

Brendan Boon interview  
February 26, 2025  
De Anza College Winter 2025 quarter  
Steve Nava interviewer  
Spaces of Belonging Project: Hidden in Plain Site/Sight  
NEH Grant  
Link to interview:

[Zoom link recording:](https://fhda-edu.zoom.us/rec/play/Qw6NecphgTF3ujb8x97eGyS49dykSj-hUSRswlpo0Og76vGypWeDBZrB5K1UVgmTZSz0xT1drte7_eU.JC7TaK6RwrflwmOa?autoplay=true)

[https://fhda-edu.zoom.us/rec/play/Qw6NecphgTF3ujb8x97eGyS49dykSj-hUSRswlpo0Og76vGypWeDBZrB5K1UVgmTZSz0xT1drte7\\_eU.JC7TaK6RwrflwmOa?autoplay=true](https://fhda-edu.zoom.us/rec/play/Qw6NecphgTF3ujb8x97eGyS49dykSj-hUSRswlpo0Og76vGypWeDBZrB5K1UVgmTZSz0xT1drte7_eU.JC7TaK6RwrflwmOa?autoplay=true)

Summary:

In this hour-long interview Brendan Boon, the great-grandchild of south-Japanese immigrants who entered California in the late 1890s during the Good Rush, shares about his life growing up in Cupertino and his connection to San Jose Japantown as a place of belonging to community. He notes that his great grandparents ended up working in agriculture like many Asian American immigrants in the late-1800s and that the struggles of Asian Americans, starting with the Chinese immigrants who built Chinatown where San Jose Japantown sits today, presaged the sense of community preservation felt *by many who live an/or work in San Jose Japantown*. Brendan, his partner and friends, opened Minasan, an eclectic shop/hangout in 2025, while Brendan still works a fulltime job at Google. His intention is to create a no-pressure sales hangout, a shop where folks waiting for a table at the local sushi restaurant or an elder can stop by and brows and chat after picking up their prorated lunch at the Yu-Ai Kai senior center. The space has a museum feel with its T-shirt collection strewn across the walls in the tall ceiling space. The shops location used to be Jackson Jewelry shop (next to where Aki's Bakery used to be), a resale show store called On Ice, then more recently *Headliners* a hip-hop shoe and T-shirt shop. The Minasan shop's themes include mostly previous generation references, like historical sports teams, restaurants, or other Asian American organizations. There are also new T-shirts that reference historical moments like the Japanese concentration camps during WWII, which he mentioned, sold the same day they were displayed, pointing to a desire for historical memory in the community.

The Boon's and their staff try to appeal to multiple (nisei, sansei, yonsei) generations in their store themes. Mr. Boon notes that Japantown has this interesting way of retaining community members of all different age groups and this interview explores some reasons why San Jose's multi-ethnic and multi-generation Japantown builds a community that many want to return to.

Boon also discusses the popular cultural elements that make this area appealing to many who live, work, and visit. He recognizes the shift toward a less nostalgic San Jose Japantown which speaks to the roll of gentrification as a social force transforming many historic communities around the world. This interview moreover speaks to both local and global influences on a local place and how generations preserve and sometimes lose touch with their cultural and ethnic roots through community practices like the Minasan shop. The Minasan hangout shop is a community project and is in some ways, an experiment in bringing ideas and people together in a *thirdspace*. He points out that Japantown like any place, will eventually diversify racially and ethnically but at the same time, San Jose Japantown is one of the remaining Japantown that still maintains a non-commercial presence in the United States.

Minasan is located on 210 Jackson St, San Jose, Ca 95112

WEBVTT

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00:00:03.310 --> 00:00:16.520

Steve Nava: All right. So Hello, this is Steve Nava Sociology Instructor. And I'm working on a project called *the Spaces of Belonging* for the California History Center today. It's February 26th 2025,

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00:00:16.630 --> 00:00:19.760

Steve Nava: and we will be interviewing Brendan Boon.

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00:00:19.960 --> 00:00:27.299

Steve Nava: who operates the Mina San shop and we'll learn more about the details, and this is in San Jose, Japan Town.

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00:00:28.171 --> 00:00:36.010

Steve Nava: The spaces of belonging project is an oral history project, bridging generations through dialogue about the deeper meaning of community

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00:00:36.290 --> 00:00:38.530

Steve Nava: and social and cultural change.

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00:00:39.000 --> 00:00:44.340

Steve Nava: And again, we thank you, Brendan, for bring being able to be part of this recorded interview.

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00:00:44.923 --> 00:00:52.189

Steve Nava: And in general, we're trying to learn a little bit more about community. The idea of community

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00:00:52.400 --> 00:01:00.179

Steve Nava: during changing times, and we're centering mostly on Santa Clara Santa Clara Valley, mostly San Jose.

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00:01:00.530 --> 00:01:03.559

Steve Nava: And so to start, if you could just

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00:01:03.890 --> 00:01:11.270

Steve Nava: please share your age, occupation, and other ways, you might identify yourself, and then Eric will take the 1st question.

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00:01:11.900 --> 00:01:30.610

Brendan Boon: Sure my name is Brendan Boon. I am 30 years old today, and I've been a I guess tech-recruiter now for about seven years I got the opportunity to open a little store called *Minasan (everyone)*. So right now we're doing, I'm both working my full time job, and then I have the shop on most nights as well as weekends.

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00:01:35.020 --> 00:01:39.209

Eric Huizar Solis: All right. So the first question is pretty easy. Just the.

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00:01:39.530 --> 00:01:47.449

Eric Huizar Solis: if you don't mind. Just tell us about yourself. Just who are you? What involvement do you have with your community? What, what kind of work do you do?

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00:01:48.000 --> 00:01:53.060

Brendan Boon: Yeah. Yeah. So again, my name is Brendan. I've been.

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00:01:53.200 --> 00:02:14.273

Brendan Boon: I guess, within the confines of Japantown. I've always sort of had this connection to this community. My mother is Japanese, American. My, so she's 3rd generation. I'm 4th generation, we call it *yonse*, and then my dad is Chinese from Singapore they met in Hawaii. So I think this connection to Hawaii and California and Asia has always been something that is very much so a part of me.

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00:02:15.200 --> 00:02:41.209

Brendan Boon: I mentioned that I've been working as a recruiter for the past six or seven years, but I think retail has been something that I've always been interested in since. Maybe, like middle school, I've always wanted to have my own cafe or have my own clothing shop. So when the opportunity popped up for us to open up the shop. I think it was sort of like this, this crazy moment where I was able to sort of bring together a lot of ideas that I've had for a very, very long time, and just throw them into one space.

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00:02:41.760 --> 00:03:01.039

Brendan Boon: yeah, my life has never been so full and hectic, working both 9-to-5 and having to shop. But it's that we're we're still having a ton of fun, and I feel like the I think the deeper connection that we have to the neighborhood is something that feels fresh for a lot of folks. But also I think we're able to bring a lot of new perspective in and and just talk story with a lot of people. So it's been an amazing experience.

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00:03:02.460 --> 00:03:03.270

Eric Huizar Solis: Alright!

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00:03:06.200 --> 00:03:06.840

Steve Nava: And I can.

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00:03:06.840 --> 00:03:08.210

Brendan Boon: Mention. Oh, go ahead. Sorry

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00:03:09.070 --> 00:03:36.909

Brendan Boon: I yeah. I grew up in Cupertino so not too far from here, fifteen minutes away. Japantown, as a community, I've always been a part of things like the Japanese American Citizens League. I went to Japanese American Summer School at Mountain View, Buddhist temple called nakayoshi gakkou, and I think, like it took me a long time to realize how deeply embedded I was into this community, or how much I cared about it. But I think the older that I get, the more that I find myself gravitating towards these topics, and and

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00:03:37.000 --> 00:03:41.890

Brendan Boon: trying to be a preservationist, especially for this very very nuanced Japanese American culture.

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00:03:42.350 --> 00:03:47.700

Steve Nava: Sorry. Carry on. Yeah, yeah. Yeah. So yeah. I'm glad you shared that part, too.

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00:03:48.140 --> 00:03:50.502

Steve Nava: And another question we have is,

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00:03:51.220 --> 00:04:00.709

Steve Nava: Can you talk a little bit about the timeline of, you know, opening the shop? What was the inspiration? You? You mentioned it? But if you could go a little more detail about

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00:04:01.327 --> 00:04:09.060

Steve Nava: what inspired it in terms of the particulars that you're you know, selling and and promoting. And

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00:04:09.210 --> 00:04:11.130

Steve Nava: Yeah, if you talk a little bit about that.

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00:04:11.940 --> 00:04:28.186

Brendan Boon: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I think so. I guess the timeline with the shop is. There's a shop that was in this space before was called *Headliners*, and it was by our good friend. His name is mine when and he had this shop for seven or eight years, but his business had been around for probably closer to twelve to fifteen years.

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00:04:28.680 --> 00:04:47.212

Brendan Boon: I've known him since I was probably fifteen years old. I would take the bus down here from Cupertino. Force my now wife, to get on the VTA with me. We would walk to Japantown, and we would go get banana creep, and then and then stop in at headliners and talk to the owner just about. He was like my first friend within this sort of creative community. So.

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00:04:47.730 --> 00:05:11.889

Brendan Boon: we've been now living in this community for four to five years, and I think we've become closer and closer friends with these folks. I reached out to my the moment that I found out that *Headliners* was going to be closing down, and I just asked them, Hey, dude, what is the plan with the space. What do you have planned and what's going to come next? And I think there was a few potential folks that were interested in moving forward, but I think we had a lot of support from different folks in the neighborhood to just

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00:05:11.980 --> 00:05:35.389

Brendan Boon: that sort of like understood my involvement with the community, and sort of what I look for, and I guess people kind of just trusted me to have this opportunity. So we opened up. I reached out to him mid December, maybe, like December 16th or

so, and then we opened up the shop early January, January 11<sup>th</sup>. The concept behind the shop is sort of twofold on one end. We get to be this sort of.

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00:05:35.660 --> 00:05:55.019

Brendan Boon: in a way, sort of community center for the Japantown community. I think a lot of one thing that I have noticed in in the community over the past 15 years is when I was a kid you used to be able to. We'd be waiting for fSushi Maru or Minato, and they had like an hour long wait. So we're walking around looking for something to do as a kid. There was like all these toy stores or the anime store you could walk into.

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00:05:55.020 --> 00:06:13.140

Brendan Boon: I noticed for me now, when I'm walking around the neighborhood at 7 or 8 pm. Almost all the retail shops are closed. So a big part of what I wanted to do was just just create community space. I think a big part of what we try to do is make sure people don't really feel pressured to make a sale. And we want people to just come in

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00:06:13.140 --> 00:06:31.460

Brendan Boon: and to be able to look around and hang out. So we offer complimentary tea. We have sembe that we can give folks. We have movies playing on the wall constantly. We have a big hangout area where we have a couch and a couch and a coffee table and a couple of chairs around it. Sometimes we have a puzzle that people can just walk in. And do, I think, like

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00:06:31.610 --> 00:07:01.299

Brendan Boon: it's 50% sort of community center and gathering space, and then the other, I guess 50% would be focused on just things that have inspired us over the years. We've been in a lot of different Asian American spaces over the past 10 years. We see what's happening in cities like San Francisco and LA has been a big one especially Orange County and San Gabriel Valley. We see what's happening in places like Honolulu, and I think the 3 of us collectively me, one of our best friends, Michael and my wife Michelle, have

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00:07:01.330 --> 00:07:12.509

Brendan Boon: done a lot of this like exploring of this this space for the past couple of years, and we've I guess it's almost like a duty of us to bring some of that flavor and sort of like unique retail experience to San Jose.

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00:07:13.230 --> 00:07:13.890

Steve Nava: Hmm.

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00:07:14.170 --> 00:07:21.579

Steve Nava: so in terms of popular culture. Could you talk a little bit about what makes you excited in terms of including

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00:07:21.730 --> 00:07:23.400

Steve Nava: pop culture in your space.

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00:07:23.860 --> 00:07:27.405

Brendan Boon: Yeah, I think like, when I think about pop culture,

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00:07:28.230 --> 00:07:33.859

Brendan Boon: especially within the context of Japantown and I, there are so many things that

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00:07:34.260 --> 00:07:59.669

Brendan Boon: we, as I think, Asian Americans growing up in this area, grew up with especially being Japanese, American and coming to Japantown, we have all these. There's there's a lot of nuance in this community, and there's a lot of things that I guess, like a big part of what we want is to take this. What I would say is like this, more like soft culture of

Japanese, American as as a community, and and sort of like, have like a place where it's celebrated right? Like a big part of what we sell is like

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00:08:00.020 --> 00:08:27.200

Brendan Boon: the old, old references to old Japantown businesses, or or old T-shirts that have come from this community or from other Japanese American communities like we have a lot of things on display, even that, I would say, make us akin to like a museum at times. So we have, like a lot of old bowling shirts. Some of them come from South Central Los Angeles, and we had another a couple that came in the other day and said, Hey, I used to bowl at holiday bowl until the the mid-seventies, and we used to eat at this coffee shop and get Simon all the time.

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00:08:27.720 --> 00:08:29.260

Brendan Boon: I guess the

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00:08:29.670 --> 00:08:56.469

Brendan Boon: as opposed to like pop culture. A lot of it is like this relationship between things that we find nostalgic just growing up in in these communities. And that's sort of like the thing that we're like, outwardly, almost like aggressively trying to highlight is the, I guess, Asian American youth and and growing up in this thing. But also, I think, having that connection to Asia has been a big one for us as well. So we constantly have folks bringing in things from Japan, or or we have friends who have family in Taiwan, and we want to make sure that that the the youth

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00:08:56.470 --> 00:09:03.869

Brendan Boon: can feel like they have that connection to Asia. And it's it's okay to be Asian, American, and also like, have this strong connection with the Pacific.

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00:09:06.830 --> 00:09:08.501

Steve Nava: Yeah. And and in terms of

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00:09:08.890 --> 00:09:18.400

Steve Nava: your perception of how folks, what different age groups connect to different kinds of pop culture. How would you describe that.

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00:09:19.200 --> 00:09:48.536

Brendan Boon: Yeah, it's. And we, I think one of the blessings of being in Japantown is general, is in general, is this, it's very, very multi generational like. If if you go to Roy's on a random weekday, you will see folks that are college students that are doing their homework. You will see senior citizens who live in or or just picked up their their lunch from like UI. Senior center. And they're just walking over and catching Roy's on the way in. You'll see folks in my parents generation like the sansei folks grabbing lunch. I think that

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00:09:48.990 --> 00:09:52.250

Brendan Boon: a big part of what we try to do is.

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00:09:53.180 --> 00:10:06.779

Brendan Boon: I guess, curate space, where people can come in at any age and any sort of background, and we'll have something that they will feel some sort of connection to, or will be friendly enough that they'll be open to having a conversation and interested in hearing about these stories.

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00:10:08.770 --> 00:10:14.134

Steve Nava: You know what's interesting Brendan is? When I first got interested in this project.

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00:10:14.580 --> 00:10:15.924

Steve Nava: I was kind of

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00:10:16.750 --> 00:10:28.788

Steve Nava: nudged into the Japan town as a space because of. I'm working with Tom Izu, who's active in the community for many years. And

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00:10:29.480 --> 00:10:41.770

Steve Nava: I happen to be. I haven't happened to have just moved into the neighborhood not that long before, in fact. And one thing that I immediately started to think about was the role of nostalgia in

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00:10:43.420 --> 00:10:50.950

Steve Nava: a kind of affection for a place I guess a community or a neighborhood like Japantown.

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00:10:51.540 --> 00:11:00.180

Steve Nava: And so, you know, I started wondering. You know, what is it that draws people to a space? And I thought, Well, has something to do with

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00:11:01.110 --> 00:11:05.180

Steve Nava: the old and the new right. There's something about multi-generationality that

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00:11:06.240 --> 00:11:09.700

Steve Nava: is refreshing, I guess you would say, or

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00:11:10.470 --> 00:11:16.620

Steve Nava: yeah, I I wasn't sure if it was a nostalgia thing. But what do you think about the idea of nostalgia? And like

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00:11:16.930 --> 00:11:23.579

Steve Nava: what? What do you think? Really, if that plays a role at all in the love for Japantown, that people tend to have?

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00:11:24.730 --> 00:11:44.099

Brendan Boon: I think it's undeniably a big part of why, a lot of people, especially for people from my generation I've noticed this trend of like younger age, and Americans wanting to get involved in the neighborhood, and people who are maybe involved as a kid, and and didn't really see the value in it, or didn't really understand it now, wanting to come back to it. And I think

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00:11:45.030 --> 00:12:03.179

Brendan Boon: on top of that, I think that Japantown has this interesting way of retaining community members of all different age groups. Right? We have multiple senior centers in the neighborhood. We have, like, we have housing for older folks. We have community center multiple community centers that are senior leaning. I think that

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00:12:03.470 --> 00:12:05.339

Brendan Boon: most it's

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00:12:05.450 --> 00:12:31.869

Brendan Boon: somehow happened that people that tend to be interested in Japantown as a whole, are folks that have some sort of appreciation for nostalgia? Right? And it's I don't know exactly how or why it happened that way, but if you want, it's not an uncommon place to see classic cars right. It's not an uncommon place to see photos of a family in a restaurant that has been running it for like fifty years. It's one of and it's it's 1one of those places that I think

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00:12:33.010 --> 00:12:42.710

Brendan Boon: somebody once or recently told me that San Jose feels like a last bastion for these sort of things, and when we compare it to even other metros, and I think that there's some truth in that statement in that

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00:12:43.190 --> 00:12:46.840

Brendan Boon: Japan town is like aggressively one of those places that

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00:12:47.070 --> 00:13:00.069

Brendan Boon: keeps the historic facades of all the buildings. Everybody who is in this community is somebody who has sort of been a part of this community and the people it's it's like, almost like a village within a city, in that the community, specifically

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00:13:00.530 --> 00:13:14.589

Brendan Boon: like, almost seems to like filter in and out of different cultures. And people who like don't really resonate with the Japantown culture. Don't end up saying, and people who like are really, really with it sort of like are given opportunities. I think like it's.

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00:13:14.690 --> 00:13:16.670

Brendan Boon: I think Japantown

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00:13:16.860 --> 00:13:28.908

Brendan Boon: is like an inherently nostalgic place. But I I do think that that is changing over time. I think that the we are starting to see a lot less of the things that I would consider nostalgic Japantown. And

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00:13:30.070 --> 00:13:32.579

Brendan Boon: yeah, I think that's a big part of what I.

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00:13:33.010 --> 00:13:42.929

Brendan Boon: What I want to do even with this space is to make sure that these things are celebrated. And there's a place where people are still dressing like my grandpa did, or or finding clothes like my grandpa wore. You know what I mean, and.

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00:13:43.210 --> 00:13:43.540

Steve Nava: And then.

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00:13:43.540 --> 00:13:46.669

Brendan Boon: Having conversations about old Bowling Alley, talk.

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00:13:47.590 --> 00:13:49.309

Steve Nava: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

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00:13:49.410 --> 00:13:55.909

Steve Nava: I I can totally see that. Well, we have Kenneth as well. I'm not sure. If Kenneth could you introduce yourself.

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00:13:59.020 --> 00:14:00.729

Kenneth Le: Hello! My name is Kenneth. Please.

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00:14:00.730 --> 00:14:02.260

Brendan Boon: Hey, Kenneth, nice to meet you.

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00:14:02.260 --> 00:14:06.919

Kenneth Le: Sorry for coming in a little late. I had to. I got stuck in downtown, actually.

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00:14:06.960 --> 00:14:09.589

Brendan Boon: All good dude not too far.

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00:14:09.590 --> 00:14:13.910

Kenneth Le: Yeah. Alright. So are we. On the next question I'm assuming right?

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00:14:13.910 --> 00:14:14.870

Steve Nava: Yeah, number, 2.

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00:14:15.220 --> 00:14:22.349

Kenneth Le: Okay, I was, really. And I'm actually really interested in your family background.

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00:14:22.949 --> 00:14:29.940

Kenneth Le: I also have a along that question, did you also primarily grow up in the area you're currently working in?

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00:14:30.080 --> 00:14:36.320

Kenneth Le: If not, can you explain how it was like growing up in that different time and place of your childhood?

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00:14:36.830 --> 00:14:38.210

Brendan Boon: Yeah. Yeah. So

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00:14:38.450 --> 00:15:02.559

Brendan Boon: answer the first part of the question. My mom is Japanese American born and raised in San Jose. She was born and raised in South San Jose. My dad was born and raised in Singapore. He was in Hawaii, met my mom when she was on like her last semester at San Jose State. She got to do some sort of study abroad thing, and she was able to go to Hawaii, her parents.

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00:15:03.200 --> 00:15:28.343

Brendan Boon: My Grandpa was born in Gilroy, agricultural family, and they had always been in Gilroy that worked on farms. The whole family is in Salinas or or in Monterey. Still today, or we still have a little house in in downtown, Gilroy as well. And then my grandma was in Alameda after the war happened, she ended up living in East Oakland, right around the corner from the black panthers. Sort of primary headquarters, and I think, like we've always had

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00:15:28.900 --> 00:15:35.538

Brendan Boon: that that affinity towards both both of the East Bay, the East Bay, and like, I guess, Gilroy Valley,

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00:15:36.530 --> 00:15:40.260

Brendan Boon: And the second part of the question was about

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00:15:40.500 --> 00:15:42.390

Brendan Boon: where I grew up, and sort of my upbringing.

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00:15:42.780 --> 00:15:47.520

Kenneth Le: Yeah, like your upbringing your childhood like, how was it like during that time? Yep.

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00:15:47.520 --> 00:16:03.109

Brendan Boon: Yeah, yeah, yeah, I grew up in in Cupertino, California, which at the time was in Cupertino, is like an interesting town in that I think it used to be like a very classic sort of like Santa Clara Valley Orchard sort of town, and over time shifted towards

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00:16:03.320 --> 00:16:21.979

Brendan Boon: being, I think at a at one point it was very Japanese American. So you can still see the bones of it today. There's a lot of these old Japanese American restaurants like [Azuma](#) has been there, and that place has like deep roots even in Japan towns, neighborhood sort of businesses like a lot of them have relationships. I think growing up. It was.

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00:16:22.200 --> 00:16:43.699

Brendan Boon: It was very safe at that time. It was. It felt, slow in agricultural, but then it was slowly starting to shift to be to I guess, like the sort of guard between the old Asian American community and the newer Asian American community was something that was happening pretty aggressively. So I guess I grew up in Cupertino as one of the only like

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00:16:43.800 --> 00:17:13.497

Brendan Boon: 3rd or 4th generation folks. So I definitely did have this feeling of othering where folks would talk to me about their upbringings, and you know the sort of trials and tribulations that they're going through with their parents and dealing with being a 1st or second generation immigrant. And these are things that, as also an Asian American, I didn't fully understand, because I was 4th generation, right? And that's like it's hard to explain. My parents are. We're Asian, obviously, but what we eat at home is is like more akin to like midwestern food, plus with like a Japanese American twist. Right?

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00:17:13.780 --> 00:17:19.958

Brendan Boon: so yeah, it was it. I guess we always had both

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00:17:20.720 --> 00:17:41.080

Brendan Boon: Cupertino, feeling like a very, very Asian American place. And then down the road we have Japantown, which is Asian American, but in a obviously very different way, and I think over time. I started to realize that Japantown was a place that I had a very, very

personal connection to. My grandparents. Got married here at at the Temple. My parents got married here at the at the Christian Church.

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00:17:41.319 --> 00:17:56.170

Brendan Boon: We came here at least once a week to get dinner and to pick up mochi for my grandma like, whenever we would go to my grandma's house, which is the town

of San Jose, literally every single time, which is at least once a week we would come here, go to Shuei-Do Manju Shop and bring her bring them some mochi. Right? So.

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00:17:56.430 --> 00:17:57.440

Brendan Boon: I think

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00:17:57.520 --> 00:18:05.190

Brendan Boon: very, very Asian American sort of upbringing overall. But uniquely, I think we had this relationship with the with the Ja community and with Japantown.

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00:18:07.580 --> 00:18:13.170

Steve Nava: And the next question is, during your childhood, did you remember any

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00:18:13.500 --> 00:18:23.769

Steve Nava: special or significant places that gave you a sense of belonging places that made you feel connected to something special that you could identify with, and felt like you really fit in.

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00:18:24.860 --> 00:18:47.970

Brendan Boon: Yeah, I think the first place that comes to mind for me, weirdly enough, is there was this little Japanese American grocery store in Cupertino. So it's right across the street from where, like Marukai or Tokyo Central is now. It used to be this little store called *Imahara*, and it was it had this connections to South Bay, Japanese, American agricultural stuff. So I think the owners also owned a farm somewhere in the South Bay, originally

106

00:18:48.270 --> 00:18:55.180

Brendan Boon: and then they opened up this little produce shop, which was very, very popular locally for having really good produce. But for me

107

00:18:55.180 --> 00:19:15.680

Brendan Boon: it was this place that felt like, almost like Japantown outpost in Cupertino. So like you would go there in the morning, and they would have fresh tofu delivered from San Jose Tofu almost every single day they would have like multiple sets of mochi from Shuei-Do. They sold stuff imported from Hawaii like a lot of stuff that was hard to find at that time that was imported from Hawaii, like saimen and

108

00:19:15.971 --> 00:19:25.599

Brendan Boon: this is all stuff that, and like Spam. And all these Asian snacks before, I think Japanese grocery stores were as normal as they are now. That was like the place to go.

109

00:19:25.600 --> 00:19:26.589

Brendan Boon: but I think

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00:19:26.890 --> 00:19:35.050

Brendan Boon: it was clear to me, even when I was like from the age of 5 that that was a space that felt uniquely. I guess I I felt a unique affinity, too.

111

00:19:38.440 --> 00:19:41.660

Brendan Boon: And can you guys still hear me? Okay, I think one of my headphones said, Okay.

112

00:19:42.310 --> 00:19:42.860

Eric Huizar Solis: Yeah.

113

00:19:47.560 --> 00:19:49.149

Steve Nava: It's like Andy has the next question.

114

00:19:49.150 --> 00:20:10.329

Andy Le: Oh, I'm sorry. Yeah, so I do. I know you talked about your childhood and gave us information on that. But, I was wondering about your teenage years, and you know what was like for you to like navigate during that period. Were there any like particular groups or organizations that you know you could identify with, or maybe connect

115

00:20:11.225 --> 00:20:15.609

Andy Le: that you connected to in like your personal development of your identity.

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00:20:16.210 --> 00:20:21.330

Brendan Boon: For sure. I actually think that a huge part of my.

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00:20:21.640 --> 00:20:30.010

Brendan Boon: I guess teenage experience was like heavily shaped by dance. So my brother got into popping and breaking when he was in like

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00:20:30.130 --> 00:20:36.609

Brendan Boon: middle school, and I remember like that was like my window into like this entire other community. And, interestingly enough, at that time like

119

00:20:36.620 --> 00:21:06.409

Brendan Boon: that was during a time period where I think, San Jose, and specifically, Japantown was kind of going through a creative renaissance especially related, or at least like, there was an overlap with what was happening in the street dance culture so like at that time, I think I fell in love with hip hop as like an entire thing I fell in love with the clothes I started getting interest in art. I never did graffiti. But I started to fall in love with murals. And just the idea of doing something creative that felt like it was going against the grain

120

00:21:06.410 --> 00:21:30.690

Brendan Boon: right? Even like dance politics. All of it was like really fascinating to me. You would go to dance events, and some of them were in Japantown right? And you would like see all these little clothing brands people just doing their thing and making clothes, and just like contributing to this this culture that seemed to be like everywhere in San Jose at that time. So that was like a huge, huge identity thing for me was being like the guy that was tapped into

121

00:21:30.690 --> 00:21:39.939

Brendan Boon: this San Jose Street culture that kids in Cupertino didn't really fully understand. So again, it was like me forcing all my friends to come down here, and just like.

122

00:21:39.940 --> 00:21:40.270

Andy Le: Yeah.

123

00:21:40.270 --> 00:21:47.200

Brendan Boon: Check out all the stores, and just scope out all the spots and say, Hi! To folks, and just be a part of I fell in love with small business at the same time, too, and like

124

00:21:47.320 --> 00:21:56.700

Brendan Boon: at that time in Cupertino, there weren't that many small businesses where you like really know the owner of a place where Japantown everybody knows every single shop owner, and it's always been that way.

125

00:21:57.360 --> 00:22:08.229

Andy Le: Yeah, that is really, that's really interesting. Look, the whole dance culture and street culture thing, would you say? Looking back, do you think your teenage stuff would kind of like? Be surprised at who you are now?

126

00:22:10.942 --> 00:22:13.299

Brendan Boon: I think so. I think overall

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00:22:13.460 --> 00:22:22.210

Brendan Boon: there's 2 routes that I could have taken, that I that I saw myself taking, and one that I'm terrified sometimes of taking is being the guy who.

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00:22:22.580 --> 00:22:34.273

Brendan Boon: I don't know if there's a better way to say this, but I didn't want to be like another guy who found like a comfortable tech 9-to-5, and ended up working it for the rest of his life. I knew at some point that I was always going to have extracurriculars.

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00:22:35.010 --> 00:22:36.140

Brendan Boon: I just.

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00:22:36.540 --> 00:22:42.310

Brendan Boon: I never expected to manifest in the way that it did. And I think what I've learned is that

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00:22:42.720 --> 00:23:03.090

Brendan Boon: progress is in no way linear. Right? I ended up at the place that I'm at, not because I wanted to, but it. It sort of just happened. And I've talked to multiple people who have said to me like the reason that you're in this space and why it makes sense is because, like, you've been like secretly building towards these things for years, and I guess I never realized that I was.

132

00:23:03.700 --> 00:23:23.821

Andy Le: Yeah, secretly like, going on like this path of this route that you said. I just wanna ask like if there's was any like major turning port or turning point, or like decisions that kinda or during at least your teenage period. That kind of set you on your current path right now, because it sounds like you wanted to

133

00:23:24.610 --> 00:23:28.750

Andy Le: go down a certain path, and then completely chose this route.

134

00:23:29.770 --> 00:23:36.099

Brendan Boon: Yeah. Yeah. I think that

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00:23:37.010 --> 00:23:43.850

Brendan Boon: I think my mom, she was a guidance counselor at at a high school homestead high school in Cupertino, actually, for like a super long time.

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00:23:43.950 --> 00:23:59.680

Brendan Boon: Yeah. Yeah. So for me, it was like, always very much so ingrained in her head like you have to. You have to graduate college. You have to get a 9-to-5, and I think that was just the pathway that was always defined by by her generation and the generation before. So I always understood it. But I think that

137

00:24:00.540 --> 00:24:13.070

Brendan Boon: even when we 1st opened the shop I had this like really really big internal fear of telling my dad. I didn't even tell my dad that we had the shop until literally the day it was happening. And I was, hey, we're having grand opening for this thing today, if you want to drop by. I think, like there's

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00:24:13.190 --> 00:24:19.890

Brendan Boon: that that pressure between wanting to be. I guess, the model minority, character, and follow, like the classic route as opposed to like.

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00:24:20.220 --> 00:24:33.095

Brendan Boon: Hey, we. We have a a very, very unique culture that I think should be highlighted, and I think need somebody to devote. That time was was something that I knew was always gonna be a personal like crossroads for me

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00:24:33.670 --> 00:24:53.762

Brendan Boon: So no one big moment, I think. Just pandemic was an interesting one, I I think, being cooped up for like a full year, and I was living with my wife's family at the time in in Oakley and Brentwood, which is like a full hour and a half, maybe away deep deep in the East Bay next to the Delta and I think one thing that I super craved at that time was was community

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00:24:54.210 --> 00:25:04.449

Brendan Boon: the the ability to just walk around and say Hi! To people. So we would come back down to San Jose like once a week and just go to coffee shops and say Hi! To our friends, and we would always drive through Japantown and pick a mochi too.

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00:25:06.560 --> 00:25:07.820

Andy Le: Awesome. That's pretty cool.

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00:25:08.200 --> 00:25:09.170

Brendan Boon: Thanks, man.

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00:25:09.500 --> 00:25:17.150

Steve Nava: Now, did you see any shops closed down during Covid that you were maybe disappointed about, or

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00:25:17.720 --> 00:25:19.319

Steve Nava: like Mom and pop shops.

146

00:25:19.990 --> 00:25:32.045

Brendan Boon: In a lot in general. Yeah, in in Japantown, I think one of the biggest hits for us was was banana, crepe and banana crepe was this this old shop that used to sell?

147

00:25:32.920 --> 00:26:00.889

Brendan Boon: It's it's where *Pau Hana*, the shave ice place is now, before it was this old like Hawaiian style, very funky place that was run by this guy, who was an engineer for many, many years, and in his second career opened up banana crepe, and he was selling things like he was selling crepes. You could do. You could do savory. You could

do, sweet. He was selling. He had an espresso bar so you could do coffee, but they were also kind of well known for doing shave ice as well. So it kind of made sense that the new shave ice place went into their space.

148

00:26:01.187 --> 00:26:07.139

Brendan Boon: I think that that was a big loss for the community, because it was one of the only places where.

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00:26:07.450 --> 00:26:20.919

Brendan Boon: 1st of all, it was like a casual cafe, so anybody could walk in, and they had like a really big variety of things, like, if you don't want to buy like a whole dessert crepe you could literally buy like an espresso for 2 or \$3 and be able to hang out

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00:26:21.270 --> 00:26:29.589

Brendan Boon: It's a term that I've heard a lot recently is just. It was like a very good 3rd space for the community. And I think that losing banana crepe.

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00:26:31.350 --> 00:26:39.420

Brendan Boon: post pandemic. Japantown, I think, has like, been very, very careful about what comes next for the community. And I think that

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00:26:39.810 --> 00:26:43.260

Brendan Boon: the loss of banana crepe was like a really big loss for our culture.

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00:26:46.680 --> 00:26:59.709

Steve Nava: I'm gonna talk a little bit back. I'm gonna go back a little bit to growing up. So you know, you talked a little bit about teenage years, and the dance, and the graffiti and different things that you were involved with, and your brother

154

00:27:00.173 --> 00:27:07.740

Steve Nava: what was it like transitioning to early adulthood from teenage years. What? What changed and what stayed the same for you?

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00:27:12.240 --> 00:27:15.660

Brendan Boon: Too early adulthood from being a teenager. Yeah.

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00:27:16.240 --> 00:27:23.680

Steve Nava: Yeah, like growing up into being a young adult. Having had this teenage experience like, what had what changed for you in life?

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00:27:24.240 --> 00:27:25.110

Brendan Boon: Yeah, yeah.

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00:27:25.110 --> 00:27:27.959

Steve Nava: Like participating in in communities that mattered.

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00:27:28.520 --> 00:27:29.260

Brendan Boon: Yeah.

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00:27:31.900 --> 00:27:34.270

Brendan Boon: I think that there's always been

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00:27:34.410 --> 00:28:03.715

Brendan Boon: like me and my wife are. We're sort of aligned in that. We are constantly seeking these things out. I don't think there was ever like a I think, in in high school, for sure I had. I felt like I had infinite access. And I really felt like that that kid that was into those things, I think, like growing up into an adult and having to pay bills and being able to choose where you live, and not having the free time to pursue everything that you want to pursue, was definitely one of those things where I had to start choosing my battles, and I think,

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00:28:04.470 --> 00:28:13.529

Brendan Boon: as you get older and enter like the workforce, and your friends start to have less time to do those sort of things all the time. I think

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00:28:13.950 --> 00:28:19.639

Brendan Boon: a big part of what kept me going and interested in these things was I always

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00:28:20.420 --> 00:28:24.229

Brendan Boon: I view it. I view all of this stuff very much so as like the

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00:28:24.800 --> 00:28:28.859

Brendan Boon: almost like a byproduct of the culture right? Whereas, like these.

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00:28:28.960 --> 00:28:35.010

Brendan Boon: even like the clothes that I was buying when I was in 7th or 8th grade is those things were

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00:28:35.690 --> 00:28:42.370

Brendan Boon: happening because the Bay Area was like a place that was conducive to culture at that time. Right? And I think that is something that

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00:28:42.580 --> 00:29:05.419

Brendan Boon: has changed. The face of it has changed, but the Bay Area has still very much so remained a place where people are looking to go do cool things. There's like this the dichotomy of people that I guess, aren't from here or come here, and they want the Bay Area to be something else than it is. And then you have the people that are staying here and super aggressively, I'm going to be here. I'm going to put my foot down and I'm gonna make something unique. I think that

169

00:29:05.780 --> 00:29:22.154

Brendan Boon: the alignment. I don't know exactly how it happened, but somehow I got aligned to the ladder, and the longer that I stay here, the more that I'm aggressively like, I want to be here, and I want to make sure that we have somebody representing what I think the bay is, I guess, worth in a way beyond tech culture. So

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00:29:23.470 --> 00:29:51.680

Brendan Boon: yeah, I think as I've gotten older, that that mantra has led me to to be really deeply embedded in specific communities. I still dance once a week with my friends in a garage somewhere. We go to dance battles like at least once a month we go to. I'm still very involved in in clothing and the creation of clothing, and we have a lot of friends who run shops and things like that. And we're really, really tapped in, I think, to like both the Bay Area and So Cal and Honolulu sort of like small business communities.

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00:29:54.490 --> 00:29:57.245

Steve Nava: Great. Thank you for sharing that part, and

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00:29:57.880 --> 00:30:03.519

Steve Nava: who encouraged you when you were opening the shop. I know you were a little nervous about telling.

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00:30:03.710 --> 00:30:09.109

Steve Nava: You know people that may have had doubts. But who? Who are your main

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00:30:09.440 --> 00:30:11.920

Steve Nava: team or supporters? You think.

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00:30:13.110 --> 00:30:18.476

Brendan Boon: Yes, I think that my wife and my friends were really big ones.

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00:30:19.080 --> 00:30:30.390

Brendan Boon: I feel super lucky to just have like these people in my life that have known me for so long, and I had so many friends that were like dude. You finally did it. It's been like a common sentiment of like dude. You've been thinking about this

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00:30:30.920 --> 00:30:42.542

Brendan Boon: for as long as I've known you like. Friends from high school have said that right? So I think, like my community of friends has been a really big one. And then, beyond that, I think the Japantown community as a whole has been really, really supportive of us.

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00:30:42.940 --> 00:30:59.329

Brendan Boon: we feel super super lucky to just have friends who have a lot of businesses in the area, people who are deeply associated with this community, whether it be from the religious side or from cafes. Or you know, we have a lot of friends who are here. And all of them basically were like.

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00:30:59.430 --> 00:31:09.430

Brendan Boon: it seems like the right fit and gave us endorsements left and right. So that that's been a big one for us is I just super lucky to have made friends that understand us and and support us.

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00:31:10.780 --> 00:31:14.649

Steve Nava: Great. Yeah, thank you for sharing that. Eric has the next question.

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00:31:15.710 --> 00:31:30.379

Eric Huizar Solis: Yeah. I know you mentioned earlier that the building you're in used to belong to another business. Could you just talk more about that. And what do you know about, like the history of the building in general, and just more details about that.

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00:31:30.910 --> 00:31:37.953

Brendan Boon: Yeah. Yeah. So I guess as far back as I know, I used to read through these.

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00:31:38.640 --> 00:31:54.679

Brendan Boon: there's a Japanese American newspaper that is distributed to the members of the Japanese American Citizens League, called the Pacific Citizen, and I used to look through their old ads and through their old like holiday issues. And they used to have they have these. You can still find them online through the one of the projects through the website. But it's all these

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00:31:54.700 --> 00:32:22.409

Brendan Boon: ads from businesses, from Japantown or from San Jose, and it dates back. They have them in from the sixties. They have all the way up, until, like the mid-nineties, they have all these old issues. Right? So I was looking into the history. And it turns out that this used to be Jackson jewelry, which was just a jewelry shop for a very, very long time, and right next door was Aki's bakery, which is anybody who grew up in this Japantown community, or within the Ja community, is like deeply familiar with Aki's, specifically for their guava cake.

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00:32:22.410 --> 00:32:34.859

Brendan Boon: So this space used to be a jewelry shop for a very long time. When I started coming here to Japantown as like a teenager. It was a resell shoe store called Soul on ice, and that was like

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00:32:34.860 --> 00:32:49.140

Brendan Boon: the only, I think, place in San Jose that you could buy like dead stock Jordans and and Sbs and things like that. And then after that it became a store called Headliners, which was specialized in hats, and at that time this is, I guess

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00:32:49.400 --> 00:32:57.149

Brendan Boon: I don't know how familiar you guys are with like things like plunder, and like the the I guess street, where as a whole like this is directly before

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00:32:57.270 --> 00:33:00.389

Brendan Boon: that entire community was sort of

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00:33:01.020 --> 00:33:26.930

Brendan Boon: how do I say this? I don't want to say gentrified, but like there, there was a time where you have to specifically seek out specific types of clothes, and if it was like a hyper, exclusive thing to be aware of these things right, and that was the time when I would come down here and come to this space is because it was the only place that would sell specific brands that I really liked, where I had only seen it in San Francisco or in Honolulu. That was like headliners like the place to buy that sort of clothes.

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00:33:27.410 --> 00:33:36.079

Brendan Boon: so yeah, it was. It was a jewelry shop, and then it became soul on ice, and then it became the headliners. And then now it's Minasan.

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00:33:37.000 --> 00:33:42.940

Eric Huizar Solis: Oh, can I also just ask, where like, what streets are you located at? Like? What transit lines go through there?

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00:33:43.080 --> 00:33:45.000

Eric Huizar Solis: I'm curious about that, too.

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00:33:45.450 --> 00:33:49.620

Brendan Boon: Yeah, so we are on the corner of

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00:33:50.540 --> 00:34:03.359

Brendan Boon: 5th Street and Jackson. So basically, like, directly in the heart of San Jose's Japantown, Japantown is kind of like. An. Interestingly, I'm sure you guys have spoke about this at length. But Japantown is an interesting community, because it

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00:34:03.610 --> 00:34:05.040

Brendan Boon: isn't really

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00:34:05.300 --> 00:34:12.230

Brendan Boon: it's almost like a a downtown area that's not really supposed to exist. Right? It it sort of came up out of necessity and and like it

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00:34:12.540 --> 00:34:34.949

Brendan Boon: in nature maybe doesn't feel like a downtown area. And it's not really like hyper centrally located in terms of transit lines. I think the closest thing to us that I can think of would be. We have a bus line that runs along Taylor that, I think, runs through the Rose Garden. It might be the 66 but, I don't want to promise. And then we're relatively close to the light rail. Specifically, the Japantown Bart station. So

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00:34:35.178 --> 00:34:50.460

Brendan Boon: it's about like a 7 min walk to get from that station to Japantown proper, and then that one can lead you directly into downtown and into North San Jose. So, I know a lot of people who have worked in North San Jose that chose Japantown because it was close, and I know a lot of people who take the light rail to go downtown regularly.

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00:34:50.739 --> 00:34:51.599

Eric Huizar Solis: Okay.

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00:34:52.318 --> 00:35:01.029

Eric Huizar Solis: I'm really curious about that now, cause you say it's not like it. It's centrally located, I guess, but it doesn't look like downtown right.

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00:35:01.630 --> 00:35:03.083

Brendan Boon: Yes, yes.

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00:35:04.750 --> 00:35:11.130

Brendan Boon: yeah. And like, with regards to like the history of Japantown, as as far as I'm aware.

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00:35:11.350 --> 00:35:13.670

Brendan Boon: Actually, Steve, is this a good time to talk about these sort of things.

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00:35:13.670 --> 00:35:14.370

Steve Nava: Yeah.

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00:35:14.910 --> 00:35:40.720

Brendan Boon: Okay, like Japantown sort of like in the mid to late 1800 was Chinatown right? So there was Chinatown, which existed on the corner of what 6th Street and Jackson. And it was like this, this area that was bought by this immigrant named John Heinlein. I think he was German, and he created this space where he just wanted Chinese people to be able to thrive and to have community and not be able like. At this point, I think 4 or 5 Chinatowns had been arsoned

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00:35:40.720 --> 00:36:02.160

Brendan Boon: in San Jose at that time, so he specifically buys this huge amount of land, and he says, I want Chinese people to be able to thrive here. Right? So he creates this Chinatown across the street from what is now Minato, and it ran for probably 40ish years. At the same time, I think late 1800, like 1890s, Japanese

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00:36:02.420 --> 00:36:08.999

Brendan Boon: south of Japan is getting hit super hard by some sort of economic hardship. It might be a drought, or it might be a

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00:36:09.940 --> 00:36:33.300

Brendan Boon: just like crops weren't doing well, or something like that. So at that time I know a lot of people, especially from agriculture from the south of Japan, were moving to the Us. To work in agriculture. So that's how my great grandparents ended up. Here is both late 18 hundreds. They they got on a boat and came over for the promise to work in agriculture right, and then also at the same time. Folks from the Philippines are also coming to the Us. At that time, and none of them. They're all here sort of like.

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00:36:33.300 --> 00:36:53.079

Brendan Boon: because of the Gold Rush right? But then they also all landed in in the South Bay, working in in the orchards or in the fields nearby. So at that time Japantown became this place. That was the gathering place for the Filipino community, for the Japanese community and for the Chinese community, all sort of within the same 3 block radius, and then, when Chinatown.

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00:36:53.530 --> 00:37:13.034

Brendan Boon: the dude, [John Heinlen](#), eventually passed away, his kids took over the the property, and then, when they went bankrupt and couldn't keep it going. The city of San Jose came in and tore down San Jose's Chinatown pretty much immediately. So what was left was Japantown, which had sort of like been created directly next to this area.

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00:37:14.120 --> 00:37:38.109

Brendan Boon: so that that's kind of what I mean by it's not like. If you think about the when I think about the grid lines of San Jose, and I think about the way that downtown was built.

It's like this was probably a residential area at some point. I don't think it was ever really meant to be a hyper-commercial like being on the corners of 5th and Jackson is, is kind of like a random one when you think about most of downtown is either along 4th or along First Street

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00:37:39.410 --> 00:37:47.459

Eric Huizar Solis: Alright. Then would you say that? Does that sort of history of sort of well with the

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00:37:47.880 --> 00:37:50.499

Eric Huizar Solis: what was his name? John? Hi! I didn't catch his last name.

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00:37:51.180 --> 00:37:53.219

Brendan Boon: In, yeah, yeah.

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00:37:53.220 --> 00:38:02.389

Eric Huizar Solis: With him, owning it for so long, and allowing people to congregate and do what they need to do to have their own community, because, you know, they put it because.

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00:38:02.570 --> 00:38:07.460

Eric Huizar Solis: you know, they just their stuff would get worn down. Do you think that history

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00:38:07.640 --> 00:38:11.629

Eric Huizar Solis: contributes to how tight knit the community is now.

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00:38:12.480 --> 00:38:16.579

Brendan Boon: I think, yeah, definitely. So I I think so. I think that a lot of that

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00:38:17.850 --> 00:38:42.132

Brendan Boon: a lot of the people who live in Japantown today, or a lot of people who have connections to Japantown today, especially the old Japanese American community all came from, or I guess, like a good chunk of them are 4th or 5th generation Japanese American folks who likely had some sort of connection to Japantown, and not all of them have lived here. But a lot of them have used this place as a community center. Right? So

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00:38:43.260 --> 00:39:07.549

Brendan Boon: I think there's some. You can kind of feel it in the air to some degree that this place has always been accepting, and that might be just my own personal bias. But I feel like this used to be at the same time. Post world WarII, right. There was Italian Americans, and they were also there used to be a little Italy directly north of Japantown, too, a lot of the relocation of Japanese people back into the valley.

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00:39:07.560 --> 00:39:31.027

Brendan Boon: especially in and around downtown San Jose. The Italian community played a really big part in finding spaces for Japanese people. So when my grandparents came back from camp and they were looking for a place to live, they were getting turned down, left and right when they were trying to rent apartments. Post World War II and then they ended up. An Italian couple ended up renting to them. Directly north of Japantown, right up 4th and Younger Street. So

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00:39:31.410 --> 00:39:35.859

Brendan Boon: yeah, something about this place. I think it's just like it. It has always been.

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00:39:36.790 --> 00:39:37.640

Brendan Boon: It is

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00:39:37.790 --> 00:39:45.350

Brendan Boon: always felt like a protected sort of forward thinking, immigrant space, since, like the mid 18 hundreds, probably.

225

00:39:46.130 --> 00:39:47.930

Eric Huizar Solis: Wow! That that's so cool.

226

00:39:48.800 --> 00:39:49.370

Brendan Boon: Should be.

227

00:39:49.830 --> 00:39:50.490

Eric Huizar Solis: Yeah.

228

00:39:54.700 --> 00:39:58.329

Steve Nava: Looks like Kenneth has the next one, which is number 8.

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00:40:00.810 --> 00:40:05.005

Kenneth Le: Alright so. Well, since opening Minasan right?

230

00:40:06.278 --> 00:40:12.559

Kenneth Le: Has your sense of community changed much in your opinion, and if it has.

231

00:40:13.450 --> 00:40:18.089

Kenneth Le: how have these changes like that you've witnessed impacted your your like connection to it?

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00:40:22.215 --> 00:40:38.769

Brendan Boon: It's okay. So I don't know if there's a better way to say this. I think there was a fear in my mind over time that the Japanese American community that I had grown up with was like, maybe slowly dwindling away. And it's like it's one of those things where it's like. I don't know  
233

00:40:38.820 --> 00:40:56.039

Brendan Boon: if you look at Japantown thirty years from now, if it'll still feel like Japantown right? And that was like a really really big fear of mine. I think now, having the shop, even even in the one month, a little bit more than one month that we've been here. I think that that sort of fear has subsided in me because the amount of  
234

00:40:56.480 --> 00:41:02.230

Brendan Boon: I think the community support has been really big. We've met folks from  
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00:41:02.350 --> 00:41:30.869

Brendan Boon: pretty much all over the Us. You know all different kinds of people, but I think the thing that inspires me the most, or the one that I feel the most deeply in that way has been. We've met a lot of folks in the Japanese American community that have visited from places like La or from from Seattle or from the Midwest, or you know, there's a pretty big Japanese American community in in like the mountains of like Montana, and things like that, and Snake River and things like that, and a lot of them come through Japantown. And I think one thing that  
236

00:41:31.470 --> 00:41:34.119

Brendan Boon: there's this message that has been  
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00:41:34.490 --> 00:41:38.920

Brendan Boon: people have been telling me that Japantown feels like one of those places that still feels  
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00:41:39.110 --> 00:41:44.290

Brendan Boon: very like Japanese American at its core, or like very like like  
239

00:41:44.780 --> 00:42:03.209

Brendan Boon: it still feels like a Japan town where a lot of other Japan towns feel like they've been commercialized. So I guess the long that I the longer that I'm here, the the more prideful I am of this community that's been that's been built, and it's not. It doesn't, I think, like the overall mantra of Japantown is. It doesn't have to always be pure, blooded Japanese people. And I think, like  
240

00:42:03.420 --> 00:42:04.949

Brendan Boon: we are open to

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00:42:05.050 --> 00:42:17.499

Brendan Boon: as a community. That's just not the way that it's always going to be. But I think that this entire community has this affinity for history, and understands and wants to preserve what makes this place special.

242

00:42:19.410 --> 00:42:33.649

Kenneth Le: Got it. So yeah, I can understand like where you're coming from, too, because my family, they live in little Saigon, which is like on Story Road, you know, like it's like a main road that a lot of people kinda go through. And so like

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00:42:34.330 --> 00:42:49.319

Kenneth Le: that area has also kind of been protected similar to Japantown. It may not have as deep of a history, but it was very much, purely like Vietnamese, American, but obviously like, of course, over time it started accepting more

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00:42:49.320 --> 00:43:04.550

Kenneth Le: pop ups from both like like Mexican descent as well as like, maybe even like a little bit of like African American black, like culture as well. It was something that I found also very interesting about that. It also kind of reminds me of

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00:43:04.780 --> 00:43:15.149

Kenneth Le: the area up upwards of Story Road, right past Little Saigon, towards like Emma Prusch Park. There's a lot more Mexican influence up there as well, and I find.

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00:43:15.350 --> 00:43:20.710

Kenneth Le: like all these areas, being relatively close to one another, is very interesting to me.

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00:43:21.260 --> 00:43:36.500

Brendan Boon: For sure. I think that San Jose in general is one of those places where there's these worlds that you wouldn't really know about unless you were a part of that community, or unless somebody told you about them right. I didn't go to little Saigon until I was in my early twenties, probably right and then. Now it's a place that I will bring anybody who comes through town

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00:43:36.760 --> 00:43:49.580

Brendan Boon: to to be aware that we have this community of folks, and even like a deep history with Vietnamese. American folks moving to the bay specifically to San Jose, is something that like should be highlighted. It makes it's what makes San Jose special to me.

249

00:43:51.630 --> 00:44:06.339

Steve Nava: I'm gonna I'm gonna jump into Number 12, and then we can go back to Number ten with Eric. But it kind of piggyback and that's why I'm adding, this question is in terms of ethnicity and race. Have you seen changes in the culture of the Japantown community?

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00:44:07.370 --> 00:44:14.829

Steve Nava: And can you share a little bit about how you perceive that change? Happening?

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00:44:15.200 --> 00:44:17.499

Steve Nava: You kind of started talking about that already.

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00:44:18.840 --> 00:44:21.680

Brendan Boon: Yeah, it's something that

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00:44:22.760 --> 00:44:32.279

Brendan Boon: even I have to accept this. I'm I'm half Japanese, American, right? So it's not. It's not like, I'm this person who is like hyper preserving this bloodline. And there's there's no way that I can be right. I think it's like

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00:44:32.640 --> 00:44:47.860

Brendan Boon: the overall mantra of Japantown is, is awareness of the state of the Nikkei community. If you talk to folks from the San Francisco Japan town, I think like less than 1% of Japanese Americans who live in the greater area live in Japantown today. Right? And it's like.

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00:44:48.820 --> 00:44:50.979

Brendan Boon: when you hear those things.

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00:44:51.970 --> 00:44:54.300

Brendan Boon: I think it's you have to realize

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00:44:56.080 --> 00:45:03.339

Brendan Boon: it's impossible for a community to stay the exact same way over the next 50 to a hundred years. If.

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00:45:03.640 --> 00:45:07.930

Brendan Boon: like, it's where we can't be so deeply rooted in.

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00:45:08.960 --> 00:45:36.509

Brendan Boon: Sorry, let me rephrase this, I guess, like when I think about the immigration of Japanese, Americans or or Japanese people to the Us. In like the 18 hundreds that's like it's. It's a pretty specific community. And a lot of times we have affinity to folks from Hawaii more so than we do people immigrants from Japan, right? And it's it's it's both ways where

people who are Japanese, Japanese don't grow up coming to Japantown. They don't really know about. They never went to Santo Market right? It's 1 of those things where like, it's almost 2 entirely different communities.

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00:45:37.050 --> 00:45:38.250

Brendan Boon: I think we.

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00:45:38.640 --> 00:45:47.460

Brendan Boon: we have to be realistic in expecting that Japantown will change over time. And I think, if you look at my generation, a lot of

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00:45:47.800 --> 00:46:16.959

Brendan Boon: almost our entire community. This is a question that comes up all the time, which is like we talked to the folks from a lot of local businesses. And you ask, like, what do you think the kids are going to take over? And a lot of them are working 9 to fives, or they're working in the medical field, and they don't have a specific interest in taking on their family's restaurant. Right? And even then we don't have that many young Japanese American chefs that want to open up a restaurant anytime soon. Right? It's in fact, there's probably you could probably list them on your hand right, and if you were going to choose a place. Would it be San Jose? Right? It's like not the hottest market. So

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00:46:17.330 --> 00:46:25.489

Brendan Boon: I think we have this acceptance that Japan town will change over time. And I I feel like I can see it day to day. But I

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00:46:25.610 --> 00:46:28.320

Brendan Boon: I think you have to just be okay with the flow. It's

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00:46:28.970 --> 00:46:39.579

Brendan Boon: like things are gonna change over time, and Japantown will still be a historic place with this history. But I hopefully that the the next generation of folks will at least celebrate it.

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00:46:42.120 --> 00:46:44.929

Steve Nava: Yeah, that really helps clarify that.

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00:46:45.070 --> 00:46:54.320

Steve Nava: And I think we're gonna have to skip to number 13 where Andy's question, because we already covered 10, 11, and 12. So, Andy, would you.

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00:46:54.980 --> 00:46:55.850

Andy Le: Yeah,

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00:46:58.220 --> 00:47:11.340

Andy Le: I'd like to ask about your experience. And how's like your experience changed, and how you kind of like, understand what belonging to a community like, you know, means to you.

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00:47:11.570 --> 00:47:17.599

Andy Le: all right. Yeah. And I guess, like, what role or like, or

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00:47:17.750 --> 00:47:22.750

Andy Le: what do you think, or what role. Do you think like inclusivity and acceptance play in like a strong community?

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00:47:24.020 --> 00:47:28.529

Brendan Boon: I think it's huge. I think specifically, inclusivity is is one of those things that

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00:47:28.800 --> 00:47:44.749

Brendan Boon: I think Japantown is a community that feels very open arms, and like I would talk about even before living here, I would always talk about how Japantown seems like the type of place that has a really tight knit community. But it wasn't until I think, really living here and and doing this day in, day out, I reached a point where

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00:47:44.770 --> 00:48:07.349

Brendan Boon: I can go to Roy's and sit down with somebody that's 50 years older than me, and just talk for like 30 min. And this is just neighborhood folks, right? And that's something that I don't think you can really find anywhere in San Jose. So I think my sense of community has has shifted quite a bit where I thought that I was just going to be surrounded by by young creatives and folks that were doing in my, from my perspective, interesting things. But I think that

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00:48:08.370 --> 00:48:14.160

Brendan Boon: the thing that makes this community special is the fact that it's so inclusive. It would if it was.

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00:48:15.150 --> 00:48:21.062

Brendan Boon: And and to be clear, Japantown has changed a lot over time, I think, if you look at Japantown even 20 years ago.

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00:48:21.430 --> 00:48:23.149

Brendan Boon: The the community

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00:48:23.680 --> 00:48:47.720

Brendan Boon: was very heavily shaped by old religious institutions, and that's not not to knock on old religious institutions at all right. The Temple has always been a really really big

part of Japantown politics, and same with Wesley, which is our Christian church right? These folks have always, like, been very heavily embedded in the way that Japantown moves, and the way that Japantown had developed for a very long time. But I think generational shifts have have kind of like

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00:48:48.410 --> 00:49:07.440

Brendan Boon: new folks in the community are much more open to to thinking about Japantown from a sustainability, perspective, and inclusivity like has to be a part of that like, as I mentioned, if it was. If we only wanted these businesses to be run by the community, or or specifically from Japanese American communities. This thing would be gone in the next 20 years, right.

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00:49:09.160 --> 00:49:17.779

Andy Le: Hmm! I like that answer. Just one more thing. If I can ask like, what kind of advice would you give to someone who's like kind of struggling to find a sense of belonging.

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00:49:21.110 --> 00:49:22.100

Brendan Boon: I think.

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00:49:25.410 --> 00:49:27.529

Brendan Boon: finding a sense of belonging. I think, like

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00:49:28.790 --> 00:49:41.990

Brendan Boon: I'm always like an interest. 1st person, I think, like the you have the thing that you find yourself personally attracted to and over time, you will find it just definitely get yourself out into those sort of spaces right? Like, I think

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00:49:41.990 --> 00:50:00.269

Brendan Boon: the longer that I it's like my attraction. My my affinity towards Japantown has led me towards this community, and it's not through. And it's not like I'm doing this active push and trying to get in everybody's faces and trying to make myself known. It's just like my personal interest in this community has led me to be deeply embedded here, and I think it's the same with any interest. The moment that you

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00:50:00.470 --> 00:50:01.559

Brendan Boon: have an angle.

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00:50:02.480 --> 00:50:17.989

Brendan Boon: something you will find the people to that will be similar minded. Right? And I think that's true of of most things. But I think it's especially true in a city like San Jose, where I think it's otherwise sometimes difficult for folks to find belonging. I think that the moment that you find people that are

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00:50:18.760 --> 00:50:32.810

Brendan Boon: interested in the same thing as you. It's likely that they're going to also be similar people to you in some degree like there's obviously a pruning process. But I think that finding thing that you love, and that you can talk deeply about at length, will eventually bring you the people.

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00:50:33.060 --> 00:50:34.560

Andy Le: I agree. Thank you.

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00:50:34.560 --> 00:50:35.900

Brendan Boon: Good. Thank you.

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00:50:36.410 --> 00:50:36.980

Steve Nava: Anyway.

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00:50:36.980 --> 00:50:43.929

Steve Nava: you talk a little bit about some of the history, but in general, what do you think are the biggest historical things that have happened in your

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00:50:44.530 --> 00:50:54.870

Steve Nava: your memory, your lifetime, historical things that have happened in general.

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00:50:54.870 --> 00:50:55.580

Brendan Boon: 4th thing.

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00:50:55.580 --> 00:51:00.090

Steve Nava: Even beyond Japantown. Just more like impact did your life or.

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00:51:00.470 --> 00:51:23.919

Brendan Boon: I know I mentioned pandemic. I really stand by that. I think that was something that really, really it was like a cultural reset in a lot of ways right? And that like, I think I was forced to think very deeply about what I wanted out of life. I think working from home was a dream for me for a very long time, and all of a sudden it became like torturous right, and then, like a lot of things like, I guess when I think about

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00:51:24.040 --> 00:51:32.950

Brendan Boon: shifts in culture again, I'm gonna circle back to like the flourishing of San Jose's creative community just being

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00:51:33.170 --> 00:51:50.199

Brendan Boon: honestly, probably a result of the 2008 crash right? Is like these folks right? It's like these folks now need creativity more than ever, and I think things were actually

probably really tough for anybody who was in that age range at that time. But for me as a high schooler who was growing up in Cupertino. It was just cool to see right? I didn't understand it. Beyond that.

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00:51:51.820 --> 00:51:56.230

Brendan Boon: Yeah, yeah, I would. I can't think of anything else off the top of my head.

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00:51:56.470 --> 00:51:57.490

Steve Nava: Yeah.

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00:52:00.790 --> 00:52:01.520

Steve Nava: See?

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00:52:02.570 --> 00:52:03.290

Brendan Boon: Pretty much.

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00:52:04.410 --> 00:52:08.830

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00:52:09.154 --> 00:52:11.100

Steve Nava: So Kenneth would have number sixteen.

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00:52:11.300 --> 00:52:11.860

Kenneth Le: Gotcha

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00:52:12.597 --> 00:52:37.290

Kenneth Le: so with how you've mentioned the command, the community of Japantown many times, and, like the various concerns that you may have, can you elaborate on what specific concerns you have about the future of Japantown like things? Maybe like, what would you like to see it become in the future like, maybe, if the future generations would, you know, develop it even further than what it already is? Or maybe

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00:52:38.250 --> 00:52:46.519

Kenneth Le: there are any other communities that you love that you wish to maybe see them take shape in the future as well.

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00:52:46.845 --> 00:52:57.924

Brendan Boon: Yeah, yeah, that's a good question is like, what if if I were to almost choose what Japan town would become like? What are directions that I would like to see it take.

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00:52:59.760 --> 00:53:22.659

Brendan Boon: yeah, I think the change that I see over time, and it's natural. I don't think there's anything wrong with. It is a lot of business. Owners are people, I think Japantown.

And this is something that I was talking to a realtor about recently is that Japantown is the type of place that openings don't come up very often, and when they do they are like highly sought after. There's a lot of people who have their eyes on this neighborhood because it is centrally located.

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00:53:22.690 --> 00:53:34.090

Brendan Boon: It has. It's safe. It has a downtown strip, and it has just, I think, this allure of being in. I think people like love things like Japantown from like a like people want to live in

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Brendan Boon: in places that seem cool, and Japan towns for some reason, has that aura. And it's the same from a business perspective where I think whenever there's an opening, especially something that is

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00:53:43.240 --> 00:53:44.640

Brendan Boon: people that are

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00:53:44.830 --> 00:53:57.790

Brendan Boon: people. Yeah, I don't know how else to say it. But this place is a place that for some reason all different types of businesses attract and people it's highly sought after. So over time, I think we're slowly seeing businesses shift. And I think

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00:53:57.980 --> 00:54:07.599

Brendan Boon: in in the name of like revitalizing the neighborhood, there have been a lot of new businesses opening in the past even five years that I've been here I don't know. I think that

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00:54:08.180 --> 00:54:10.539

Brendan Boon: I think that there is a specific.

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00:54:11.190 --> 00:54:37.229

Brendan Boon: I guess, mutual understanding that most folks have here with regards to community involvement. What we want out of the community, I think, like a respect for for old things and a love for history. A lot of these things are retained by the business owners here, and I think that over time I would hate to see this place become something that felt corporate or felt like the community was being taken advantage of, and I think about that sometimes, even with.

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00:54:37.260 --> 00:54:44.750

Brendan Boon: I don't want to get too political. But there's there's yeah, we feel the shift pretty gradually.

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00:54:46.820 --> 00:54:48.949

Brendan Boon: I'm sorry, guys. What was the second part of the question.

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00:54:48.950 --> 00:55:00.060

Kenneth Le: Second part was that like, were there any? Are there any other communities that you think are dear to you, that you have like similar concerns with about how you see them, like taking shape or developing in the future.

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00:55:00.570 --> 00:55:01.255

Brendan Boon: Yeah,

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00:55:03.230 --> 00:55:19.170

Brendan Boon: I guess I guess other Japan towns would be a big one, I think. Like when I think about Japantown, San Francisco, like I've talked to folks who have come in and talked to me about just the loss of a lot of their community spaces and places that are really big in their community that, like even like [San Francisco's] [Benkyodo](#), their mochi shop closed down

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00:55:19.170 --> 00:55:37.369

Brendan Boon: 3 or 4 years ago, and I was at the grand open, the grand closure. And it was like a really emotional thing for the entire community. And that place had been there for I think, over a hundred years. So like that place. It's like we're seeing sort of this thing that I think is natural, which is sort of the

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00:55:37.870 --> 00:55:45.980

Brendan Boon: the passing away, and the slow dilution of this community. I think the places that I would

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00:55:46.260 --> 00:56:00.559

Brendan Boon: like to see Japantown, maybe lean a little bit more towards is, is places that I think have this. And Japantown actually to be completely transparent is is a place that I think represents a lot of things that are, are really, really cool. I think that this is a place that is like.

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00:56:00.570 --> 00:56:20.219

Brendan Boon: It cherishes creativity, it cherishes history, it cherishes really, really deeply rooted in cultural things, but also feels very forward looking. So in that way, I think Japantown is is really really unique and very cool in that regard, and also for small business. It's one of those places that is aggressively small business owned.

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00:56:20.490 --> 00:56:24.850

Brendan Boon: I think when I think about the progression of Japantown, I would I

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00:56:25.110 --> 00:56:35.380

Brendan Boon: I look at places like there's neighborhoods in Hawaii, especially like one of our favorite places, is Kaimuki, which is this small little neighborhood, maybe like ten min north of Waikiki, and it's like

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00:56:35.440 --> 00:56:43.059

Brendan Boon: very, very small business. New things are constantly opening. People are just constantly doing creative things. There's like 4 or 5 coffee shops. People are

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00:56:43.090 --> 00:56:54.360

Brendan Boon: just constantly just making things and making it work. And the entire area uses it as a community center in a way that I've never really seen right? So like there's the way that it is

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00:56:54.360 --> 00:57:16.860

Brendan Boon: especially Honolulu is split up into like valleys that go up into a mountain, and then everybody comes down from the mountain to hang out in this neighborhood, basically. And like you feel it when you're there. Everybody who grew up there knows this strip of land, and like goes there as like their primary day to day. So I think that's a big one, is the other part of Hawaii is that it's like inherently multicultural, and I don't think anybody is like fighting to be

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00:57:17.120 --> 00:57:23.119

Brendan Boon: to tell the Japanese American story in the same way that people in the mainland are right. I think that

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00:57:23.460 --> 00:57:28.400

Brendan Boon: the cool thing about Hawaii is, and that's sort of the stage that I see us reaching eventually is

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00:57:28.760 --> 00:57:43.069

Brendan Boon: is, they're inherently multicultural, and they're not really as concerned with the preservation component. It's more about the future of Asian, American or Hawaiian culture. The other places would be.

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00:57:43.990 --> 00:58:03.339

Brendan Boon: I think, when I look at places like Orange County, where there's like a large historical Japanese American community. But there's also a young community of Japanese folks, or just Asian American folks that wanted to make their name. And you. You can feel that in cities like Costa Mesa, where it feels

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00:58:03.540 --> 00:58:28.605

Brendan Boon: both very Japanese, but also very Japanese, American. There's like it's. And it's not like, there's this difference between them. It's just like one culture that sort of like feeds back into each other. Same with Torrance and Gardena. But I think the thing that Japantown retains over those is it's aggressively Japanese-American, specifically, not even Japanese, just like super super Japanese-American. And

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00:58:29.030 --> 00:58:35.579

Brendan Boon: yeah, it's still like a very, very like community space, like people who grew up in this thing still come back constantly.

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00:58:36.790 --> 00:58:49.370

Steve Nava: Yeah, thank you for sharing that. I was just thinking about the the all the housing that's being built in in the Japantown area, and I know there's some, you know, issues around sewage and.

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00:58:50.730 --> 00:58:56.256

Steve Nava: You know, just issues right? That can come up when you have a concentration of people in any place.

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00:58:56.640 --> 00:59:04.700

Steve Nava: Is that something that? That concerns the local community of businesses. Small business, or is that more like an opportunity? Or is it both

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00:59:05.290 --> 00:59:08.658

Steve Nava: like to see big, you know tight

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00:59:09.410 --> 00:59:11.819

Steve Nava: you know, small condos that are expensive, but

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00:59:12.240 --> 00:59:17.259

Steve Nava: but you know just kind of really overnight, you know. You see them kind of come up. And

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00:59:18.170 --> 00:59:24.389

Steve Nava: do you see that as an opportunity to, I guess, grow that neighborhood?

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00:59:24.680 --> 00:59:29.660

Steve Nava: Or do you see it as potentially a threat to its uniqueness.

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00:59:30.980 --> 00:59:35.420

Brendan Boon: I think you're right. I think it's both right. I think that as the neighborhood grows, and

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00:59:35.730 --> 00:59:40.500

Brendan Boon: there are more eyes on the neighborhood. There's more honestly I mentioned that, like.

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00:59:41.190 --> 00:59:46.159

Brendan Boon: I think, given the growth of Japantown in the last ten years, I think that it has.

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Brendan Boon: I don't think previously. It was a place that people moved because they wanted to live in a cool young neighborhood in San Jose at all right, I think like when I. When I talked to the owner of the previous owner of this shop, he was telling me that the reason that these streetwear stores were looking to move to Japantown was because A. It was pretty dead at that time, and B. It was close to downtown, and the rents were cheap. It wasn't like a specific. I want to be here because of this thing it over time they grew that connection. But at that time it wasn't really a cool place to go

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01:00:16.430 --> 01:00:17.940

Brendan Boon: right.

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01:00:19.290 --> 01:00:20.400

Brendan Boon: I think

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01:00:20.630 --> 01:00:25.939

Brendan Boon: I don't know as things change. I worry about the direction a lot, but I think at the same time

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01:00:26.260 --> 01:00:31.960

Brendan Boon: I'll lean back on. The thought of this natural pruning will happen. The folks that really resonate with the neighborhood will end up staying.

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01:00:31.960 --> 01:00:32.279

Steve Nava: Paying, that.

353

01:00:32.280 --> 01:00:56.309

Brendan Boon: I think that the folks that came here expecting it to be a little bit more of a wonderland, and they find that it's something else, or they don't really feel a connection with that community will end up likely leaving right? And that's the same with us where we were in an apartment for a long time, and we saw folks that came in and didn't really understand what the community was about, and ended up leaving, and then we found a lot of friends who don't plan on ever leaving. You know what I mean.

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01:00:57.710 --> 01:00:59.489

Steve Nava: Yeah, that makes total sense.

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01:01:00.580 --> 01:01:01.290

Steve Nava: So

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01:01:01.620 --> 01:01:08.770

Steve Nava: is there anything else? You'd like to add to the interview that we didn't mention or any questions for us.

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01:01:09.640 --> 01:01:20.629

Steve Nava: as we kind of close out, we kind of use. We gave you all the questions. So if it's up to you like, if you want to add anything or something that you feel like you didn't. You didn't really get a chance to say about.

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01:01:20.780 --> 01:01:28.670

Steve Nava: you know, not only community, but Japan town, and you know your your sort of life experience and what you're learning from all this work you're doing.

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01:01:32.430 --> 01:01:51.750

Brendan Boon: I feel like I've been talking a lot, so not much too much else to add on my end. I guess the two things that came to my mind just now that I forgot to add,

when we were talking about like changes in Japantown on losses of Japantown businesses. We recently lost an optometrist, which was Shinmori optometry, and they were there for like

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01:01:52.140 --> 01:02:00.289

Brendan Boon: 50 years, probably run by the same family, and recently sold the Vsp. And losing them was one of those things that. And I've talked to the owner about sort of the change, and it seems like

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01:02:00.510 --> 01:02:07.988

Brendan Boon: it was this aggressive shift from being a local business to feeling like you're a part of, like the biggest, oldest corporate structure ever.

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01:02:08.460 --> 01:02:28.740

Brendan Boon: that was a big loss, and that's something that I worry about is sort of just the loss of Japanese American community stuff. And then the other one was Santo Market. They haven't closed. They're still very much in business, and they're probably doing better than they've ever done. But they used to pre pandemic. They used to have this indoor dining space, which was like the randomness. You walk into a grocery store, and there's like 10 tables in the middle, and there's always

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01:02:28.740 --> 01:02:45.150

Brendan Boon: folks of all different ages just sitting and eating stuff and just like hanging out. And you could talk to somebody who was 40 years older than you whenever you wanted at inside Santo market. I feel like a lot of interesting connections were being made at that time, so the loss of that was another like a third space lost in Japantown.

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01:02:47.190 --> 01:02:48.749

Brendan Boon: I don't know, I guess.

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01:02:50.230 --> 01:02:54.580

Brendan Boon: Well, in high school we hung up what

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01:02:55.160 --> 01:02:58.620

Brendan Boon: I guess from your guys. Perspective. What? What? What do you?

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01:02:59.070 --> 01:03:07.160

Brendan Boon: Where do you expect Japantown to go, and I guess, like in from your studies, right? What is the sort of natural development of these sort of communities.

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01:03:09.300 --> 01:03:11.930

Steve Nava: Hmm good question.

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01:03:13.890 --> 01:03:15.479

Brendan Boon: If there is such a thing.

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01:03:15.480 --> 01:03:16.080

Steve Nava: Yeah.

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01:03:16.890 --> 01:03:22.157

Steve Nava: You know, before you answer that there was a quick footnote I wanted to share in in.

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01:03:22.570 --> 01:03:33.170

Steve Nava: there's a film called the wash in 1988 that was filmed in Japantown. Yeah. And you mentioned Santo market. I wondered if there was filmed partly in there, because there was definitely a scene where there's

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01:03:33.280 --> 01:03:41.619

Steve Nava: tables that are kind of randomly in this big room, and it's like it looks like a house. But then it also looks like a business. Anyway. I don't heard of it. The water.

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01:03:41.620 --> 01:03:50.500

Brendan Boon: I, yeah, I've seen the watch. Actually, we have a, we have a TV, like an old school TV that is constantly displaying old films directly outside the shop. So it's like, if you look into our window, display.

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01:03:50.500 --> 01:03:51.589

Steve Nava: Yeah, I've seen it. Yeah.

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01:03:51.590 --> 01:03:54.799

Brendan Boon: Yeah, yeah, we, I put in a bunch of clips from the wash in there that are constantly.

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01:03:54.800 --> 01:03:56.969

Steve Nava: Oh, you did. Okay, you know about it. Okay.

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01:03:56.970 --> 01:04:03.519

Brendan Boon: I know the exact scene you're talking about. If I'm not wrong, it might have been inside of what was then called.

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01:04:03.630 --> 01:04:08.339

Brendan Boon: And don't quote me on this. It was either inside of the Sakamoto barbershop, which is on the corner of Sixth.

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01:04:08.920 --> 01:04:23.489

Brendan Boon: or it could have been inside what was then Shanghai Restaurant, which was where state of grace the tattoo shop is now, before. It used to be a two story dim sum place where I think the second story was like the go to banquet spot.

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01:04:23.490 --> 01:04:24.280

Steve Nava: Oh!

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01:04:24.280 --> 01:04:25.260

Brendan Boon: For many years.

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01:04:25.490 --> 01:04:30.929

Steve Nava: Yeah, it was dim. Some they were serving, I'm pretty sure. Yeah, anyway, that was a little random note. But

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01:04:31.100 --> 01:04:35.240

Steve Nava: so your question was more around. The future of Japantown.

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01:04:35.870 --> 01:04:38.880

Brendan Boon: Or or even like, where would as as somebody who's, I guess.

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01:04:39.200 --> 01:04:42.069

Brendan Boon: Yeah, where would you like to see this community go? Even.

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01:04:42.320 --> 01:04:42.950

Steve Nava: Yeah.

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01:04:45.030 --> 01:04:52.241

Steve Nava: yeah, for me. I mean, I guess this, I haven't really had the students reading or or this quarter. We didn't visit the

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01:04:52.660 --> 01:04:55.170

Steve Nava: the museum, and do the tour, you know.

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01:04:55.740 --> 01:05:00.589

Steve Nava: We did it last year, but for me.

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01:05:01.560 --> 01:05:09.350

Steve Nava: I guess my thing is mom and pop stores staying open and generationally being, you know, run by their children.

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01:05:09.500 --> 01:05:18.309

Steve Nava: But you know, I think that's kind of a lot to ask for this economy and the pressures that it has on younger people.

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01:05:18.710 --> 01:05:25.269

Steve Nava: It's a it's a tall order, for, you know, a child to be like, oh, yeah, I'm gonna run this shop that my parents been running

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01:05:25.986 --> 01:05:30.410

Steve Nava: with all of their other aspirations, at the same time running at the same time.

So

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01:05:32.690 --> 01:05:33.859

Steve Nava: yeah, I think

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01:05:34.310 --> 01:05:43.399

Steve Nava: it's I think there's a lot of idealism, you know, when it comes to places like this. And in a conversation with Tomiko Rask, you know, she mentioned how

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01:05:43.620 --> 01:05:52.830

Steve Nava: a lot of the people that have these high aspirations for Japantown, being Japanese generationally, don't have children working in the community, and they don't have

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01:05:53.130 --> 01:06:02.260

Steve Nava: hours that they're putting into the community. So I don't want to say too much about my dream Japan town. Other than that. It is my hope that it stays local.

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01:06:02.460 --> 01:06:09.360

Steve Nava: I know it's going to be in more and more diversified. And that's just the natural progression of you know, global capitalism. And

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01:06:09.520 --> 01:06:14.239

Steve Nava: and just, you know, just neighborhoods in general, like, they're becoming more doors. And

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01:06:14.350 --> 01:06:19.129

Steve Nava: but yeah, I would like to see it continue to be at least local.

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01:06:19.380 --> 01:06:22.030

Steve Nava: you know, if if not generational, then local.

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01:06:23.028 --> 01:06:27.960

Steve Nava: And yeah, and I and I like the multicultural culturality of it, too. You know.

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01:06:29.260 --> 01:06:33.029

Steve Nava: You're right. You do feel you feel like you belong there, even if you're not Japanese.

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01:06:33.030 --> 01:06:33.490

Brendan Boon: Yep.

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01:06:33.822 --> 01:06:43.120

Steve Nava: And I think that's powerful, you know, especially in these days and times, as we see our sort of national culture going in a different direction.

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01:06:43.610 --> 01:06:48.730

Steve Nava: It's nice to have these kind of communities. That kind of stabilize a sense of belonging.

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01:06:49.950 --> 01:07:08.060

Brendan Boon: Yeah, we actually had this display T-shirt that was modeled after when Japanese Americans got the notice that they had to start relocating. And it was. It was made by the Japanese American National Museum, which is in LA right. And it basically said, Japanese Americans need to be vigilant. We cannot let this happen again, and if you.

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01:07:08.060 --> 01:07:08.470

Steve Nava: Starting to see.

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01:07:08.470 --> 01:07:19.079

Brendan Boon: Signs of this sort of stuff. Then we need to take action. Now. I had that hanging in the window, and then it was sold in the first day, and then the next couple of days after that I got another one, and it sold also. The same day.

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01:07:19.420 --> 01:07:20.050

Steve Nava: Oh, wow!

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01:07:20.050 --> 01:07:27.900

Brendan Boon: Where I don't want to be hyper political, but especially now. Japantown, feeling like a place that is inclusive, is something that I think like

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01:07:28.530 --> 01:07:30.099

Brendan Boon: resonates really, deeply.

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01:07:30.590 --> 01:07:41.987

Steve Nava: Yes, yes, thank you for the interview. I really appreciate it. We learned a lot, I believe. I learned a lot just from this one hour. So wanna thank you again, Brendan and

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01:07:42.480 --> 01:07:44.200

Steve Nava: yeah, thank you so much.

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01:07:44.710 --> 01:07:49.779

Brendan Boon: Thank you all for the time. Thanks for listening to me for so long. I really appreciate the opportunity.

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01:07:50.190 --> 01:07:52.309

Steve Nava: Up and thank you.

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01:07:53.590 --> 01:07:55.170

Steve Nava: Bye-bye. See ya.

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01:07:55.170 --> 01:07:55.990

Kenneth Le: Thank you.

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01:07:56.320 --> 01:07:56.900

Brendan Boon: Thanks.