you want it to change or like, yeah.

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00:41:59.110 --> 00:42:01.559

Andrew Myat: But what do you think about the future of Japantown?

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00:42:02.010 --> 00:42:04.110

Jen Masuda: Yeah. Well, as much as

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00:42:04.630 --> 00:42:05.830

Jen Masuda: you know.

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00:42:06.236 --> 00:42:22.673

Jen Masuda: Would I like it to stay the same? No, there's always like a little bit of nostalgia right from like when you're a kid, and those are happy memories. But I think we would be naive to believe that anything would change the same. The other thing is, you know,

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00:42:23.640 --> 00:42:27.660

Jen Masuda: just in life, right? Everything. That's the only thing constant in life is change.

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00:42:27.690 --> 00:42:29.310

Jen Masuda: And hopefully.

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00:42:29.440 --> 00:42:32.300

Jen Masuda: the type of change that is made is progress.

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00:42:32.350 --> 00:42:39.639

Jen Masuda: One of the things that I would like to see is, and Tom is very familiar with this is

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00:42:40.180 --> 00:42:50.150

Jen Masuda: finding a way to sustain our community in a sense where our community makes a significant

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00:42:50.200 --> 00:42:54.599

Jen Masuda: investments in trying to

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00:42:55.360 --> 00:42:56.105

Jen Masuda: to

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00:42:57.980 --> 00:43:00.980

Jen Masuda: basically financially be able to keep

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00:43:01.070 --> 00:43:02.330

Jen Masuda: properties

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00:43:02.550 --> 00:43:07.269

Jen Masuda: within Japantown to

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00:43:07.280 --> 00:43:08.370

Jen Masuda: either

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00:43:08.580 --> 00:43:10.840

Jen Masuda: nonprofit organizations

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00:43:11.210 --> 00:43:13.439

Jen Masuda: or to

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00:43:13.470 --> 00:43:20.029

Jen Masuda: organizations themselves. Or it's a like a Japantown

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00:43:22.150 --> 00:43:24.265

Jen Masuda: type of organization.

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00:43:25.300 --> 00:43:32.239

Jen Masuda: and I've been actually giving this more thought because there's a house that recently came on the market that has been

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00:43:32.982 --> 00:43:41.890

Jen Masuda: abandoned or not really abandoned, but empty for a long time, and it's come up for sale. And I was thinking, gosh! It was a shame

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00:43:41.930 --> 00:43:49.320

Jen Masuda: that the family did not consider leaving this to either the museum next door, so the museum could expand

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00:43:49.470 --> 00:43:51.502

Jen Masuda: or leaving it to

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00:43:52.150 --> 00:43:56.570

Jen Masuda: a nonprofit within Japantown so we could keep it in Japantown

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00:43:57.110 --> 00:44:00.260

Jen Masuda: and you know that.

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00:44:00.630 --> 00:44:04.749

Jen Masuda: I wish I had the money to just buy that house and

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00:44:05.160 --> 00:44:06.810

Jen Masuda: to do something.

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00:44:07.580 --> 00:44:09.649

Jen Masuda: you know. Good for the community with that.

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00:44:10.560 --> 00:44:14.723

Jen Masuda: But so. But I I think that that creates

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00:44:15.600 --> 00:44:17.550

Jen Masuda: You know the idea

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00:44:17.620 --> 00:44:20.430

Jen Masuda: which could be a seed for the future.

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00:44:22.930 --> 00:44:26.559

Tom Izu: So, Allison or Andrew, do you have any other questions?

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00:44:27.840 --> 00:44:30.400

Alison Cortes: I don't. I don't have any more questions.

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00:44:30.500 --> 00:44:33.160

Tom Izu: How about you, Andrew? No, I don't.

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00:44:33.180 --> 00:44:36.329

Tom Izu: Well, Jen, do you have any questions for us

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00:44:36.350 --> 00:44:39.473

Tom Izu: as long as they're not too difficult.

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00:44:40.290 --> 00:44:45.353

Jen Masuda: Well, well, let me ask. All right. I just want to put this out to Allison and Andrew.

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00:44:45.640 --> 00:44:54.550

Jen Masuda: yeah, knowing or I guess my question would be, Are you? Are you connected to the community that you live in?

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00:44:57.120 --> 00:45:05.099

Alison Cortes: Oh, I'll answer 1st for this one so in the community that I live in right now, I feel like

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00:45:05.490 --> 00:45:09.179

Alison Cortes: I moved abruptly around 4 years ago.

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00:45:09.340 --> 00:45:14.649

Alison Cortes: and I feel like I lost the sensitive community I used to have in Los Angeles.

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00:45:14.750 --> 00:45:19.329

Alison Cortes: It was in a Korea oh sorry audio disconnect. It was in Koreatown.

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00:45:19.540 --> 00:45:22.970

Alison Cortes: and I feel like everyone there was like really

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00:45:23.510 --> 00:45:25.330

Alison Cortes: well connected and

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00:45:25.340 --> 00:45:28.510

Alison Cortes: like it felt like family, no matter where I went

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00:45:28.650 --> 00:45:29.850

Alison Cortes: around there.

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00:45:30.920 --> 00:45:33.520

Jen Masuda: Yeah, it's it's a great feeling, right?

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00:45:34.300 --> 00:45:36.539

You could have that, too, in Japan town

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00:45:37.300 --> 00:45:40.909

Jen Masuda: here. Yeah, I used to live in la, also, I've lived all over.

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00:45:40.930 --> 00:45:42.780

Jen Masuda: So yeah, yeah.

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00:45:43.500 --> 00:45:45.371

Jen Masuda: how about you, Andrew?

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00:45:46.150 --> 00:45:59.819

Andrew Myat: I come from Myanmar, and, like the community I belong to, was like essentially my neighborhood, because, like we, I kind of be like all the people there are pretty young like same age as me. We go to same school

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00:45:59.890 --> 00:46:03.709

Andrew Myat: so like we meet every day, and also like on the weekends.

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00:46:03.820 --> 00:46:08.779

Andrew Myat: And yeah, I think that's why, like, we feel pretty connected. We play like

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00:46:08.930 --> 00:46:11.049

Andrew Myat: football on the streets. And

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00:46:11.130 --> 00:46:12.559

Andrew Myat: yeah, everything like.

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00:46:12.670 --> 00:46:17.909

Andrew Myat: yeah, if anything happens like we gossip about it at school, and everything

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00:46:18.060 --> 00:46:21.809

Andrew Myat: so like my classmates are essentially like my neighbors.

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00:46:22.050 --> 00:46:26.430

Andrew Myat: So I always say that I feel pretty connected. And

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00:46:26.890 --> 00:46:29.890

Andrew Myat: yeah, I feel like I belong to that community.

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00:46:30.060 --> 00:46:30.820

Jen Masuda: Great!

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00:46:31.590 --> 00:46:33.187

Great! That's great.

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00:46:34.420 --> 00:46:35.430

Jen Masuda: Thank you. No.

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00:46:35.740 --> 00:46:38.088

Tom Izu: thank you. Allison and Andrew!

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00:46:38.860 --> 00:46:42.480

Tom Izu: it's it's really it's always really nice to learn more about anybody

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00:46:42.710 --> 00:46:45.610

Tom Izu: but but, Jen, thank you so much because

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00:46:45.650 --> 00:46:51.529

Tom Izu: Yu-Ai Kai is very lucky to have you, because you have. You've gone through all sorts of different things and experiences. And

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00:46:52.030 --> 00:47:07.739

Tom Izu: when you were first talking about all these different jobs you had at Ui Kai. Oh, maybe that's just the way they set up that place, because I had all sorts of I won't call them odd jobs, but different kinds of jobs taking the garbage out whatever it was. Yeah, yeah, I did cleaning bathrooms.

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00:47:07.770 --> 00:47:12.449

Tom Izu: But but you you are an unusual person, and I,

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00:47:12.640 --> 00:47:23.233

Tom Izu: you know I'm just speaking for myself. It seems like this fits a lot of the issues that your class, Alison and Andrew is trying to look into belonging, and how you connect, or because,

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00:47:23.730 --> 00:47:25.820

it's just really fascinating to us

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00:47:26.750 --> 00:47:27.560

Uh

427

00:47:27.780 --> 00:47:28.770

uh

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00:47:28.940 --> 00:47:42.639

Tom Izu: and Allison and Andrew, if you have time, which I know you're both very busy. But visiting Yu-Ai Kai, I wish we could have done that in your class, and maybe we still can, or some other time, because it's an interesting place. It really is.

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00:47:43.100 --> 00:47:44.153

Yeah, please.

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00:47:45.068 --> 00:47:54.190

Jen Masuda: I think Tom can pass on my information. If you would ever like to come here and either volunteer, or if you just like a tour, we can always arrange that for you. Yeah.

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00:47:55.100 --> 00:48:04.560

Jen Masuda: we have a lunch service and a daycare adult daycare as well as other activities that happen here, and you're welcome to participate in them as well.

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00:48:04.570 --> 00:48:18.070

Tom Izu: Yeah. And it's going to be the 50th anniversary of Yu-Ai Kai. So it's pretty kind of mind boggling. Huh? Jen, I mean, wow, it's been around, yeah, you know.

Jen Masuda: And I think a lot of it, too, is that.

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00:48:18.630 --> 00:48:31.710

Jen Masuda: you know, people are like, Wow, 50, 50 years, and I'm just like, I know, but you know the thing is inside. I mean, I feel a little bad because I get to be the ED that falls on the 50th year.

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00:48:31.810 --> 00:48:34.970

Jen Masuda: you know. But the 50th...

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00:48:35.110 --> 00:48:43.839

there's all these EDs that came before me that did these amazing things so that way. We can actually celebrate it today.

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00:48:44.570 --> 00:49:03.599

Jen Masuda: So I have to. My success is resting on your shoulders, Tom.

Tom Izu: No, I don't think I did that much. I'm just so happy that Yu-Ai Kai is where it's at. So yeah. So you, Allison and Andrew, if you have a chance, come visit because I think it gives you a good feeling of the community.

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00:49:03.710 --> 00:49:08.830

Yeah. So so, Jen. Oh, did Andrew or Alison, you have anything else to, you'd like to say.

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00:49:08.900 --> 00:49:15.570

Alison Cortes: I just wanted to say, thank you to Jen for allowing this interview to happen.

Andrew Myat: Yeah, I would like to say, Thank you, Tom too.

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00:49:15.620 --> 00:49:25.539

Jen Masuda: You're welcome, and thank you also for participating in this, and I do hope you have a chance to come out to Japantown and Yu-Ai Kai,

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00:49:25.830 --> 00:49:28.350

Andrew Myat: yes, thank you, I'll be there.

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00:49:28.550 --> 00:49:34.010

Tom Izu: Thank you. Everyone. Yeah. Please take care. Then.

Jen Masuda: Okay, thank you very much.

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00:49:34.050 --> 00:49:36.000

Bye, Jen. Bye.