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Oral History Interview with Teresa Ish**Crossing Borders, Bridging Generations, 2011.019.002**

Interview conducted by April Reynosa at the narrator's home on November 19th, 2011 in Brooklyn, New York.

APRIL REYNOSA: OK. Today is November 19th, 2011. Um this is April Reynosa, and I am conducting a life history interview with Teresa Ish. And we are in Brooklyn, New York and this is part of the Crossing Borders, Bridging Generations Project. Um conducted by the Brooklyn Historical Society. And Teresa, we're just going to start out with you telling me when you were born, um and where you were born. And then let's hear a little bit about your early life.

TERESA ISH: OK. Um I was born in Fresno, California in [date redacted for privacy]. Um almost in Clovis, um right on the border of Clovis, which if you know the Central Valley is quite a bit different than Fresno. It's a little more rural, a little more kind of quaint, and a little I guess fancier in a way. Um to Jack and Jenny Ish. Um my parents met when my dad was in the Peace Corps in Malaysia. He had served two years in Borneo, and then the next two years in Kuala Lumpur, teaching English. And-- and lived either next to or underneath um my mom's family's apartment. Um so I-- I-- the home I came to-- home to after the hospital was the home I left when I graduated from high school. We lived in the same house my whole life. My parents didn't move until far-- pretty far after I graduated from college. Um and then they just moved still within-- within Fresno. Um so same house my whole life, there is-- there are people I went to kindergarten with that I graduated high school with. And I don't know, I guess um my family is so kind of normal that we're atypical. They're still married-- or actually everyone in my family is-- who had gotten married is still married. Um everyone's pretty happy, and there's no like (pause) no real crazy. (laughter)

APRIL REYNOSA: (laughter)

TERESA ISH: Um there's a little bit of crazy. There's always crazy. And there's chaos, but-- but not like a lot of drama, I guess. Um I have one younger sister, she's uh five and a half years younger than me, and she lives in San Francisco. And then there-- I had a

brother who was between us, and he passed away at about a month old. He had a congenital heart defect. So um my mom-- my parents had three kids. Um (pause) let's see. Um I went to the neighborhood elementary school. I was obsessed with Strawberry Shortcake like a lot of kids in the '70s. I had Strawberry Shortcake wallpaper, like very overwhelmingly pink bedroom, which is so not (pause) with my personality. Strawberry Shortcake tennis shoes, I mean just completely over the top. Um but not really. I-- it sometimes seems like that little kid is not at all where I am now. But there probably-- there probably is some of that still. (laughter) Not the pink part at least. Um (pause) I-- I don't know, I had a pretty normal childhood.

Um we went camping every summer at Shafer Lake, and as my parents got-- got older we went from te-- a tent or back-- and backpacking to a tent at a campground, to a camper van in a campground, to a trailer in a campground, and then my parents now have a timeshare on a cabin. (laughter) So it got increasingly wimpy as the time went on, but it was fine. So it was on a lake, we grew up water skiing, and my dad fished, and so moderately outdoorsy, but not you know, like really, really intense. I definitely enjoy kind of hiking and that sort of stuff that came out of that.

Um (pause) I-- yeah, I-- I-- I feel like growing up, it was just kind of so (pause) like idyllically normal that it's hard to kind of go into a lot of detail going through cause there's-- there's nothing I feel like it was kind of particularly um (pause) I mean there's lots of little things that stand out, but there's no kind of like life defining event that I think people with maybe more challenging childhoods have.

Um I-- I did really well in school, I um took a bunch of AP classes, I was Captain of the Swim Team, and in student council, and um (pause) was like a couple of Bs away from valedictorian. So I mean I kind of had a really-- I had a really set up. My parents were really supportive. They were at every swim meet with-- with um timing. They would-- they would sit and they would time the races at the end of the lane. And um and um they were both teachers. My dad taught severely handicapped adults. [05:00] And my mom

started out in a bank, and then when my sister and I were really young, she went back and got her college degree. And um ended up teaching high school and teaching business in high school. So you know, again, like very standard middle class. They were both teachers, they-- my mom was an immigrant, so clearly she's-- you know, there's not like a ton of family financial support coming from there.

And my dad's parents um his dad was also a teacher, he was a music teacher. Um and his mom was a piano teacher, so on the side. Very musical family from-- from my dad's side. My dad has such bad rhythm that your eyes are supposed to kind of like pulsate on rhythm, and his don't. I mean um-- absolutely appalling, cannot carry a tune, can't s-- can't dance, can't play any musical instruments. And I'm sure his-- his parents tried every possible instrument for him to play, and not a thing. Um my sister and I were both subjected to piano lessons when we were little. And you know what? I think if I had stuck with it, it would have been fine. I mean I'm definitely would never have been like some you know, musical prodigy. But I can still read music very slowly, and can pluck things out. I don't really have a good ear, but at least the rhythm part is nowhere near bad as my dad's was. (laughter)

Um and he has a twin brother and an older brother, and all three of them are horrible, musically. I mean it just totally skipped. And a couple months ago I was talking to him about it kind of asking him like not trying to straight up ask him if he thought his parents were disappointed, (laughter) but kind of trying to figure out how they must have felt that you know, music was such a huge part of their lives. And they end up with three kids who appreciate it. I mean they-- they all like listen to and enjoy music. But can't-- can't play at all. I mean I'm sure when one musician marries another, you have kind of these grand dreams of like the family band, and playing music around the house, and that (laughter) totally did not happen at all.

Um (pause) so-- my um-- my grandmother grew up in Kingsburg, California, which is a small town-- uh a small Swedish village outside of Fresno, like 40 miles outside. Her

last-- her maiden name was [Swenson], and her relatives are [Johnsons], and [Bergstroms], and [Ingstroms]. So there's fully Swedish. And um even her family there's tons of musicians on that side that have all come out of that. And um my dad's family is very close knit. I remember probably until I was five or six, we would do Christmas and Thanksgiving with his-- all of his cousins. And so um my grandmother's youngest sister had I think five kids and um they would all get together-- her older sister's two-- three kids, and their families, and then my dad and his two brothers. So there were easily like 65 people at Thanksgiving and Christmas every year. And they would turn the garage into like a-- like two, giant, big long rows of tables with small kids tables. And I was pretty young, so there weren't that many kids. But it got to the point where uh for my-- my dad's cousin, so my grandmother's youngest sister's grandkids-- or kids, most of those families had four to five kids each. So we continued to get together just for 4th of July, cause Christmas and everything got too chaotic. And there-- I think there was one point where there were like 20 kids under 12 there. It was-- it was insanity. And um you know, we still see them, and I-- I'm-- I'm surprising-- surprisingly close considering how kind of far removed the family is.

On my mom's side, uh so I mentioned she was born in Malaysia. She moved over here when-- when she and my dad got married. And um once she moved over, she started the sponsorship process to bring over her siblings. Um it got a bit easier because um my grandmother was married to an Australian. And-- and also because they were in Malaysia, they could go to Britain very easily because it was-- it was a colony. And so um it rather than having people coming directly from Malaysia, they would-- they would come via England cause it was easier to get sponsorship there. So first her-- her next younger (pause) her-- the third sister, the third-- the third daughter came over; um my Aunt Joan. And she was a nurse in England, and so she came over here, and she was a nurse, and worked at the Children's Hospital. Which I think for my mom and dad, ended up being something really appreciated. Especially when my brother was in the hospital, that she was there and she would check up on them and stuff like that.

Um and then my mom's second youngest sister came in when I was really young um and lived with them for a while. [10:00] And the-- they have all kinds of crazy-- she-- she's always been an-- not odd, but-- but kind of a bit more high strung than the rest of the-- well, my other aunt is also high strung, but in a very intense way. She visited, and she's actually-- she would have been a perfect New Yorker, right? She-- instead, she lives in Nebraska now where it totally doesn't fit. But she would have been a perfect New Yorker. She like power walks down the street. If someone next to her is smoking a cigarette, she like is very kind of passive aggressive loud about like coughing, and looking over at them. Like she's got the crowd management handled. Like she can deal with a big city. So she's high strung in that way. This other one is just um-- who's great. I grew up with them, they were-- I probably-- they were probably the family members I would-- the aunts and stuff I was closest to because they lived in Fresno with us. They were all really close, we saw them really frequently. Um they always bought me the good clothes for my birthday, Christmas too.

Um she's just-- she's just very like nervous about a lot of things. And so they have this story where I think it was before I was born in-- in the house that-- that I grew up in. Um my parents had locked themselves out, and she was still living there, and she was asleep. They had gone to church or something in the morning, and basically kind of broke in the house to-- to let themselves back in. And she got scared because she thought there was an intruder, so she jumped out the window. It's a one story house, it's not that bad. But she like you know, broke-- opened the window, broke the screen, and jumped out the window. But you know, in those 1970s tract homes, the window is-- was probably like four and a half feet off the ground. And so (laughter) I don't know how she did it, but um she jumped out the window and ran to the neighbor's house. (laughter) Um cause she, you know, she wasn't going to check or anything.

Um (pause) so then after she came over, my um-- my uncle, my oldest uncle um who's (pause) who's-- so there are three daughters, and then my uncle um Peter. So he came over next from England, and then um right after he came over, my grandmother came

over from England. But my-- my grandfather and my grandmother's son stayed in England or the-- the youngest son. Um my uncle Johnny is five years older than me. My-- there are pictures of my grandmother pregnant at my mom's wedding. Um (pause) so and then yeah, and then-- then she-- then he and my grandfather-- step grandfather came over, and then um my aunt, who still lived in Malaysia cause she married a Chinese Malay-- well, my family's all Chinese, but-- but lived in Malaysia. Um uh-- they came over later with their two daughters when they were in elementary school. And one of them's the same age as my sister, so they went to school together.

Although we-- um I mean-- I'm actually not that close to those cousins, I'm much closer to the cousins on the other side. Um (pause) so yeah, my grandmother was pregnant when my mom got married. That was her third husband. Um she had a pretty like traumatic marriage experiences I guess. Um so she-- my-- she was pregnant with my mom when she was 18, and she was married to um a guy-- a Chinese man. Um and I don't-- you know, it's-- it's all kind of like family rumor, and I haven't-- not family rumor. We talk about it openly, but it's never some-- it hasn't been something where I've kind of sat down and really asked her about. But she um (pause) her husband was-- her husband and her mother in law were essentially shot when the communists were invading Malaysia. And she was pregnant with my mom. Um (pause) so my mom never-- has never met her father. Uh apparently, the-- his-- his mother, so my grandmother's mother in law was literate, and at that's really rare for-- for a Chinese woman of that age. And so I don't know exactly what it was, but somehow they had gone to Malaysia cause they had left the-- the Chinese court. Um when they were fleeing during-- during the rebellions and revolutions that took over.

APRIL REYNOSA: Wow.

TERESA ISH: Um I have no idea what his first name is, what her family name is. Um whenever I've tried to do genealogy stuff, it always stops right there. Um and you know, I have nothing to go on. Um and then so she-- she remarried. I don't know how old my mom was; I think fairly young. She remarried um a guy who was half Scottish, half-- half Chinese. Um he-- he apparently was a bodyguard for um (pause) uh Chiang Kai Shek.

APRIL REYNOSA: Wow.

TERESA ISH: Um so (pause) I-- he-- I don't know exactly what he was doing or where he, [15:00] you know, fit into that either but um he ended up in Malaysia I'm guessing because of the Maoist regime.

APRIL REYNOSA: Mmhmm.

TERESA ISH: Um and-- and he-- that's most-- the majority of my mom's siblings. So three sisters and one brother are from that dad. Um he ended up working in the tin mines. I don't know what he exactly did, but he worked in the tin mines in Malaysia, and his mine collapsed, and he was killed. Um but it turned out that he had another family in (pause) in the UK. And so when he died, them being the like legitimate family, got kind of all of the survivor's benefit.

So here's my grandmother, she (pause) she was I think fairly well off when she was really young. I can-- I'll go back to that. But she basically had like a six grade education with um five kids, you know, living in Malaysia without really kind of any-- any resources. Um but she made it work. I mean all the kids, they-- they went to a missionary school, they went to a Methodist Missionary School; British Methodist Missionary School. Um and she just like soldiered on, and they all-- you know, they're all fine. They're all great, they're all college educ-- well, all-- all but two are college educated. Um they're all living in the US now, they're all doing very well for themselves. You know, have-- a lot of them have families.

And you know, it's-- it's really amazing. She's-- she's a very kind of quiet and obviously, she's a Chinese-- old, Chinese woman, so she's small. (laughter) This very kind of quiet, small woman. And the fact that she had the strength to do that is just completely amazing. Um and then her last husband, um the only grandfather that I know from that side, he's Australia. He was working in the-- on the oil-- in oil rigs out in Australia and in the oil industry. And um I say the oil industry, and I know you think-- it sounds like you know, Dynasty or something like that. He was like a rig operator, not fancy oil industry. Um but he worked in the oil industry. And so um my-- my youngest

uncle is-- is his son, so and half Chinese like 6'2", it's-- it's quite um-- it's not really always expected. (laughter) British accent, grew up in the UK. Um he apparently named me; my youngest uncle.

APRIL REYNOSA: Oh wow.

TERESA ISH: Um he was-- he and my grandmother went over-- or right around the time I was born. There were pictures of him holding me like as a newborn. And um he named me. So he--.

APRIL REYNOSA: And-- and what's the significance of the name?

TERESA ISH: I-- I think he just liked it.

APRIL REYNOSA: Mmhmm.

TERESA ISH: And then um I have a-- my Chinese-- my middle name is Chinese name. My sister though has no Chinese name (laughter) at all. So I don't know if they just kind of lost incentive once they were-- and neither did my brother. Um so I don't know what like why didn't that carry through, but.

APRIL REYNOSA: And what's that like to have the dual kind of hybrid name?

TERESA ISH: Um it's-- it's [Lin]. It's a very easy--.

APRIL REYNOSA: OK.

TERESA ISH: But it's just-- it's spelled in kind of the pinyin, like Chinese way.

APRIL REYNOSA: Mmhmm.

TERESA ISH: Um my mom actually-- she speaks Cantonese, but she can't write. My grandmother because of her little bit of education speaks Mandarin, and Cantonese, and then can write you know, as well as some of the kind of sixth or seventh grade education can. But um so she's the only one who's kind of-- who-- none-- none of my mom's siblings can-- can write Chinese. And actually, my-- my cousins who grew up in Malaysia, they obviously speak Chinese, they also speak Malay, and then they-- they speak English. Just because that's how the education system works out there.

APRIL REYNOSA: Oh, wow.

TERESA ISH: Um no one over there speaks-- speaks Hindi though except for the Indians. It's-- it's-- I don't know, it's a very-- a strange-- it's a strange country for how-- there are-- there are three major ethnic groups. There's-- there's Malays, there's um (pause) Indians,

and there's Chinese. And they all dislike each other, and they're all, all very separate. And the Chin-- the Chinese, you know, you have to learn Malay in school, but the Chinese also speak Malay. And most of them are Christians, so they also speak English. And then the Malays pretty much just speak Malay, all the upper class Malays also learn English and Chinese. And old Malays speak Chinese-- or English because it was a British colony and switched it over later. Um and the Indians obviously speak English as well as Hindi, but no one else speaks Hindi but them. No one else, you know, bothers cause they're kind of the poor laborer class, um and they speak Malay too and probably some of them speak Chinese too because that's kind of how it goes.

APRIL REYNOSA: Adapting, mm hmm.

TERESA ISH: Yeah. Um (pause) I don't speak Chinese. Apparently, I told my mom when I was two that I was American and not Chinese, and therefore did not have to learn it. There's um [20:00] there's video of me singing songs in Chinese when I was really little. I don't really know what they are, what they-- um mean or anything. And I still pressed her to this day like why did you listen to me when I said that? When I insisted-- I mean you could have just continued to speak to me in Chinese. (laughter) Like-- I mean I could have had no choice in the matter. But I feel like um it was-- there was just kind of this thing in the '70s where I feel like people thought that raising bilingual kids was not helpful. And cause my um my dad's cousin married a-- a-- a Latina woman, and they also didn't speak-- teach their kids Spanish. And living in the Central Valley, that's even more appalling where there's so many Spanish speakers. So it-- I mean I think that just-- people just didn't do that. Whereas now, I feel like everyone's kind of making this whole, big effort to make sure their kids grow up bilingual. And it just was never even an option for me.

APRIL REYNOSA: Does your mom ever tell you why, or does she ever share--?

TERESA ISH: She-- no, she's just kind of like well, you didn't want to. (laughter) I probably also didn't want to take a bath, and you still made me do that. (laughter) I mean it doesn't-- just because a little kid doesn't want to do something doesn't always mean you go with it. And I would hope that if I had learned, that I would be teaching [Jun]. Um I took Chinese in college. They only had-- they only ever offer Mandarin, so it's kind of a-

- I've thought about taking Chinese a number of times. But it's like well, you know, I'm really taking it to learn about my family and connect to them, but none of them speak Mandarin. So you know, I might as well not bother. But I did take it in college; it was one of the worst classes I ever took. (laughter) And I mean it was just a bad class all around. The teacher was not Chinese, people in the class who were native speakers were like he's totally pronouncing that wrong, that's not right. Um (pause) he wasn't you know, all that friendly. (laughter) It-- I struggled with it. I mean it's a hard language to learn as an adult. And even though I was used to hearing tonal languages, it still, it never really caught on. And the stuff we learned was ridiculous, like the lobster jumped out of my hands into my girlfriend's purse. That was in our phrase book. Did you have that same phrase book?

APRIL REYNOSA: (laughter) Wow. Yes, I did. (laughter)

TERESA ISH: Yeah. Yeah. And-- and a dog's my friend, and my friends are dogs, but you are not my friend. Or you are my friend, but you are not a dog.

APRIL REYNOSA: That's great you remember. (laughter)

TERESA ISH: Real-- I remember the English translation, and I could-- I could with some thinking, probably do the Chinese one. Although I wouldn't be saying the right thing. But it was such an appalling-- I-- I couldn't have found a bathroom. I mean there was nothing useful that came out of that. Which made it a lot harder cause that also was not a conversation I was going to have with my grandmother. So (laughter) yeah. So the two-- two quarters of that, and that was over.

Um and I just, I haven't gone back. Um I do-- I do really want Jun to learn Chinese. Um (pause) you know, I've asked my mom a few times to try just like just talk to her in Chinese. Don't even bother with the English, she'll pick it up. Even though they don't see each other that often. But you know, she's just-- she's not committed to it, and I don't know if that's really enough to make her-- to make-- to let Jun really pick up on it. Um there-- it's-- Eric-- Eric um has two co-- three cousins in San Francisco. And there's a Chinese public school, and it-- so all three of those cousins speak fluent Cantonese and Mandarin. So his um little, blonde cousins have a leg up on (laughter)-- on me.

APRIL REYNOSA: Wow.

TERESA ISH: So that-- I mean that's actually been one of the things that if we moved to San Francisco, I would really like to try to get her in there. But I think we'd be competing with a lot of other folks who are probably in the same situation as me. Although I-- you know, I don't-- I don't (pause) meet as many-- well, I guess most of the first generation kids who are Asian-- both of their parents are Asian-- and so I don't-- a lot of them speak Chinese. And I-- I don't know a lot of kids my age-- at least where I was growing up-- that were-- that were mixed race. So it--.

APRIL REYNOSA: Do you-- so do you ki-- consider those kids your peers or do you feel like you had a real-- could you relate to them?

TERESA ISH: The-- the Asian kids?

APRIL REYNOSA: Uh huh.

TERESA ISH: I mean I had Asian friends, but they-- you know, how schools kind of divide up into ethnic cliques. And there was like the Asian group.

APRIL REYNOSA: Mmhmm.

TERESA ISH: But my Asian friends were not in the Asian group. They were in the like I guess it was a white group, although it wasn't really white. It was-- it was pretty mixed. But it was like the-- there was like the traditional, high school American group. And then there were the kind of other ethnic groups around. And so my Asian friends were in the-- you know, they were athletes, and [25:00] (pause) kind of more--.

APRIL REYNOSA: So there was other--.

TERESA ISH: More mainstream like traditional, high school track of kids. Um because where I grew up, so-- where I grew up, most of the Asians were Hmong and southeast Asian. And so they clearly had a very different experience than I did, you know. They were still-- yeah, they were both you know, first or second generation. But their parents were refugees, and a lot of times their parents didn't speak English. And I came from a house with two, college educated folk. I mean it was just-- it was different. It was, I think, more stratified along those lines. So um although my-- one of my good friends, [Hahn], she's Vietnamese. Or one of my good friends in high school is Vietnamese, and she-- her family was also um a refugee from family. She came up without her family. But-- or

without her dad. It was just her, and her mom, and some siblings. But she somehow also managed to kind of fall into the (pause) less of the like Southeast Asian clique, and more of the mainstream, America side.

Um (pause) so yeah, I mean it was-- it-- there was (pause) one) I don't look particularly Chinese. Um I-- I actually have a much-- I have a very easy time in Hawaii cause people think I'm mixed Hawaiian instead. And people often think my mom is Filipino or something like that instead cause she's kind of darker complexion, taller, um rounder eyes. That's just wherever they were from in China that was the look. And so between my dad's blonde hair and blue eyes, and I have green eyes, and I-- most people would not even guess that I was half Chinese.

It's really nice for traveling. I can-- if I keep my mouth shut, I can kind of fake it almost anywhere. Um (pause) and-- and-- but, you know, obviously once I speak (laughter) everyone knows I'm American. But I can go to Hawaii, and it's-- it's really--. I surf, and so surfing in Hawaii, when you look Hawaiian, a lot easier. I can travel through Latin American and people usually don't think I'm you know, Latina, but they kind of wonder if I'm like mixed with some Indian blood-- you know, native blood. It's-- it makes it-- I could be Mediterranean in the right. So that-- and that makes that sort of nice and easy. But um (pause) yeah, so I-- I wouldn't have said that I grew up with any kind of particular um (pause) like Asian experience.

We celebrate Chinese New Year. But again, since my mom's whole family went to um Methodist boarding schools, it was-- they-- they all grew up Christian. Um (pause)--.

APRIL REYNOSA: Describe Chinese New Year, how you celebrate it.

TERESA ISH: Uh we eat a lot. We don't do like the full ritual. There's no cleaning of the house, there's no really going around visiting neighbors. Unmarried folks get [foreign term], you get money, which is-- I mean basically, I did it for the money and food, right? (laughter) I mean that-- that was--.

APRIL REYNOSA: In the red envelope? Mmhmm.

TERESA ISH: Yeah. Yeah, the little, red envelope. Um and yeah, and we just eat and get together. But honestly, my-- since everyone except for my aunt, who's living in Nebraska, lived pretty near my parents when they immigrated. It-- we-- we got together every Sunday night for dinner anyway. Basically, Chinese food. So Chinese new year was like five extra dishes and money. Like it wasn't hugely, hugely different. Um (pause) so yeah, that-- I mean that was nice. My-- having my grandmother there, and I grew up with like home cooked I guess Malays-- Malaysian style Chinese food. Um my mom-- when I was little though, I hated Chinese food. I wouldn't eat it. And they would go out to eat, and my mom would stop and get me McDonald's.

Um and she says it's because when she was pregnant with me, she ate Chinese food once and got just like awfully ill. Like totally sick, and couldn't eat it while she was pregnant. She was like even then, even then you didn't want it. But she would sit in the garden and eat strawberries straight from the patch, and that's kind of all I wanted when I was little. So I don't know which way it is. If-- if (laughter) somehow, something in like fetal me rejecting it early on, or-- or just the fact that she didn't eat it, and I never kind of developed the flavor. Um but again, having someone to home cook it means that you can get very Americanized version. And once my grandmother moved to the US, she would make um bao, which are the-- the s-- everyone just calls them steam buns here. And you know, most people get the pork buns, but I got peanut butter with a little bit of sugar and sesame in them. It was like I don't know how much w-- I don't know if there is a better food symbol for me growing up as that. I mean how much more American can you get than peanut butter? And then all kind of toasted up in this nice, little [30:00] steamed bun. And so that-- those were always what I got growing up. And when I go home now, I-- she sends like a big bag full home with me.

APRIL REYNOSA: Wow. That's a great example of like a hybrid you know, meal. (laughter)

TERESA ISH: Yeah. Yeah. (laughter)

APRIL REYNOSA: That's really great.

TERESA ISH: Yeah. And they're really good. (laughter) It's a good combination, the sesame and peanut butter. It's really nice.

APRIL REYNOSA: That sounds good.

TERESA ISH: Um so you know, I've (pause) opened up a little bit to eat Chinese food. I'm a little better about it now, but I don't really cook it, and I'll leave that to my-- my mom and grandmother. I did learn how to make bao though, and [Jun] and I made it for the first time together a couple weeks ago. And she mostly just ate the raw dough, and I gave her one piece to you know, smash a lot. There's not a lot of cooking going on with the one and a half year old. But yeah, I think she had fun, and she liked it. So I stuffed it with kaya, which is this um it's southeast Asian, it's um like a sweetened coconut paste. Um very creamy, really sweet; really, really sweet. So it was a big hit.

Um (pause) yeah, and then my parents came-- came out to visit. We-- there's-- there are a couple of Malaysian restaurants in Sunset Park, and most of the Malaysian restaurants out here are run by Chinese. Um Chinese Malaysian food is-- I mean there's general Malaysian food, but Chinese Malaysian food is slightly different. And then there's straight Malaysian, which is actually very different. They're the Chinese that came over on the first wave. So their food is even different than the kind of food that my-- my family um (pause) is used to. Um but it was-- it was great.

So because of the work that I do, um I get to travel a fair bit. And so um I went to Malaysia for a meeting four years ago. And I had been once, when I was a baby. Um my-- when I was like two, my parents went back. It was the only time they had been back since my mom left in '72. So this was '80. It had been a long time. Um and it was really surprising how familiar everything was, even though I hadn't been there. I mean the food is very familiar, the-- the accents of the um-- of the Chinese people was-- it was like listening to my aunts. Um and it's not like they have an accent because English is their second language. It's just the (pause) the you know, the local dialect, the local accent for English. And they're just like-- it's just like listening to my aunts. It's kind of a weird mix of like British, Chinglish, I-- I don't know. It-- it was funny.

Um and then later, I came back-- I went back a coup-- couple years later cause I had a meeting in Bangkok. And my-- my grandaunt, who still lives in Malaysia, who's very sick. So my grandmother went over, my parents went over, and I met up with them. And it was great getting to travel around. Cause you know, even my dad spent four years there. So it's still-- he still has very clear memories of it. And traveling around KL with them, and then talking about all the changes in the country was really, really interesting. And-- and how much it had grown.

And you know, Chinese eat a lot of pork. But now since a lot of the malls are owned by Malay families who are Muslim, there's no more pork in-- in the restaurants in the malls, and a lot of the restaurants are in malls because they won't let them cook pork. And so we had to like go out of the way to like the old, Chinese neighborhood where there was just like pork galore everywhere. I mean I'm vegetarian, so that was not so useful. (laughter) But it-- it was funny that my-- the-- my parents' friends used to live there were like ushering them out. They were like you can eat pork now, we'll go to this place so you can eat as much pork as you want. Um and I don't know, just their-- their kind of outlook on how much has changed, and what they're happy with, and what they're not. And I still have some extended family there.

And (pause) there's like a lot of political stuff too that-- that I think has changed that they don't necessarily feel like is-- is for-- it's for the better. And it-- it was hard sometimes because you know, before I went over there when I was younger, my aunt-- my aunt and uncle particularly, who had just immigrated from Malaysia, they-- I don't want to say that they are blatantly racist, because that's not necessarily the case. I mean (pause) it-- they would be the equivalent I think of-- of someone white in America saying oh yeah, but some of my best friends are black. Like that's kind of how they were towards Malays and Indians. Like they had-- they definitely had some very, very dear friends who were Malay or Indian. But there were also these kind of broad, dismissive like oh, the Malays, they-- they don't have to do-- they don't-- they're lazy and they still get to be heads of

these companies because of the laws. Or the Indians who are primary [the laborers], oh they're-- you know, they're poor and they smell.

You know, it was-- it was so not what I was used to hearing. Um one) because it's just not OK to act like that here. And-- and two) [35:00] it's just not what my family here is not used to because I mean, (pause) it was just not stuff that they would say. Who knows what individuals are thinking, but that's just not you know, how-- how-- how I was used to people talking about other folks. And it was-- it was always kind of a real-- a real shock. But then when you go over there and you talk with cab drivers, the Malays are like oh yeah, greedy Chinese. And the Indians are like oh everyone, everyone else is oppressing. You know, like it-- they're-- they were very clear racial divides. It was interesting. Um (pause)--.

APRIL REYNOSA: Tell me about um so the Malaysia that you kind of imagined as a child, that was transmitted through these stories from your mom and your dad.

TERESA ISH: Mhmm.

APRIL REYNOSA: Tell me about that, and then kind of how that evolved or changed once you went there yourself.

TERESA ISH: Yeah.

APRIL REYNOSA: So maybe start out with your parents' memories that they ever shared with you or--?

TERESA ISH: Yeah. Um well, so my dad what-- what I remember-- what my dad talks about most was his time in Borneo. I mean obviously, that's a lot more kind of exciting, glamorous, living in a long-- in a long house with like former headhunters. Makes for much better stories, right? Than-- than living in this huge, metropolitan city. Um and it's-- so-- so from-- coming from his um (pause) rec-- I-- you know, I kind of have to reconcile his stories of Malaysia versus my mom's. Um my dad's, you think it's very kind of exotic, and wild, and tropical.

And my mom is like I moved to Fresno, and I was like what kind of Podunk town did I move to? She thought she moved to like some backwater hick town because she came

from KL, which is a really, big, metropolitan city. Um I mean she still talks about when she was younger having to kill and pluck chickens. Which doesn't really, you know, jive with any kind of city experience (laughter) that I know about. But I mean that was just Asian markets in this-- in this huge city. And she-- she would talk about moving to Fresno and just thinking it was a total hickville. Like y-- it would be like I don't know, someone getting married in New York, and their spouse taking them to you know, some village somewhere. It just (laughter)-- it-- it's not-- it was not kind of a let down for her cause I think she really liked it. But um or you know, liked being here. But it was-- it was an adjustment in-- in life pace.

And it's funny because I-- when you tell people oh, my mom's from Malaysia, they think my dad's version and not (laughter) not my mom's version. Um (pause) and so I was-- you know, I was expecting a big, bustling city when I got to KL, and I didn't get a chance to get out into the jungle. I'd really like to go back and see that. Um (pause) but-- but (pause) and also having traveled in southeast Asia before I had been to Malaysia, I had maybe kind of reformulated the picture in mind about what it was going to be like anyway. And it was-- it was pretty-- pretty close to what I expected. It was a big, busy, developing country, city with like ridiculous shopping malls.

So the-- the-- the first of the second time I was there, the first time I was there as an adult, was in August. And um (pause) and uh (pause) we were staying in the con-- in the conference area, which meant we were right amongst all the wall-- the malls and stuff. And it was-- the city was just filled with all of these Arabic families. And my um-- my family that's still there explained that when it gets too hot in the Middle East, they all come to Malaysia and go shopping. So the malls, like the really high end malls were just packed. Like packed with people carrying bags, and bags of crazy, expensive stuff. Um which was a little surprising to me, but also totally made sense when you think about it logically. Although the idea that Malaysia is somehow the cool escape is also kind of (laughter) terrifying. Like it-- it was hot. It was hot and humid. I mean I came back to

New York in August after spending a week and a half there, like not even sweating in the subway. I was-- I had acclimated, and it was like eh, New York summers, easy.

APRIL REYNOSA: (laughter) I need to go there then.

TERESA ISH: I know. I know. (laughter) To adjust. Um (pause) but I acclimated back very quickly. And my mom now because Fresno is such a dry, dry heat. She goes back, and she is just miserable. And they-- they told-- they tell-- they have this story about when I was little. Um when we went when I was really little, um the babysitter that I had I guess had potty trained me before two. And I-- when we were in Malaysia, I basically just cried the whole time and stopped potty training then. (laughter) I was really unhappy. (laughter) [40:00] So the humidity did not suit me apparently. (laughter)

But I'd really-- I'd-- um the last-- this last time I went, I was pregnant with Jun. And um, I'd really like to go back again um to have my aunt-- my great aunt meet her. And you know, I've only seen my great aunt a few times. Um she was over when I was little. I do you know, the-- it's hard to tell what I actually remember, and what I've seen in pictures, and trying to formulate memories out of that. But she was here um when I was little, and then um and then this time that I saw her was the last time that I had-- the first time that I had seen her as an adult, and the only time in between.

Um she was-- she's not able to get a visa because she's single, and um-- and has no significant assets in Malaysia. So they think that she's a flight risk. But what they don't know is she's basically part of like some religious cult. And the reason why she has no assets is because she gives them all to the church. And would never leave them. (laughter) So I mean it's like that. I don't know how you explain that or can factor that into-- to her not being a flight risk, but she-- she can't get a visa to come visit.

Which now she's probably not well enough to come visit, and um (pause) and my grandmother's getting to the point where she's not-- she just went recently, but she's not really well enough to-- to make the flight over to see her either. So I think every time they do manage to see each other, every time my grandmother does get over, it's kind of

with a-- I mean this might be the last time we see each other, which is I think pretty heartbreaking.

Because um (pause) I-- I grew up thinking that she was my grandmother's only sister. But a couple years ago, maybe three or four years ago, um (pause) we were sitting around and having you know, family dinner just talking and stuff. And my mom and her sister start talking about all these people that I never heard of. But apparently, my um-- my grandmother has like four or five--three or four other si-- full siblings. She has a bunch of half siblings, her mom was a third-- a third wife. Um (pause) I don't know if she-- I don't think she was a concubine. I think she was actually a third wife. So she has a bunch of half siblings. But uh she has a bunch of-- of full siblings that I had never heard of. But it-- I-- it turns out that um her mother was schizophrenic and a bunch of her siblings also ended up being schizophrenic. And my dad didn't even know about them. My parents have been married, at that time, for at least 35 years. My dad didn't even know these people existed. Like he thought it was just my-- my grandmother and her younger sister. But--.

APRIL REYNOSA: Wow.

TERESA ISH:-- all this-- yeah, all this family over there. And then other um (pause) I met one of them, and I'm not-- I'm still not clear on his relationship. He's some sort of like cousin or uncle or something, and my mom calls him uncle. But you know, you call everyone who's kind of close and older that. So he's-- he was some sort of (pause) relation somehow um that I met. But I don't-- I don't understand it. I actually have-- it's in my file somewhere. I-- they mapped out that night all of the-- the family names. And who raised whom, and um (pause) because so what happened to my grandmother, she was my-- I said she was a third wife.

Um when my great aunt was born, the-- she's the youngest. Um she was born right at the time that the husband died. And because of all the superstition, because that fam-- that family was still Buddhist. All the superstition or Confucian, or you know, whatever the hybrid the Chinese practice is um when-- when the-- the simultaneous death and birth

made the older wives kind of flip out, and they kicked out-- and-- and the fact that the mom was schizophrenic, and they didn't want to be responsible for her anymore. They kicked out the whole family. So that's when my grandmother left um school.

And they were fairly well off. They owned a large rubber plantation. I guess my grandmother has since gotten in touch with some of her half siblings, and they own like two factories in Hong Kong, and they're-- you know, they're all doing fairly well. And it made me a little sad to think about like how much she had to struggle as an adult when all of her siblings were-- were all very comfortable; child and adult. But anyway, the-- the point that I was getting at is that she was really young, her sister was an infant. Um her-- some of her siblings were older. And so they kind of-- the older sibling sort of adopted her, and like you know, other family members it's more just like family members have adopted them and-- and raised them.

Um and one of the things I got to do in high school, which was really cool was we I guess kind of did an oral history. And um interviewed our grandparents and tried to tell their story from their perspective. And so my grandmother was talking about you know, when she was growing up, and um (pause) the-- the family member that she was living with when she was growing up owned a small store. [45:00]

And um she was just talking about during the Japanese invasion, and how scary it was, and that they were working the store, and the Japanese would come in, and-- the Japanese soldiers would come in and take all of their-- take their-- the cigarettes and stuff like that. And they would like hide chickens in the basement and stuff so they would actually have their own-- their own meals. Um you know, and as I got older, I sort of learned more about like what the Japanese was invas-- invasion was like for people living there. And I-- I know there has to be a lot of stuff that she's not telling me. I mean she's a 13 year old girl, the Japanese soldiers were notoriously brutal. Like I-- I wonder, but don't want to ask her like what she might have actually gone through.

APRIL REYNOSA: Mmhmm.

TERESA ISH: Um it's just-- it's kind of too-- I wouldn't want to bring up those memories for her.

APRIL REYNOSA: Mmhmm.

TERESA ISH: Um (pause) But I do, I do wonder. And then at the same time, I'm also kind of amazed that she like holds absolutely no bitterness at all. Um so maybe that means nothing happened. Maybe she mean-- that means she was one of the lucky ones who-- who made it out relatively unscarred except for some financial you know--.

APRIL REYNOSA: Mmhmm.

TERESA ISH: Some serious financial loss. But yeah, I don't really know. Um and then she has this other story that she told that's very funny. I don't know if this is before or after, but she was um she was told to bring these two geese or ducks, I guess, um from her mom's house to her aunt's house for-- for dinner. And so she had-- they're a pair. No-- not-- they weren't for dinner, for breeding. They're a pair, so she had one in each bag, and one-- a male in one bag, and a female in the other. And she had to ride her bike like this. So she's riding her bike with a goose in each bag, and one of them (laughter) one was like squirming, and squirming, squirming so she'd just like keep clamping it down under her arm 'til she got there. And so she's got her ducks on the bike, and the one's under her arm. And she gets to her aunt's house, and she opens one bag, (laughter) and the duck flies away. And then she opens the other bag, and she killed it, and it fell on the ground. (laughter) I don't know if she got in trouble for that. I would imagine she would have, cause that couldn't have been a cheap loss.

But to watch her tell the story where she's like laughing to the point she's crying. And it doesn't matter how many times she tells it, and it's so funny with her like little accent. And you know, her big-- her big grandma glasses, and she's just like dying laughing about having done this as a 12 year old. It-- it makes me really happy to have her tell that story. (laughter) I could just ask her to tell it just to watch her laugh. It's a great--.

APRIL REYNOSA: How old were you the first time she told you this story?

TERESA ISH: Uh I was probably in fifth or sixth grade. And it-- it got repeated a hundred times. I mean everyone-- every one of my cousins-- well, maybe not all my cousins cause some

of them grew up um in Nebraska. But you know, all the ones who grew up there, my sister, we all-- we all know this story.

APRIL REYNOSA: Yeah.

TERESA ISH: And all know her reaction to it. My cousin that grew up in Nebraska though um is going to college in San Francisco, so it's like now she's getting what all the rest of us got growing up because Fresno's not that far away. And so she goes-- she goes there a fair bit. Especially she'll ride home with my sister. And so you know, she learned-- she just learned how to make bao. She probably had peanut butter bao for the first time. Like all-- all these things that my sister and I did growing up with my grandmother. She's-- she's getting, which I'm really glad. Her brother still doesn't get that cause he's living in Nebraska, but um yeah. It's-- it's really exciting to see.

APRIL REYNOSA: Yeah. That's-- that's actually a really amazing point that you had your grandmother so close to you. Not everyone does.

TERESA ISH: Mmm... Yeah.

APRIL REYNOSA: And do you-- how did that affect your sense of identity um in terms of she has-- she's such a strong, cultural signifier to who you are, and do you think that's something you thought about as a child? Or did you later on, as adult, kind of think back on that and how--?

TERESA ISH: Um you know, I-- (pause) I-- it-- it's I think part of her kind of quiet and reserve personality that she actually never really felt like she had to be the bearer of the culture. I mean again, the fact-- one, I think part of it one) is that she was-- she was Christian. So (pause) kind of a lot of the American cultural things were already sort of a part of her life. Um my mom did say that when they grew up, obviously there's no Christmas trees in southeast Asia. They used like palms and other things, which was always really you know, to a little kid, really funny to hear. But um (pause) it-- yeah, so I never really felt like she was trying to kind of-- outside of the food culture, really [50:00] you know, (pause) was a cultural reference point for me.

APRIL REYNOSA: Mhmm.

TERESA ISH: Um and you know, just like I was, she was totally surrounded by American culture. So the kind of-- she-- she was still sort of the outlier in the family at that point.

My mom had lived in the US for almost 20 years. Um she is probably more identified-- identified as American now than-- than anything else. And so she was just kind of this lone, person. I think her ability to kind of exert the more subtle cultural thing were not there. My sister did go to China with my-- my grandmother and my mom, um and dad, and you know, some other folks a couple of years ago. And my grandma, she's not that old. I mean she had my mom when she was 18, so I think she was probably in her like late 60s then. Um or sorry, mid-- mid 70s? Um my sister was like she was transformed. She like muscled her way into the front-- there were no lines. She like has-- she could totally deal with the fact that there were no lines. Just like push her way right to the front, like she was-- she was kind of back in her element. And my sister would talk about how kind of amazed she was at how-- how different she behaved. Like it was like all the old (laughter) stuff that she was used to all came back out. She-- perfectly good at waiting in line now, that's not a problem.

APRIL REYNOSA: (laughter)

TERESA ISH: But you know, when she was over there. Even though she had never lived in China, I think that was her first trip to China. Um totally like (laughter) fell right back in. She was probably spitting and clipping her toe nails on the subway too or something. (laughter) But um yeah, my sister thought it was really funny. (laughter)

APRIL REYNOSA: That's great. Um talk to me more about religion. So you're-- I think that's very interesting your mother was Christian and-- cause your grandmother, you said her mother was Buddhist and Confucius, right? Or--.

TERESA ISH: Yeah.

APRIL REYNOSA: Some of the hybrid that--?

TERESA ISH: Yeah. Yeah.

APRIL REYNOSA: --traditional Chinese religion.

TERESA ISH: I don't know exactly when my grandmother converted. I'm guessing it was probably after her first husband died. Cause he-- you know, he obviously came from a very kind of traditional, Chinese family. I don't think that he was Christian. I don't think she would have converted then. Um either that or missionaries got to her or-- got to her when she was younger. Um but I have a feeling it was more along the lines of her second

husband because um Chiang Kai-shek was Christian, and you know, he was half Scottish, so there's that. And then at that time, that's probably about when all of her kids went to-- started going to British boarding, Methodist schools or Mission schools.

Um so it-- I mean it's I think totally random that she's Methodist and-- and my dad's family is also Methodist. Um (pause) and-- and I don't think that that would have had any bearing one way or another. Cause I wouldn't call my parents particularly-- particularly religious. I mean there's a-- there's-- there's a split in the Methodist church. There's kind of the Methodists are more like Baptists, and the-- the Methodists are big old hippies, and we came out on the big, old hippies side. You know, I grew up with a lesbian pastor, and you know, gay marriages in the church, and you know, recycling programs in 1982. And it-- so it was very, I don't know, it was not normally what one would associate with church stuff. Whereas my-- the rest of my dad's family, the ones that stayed in (inaudible) are very-- are much more kind of tradition-- uh conservative.

Um so I'm not particularly religious, and we're not baptizing Jun, and I haven't mentioned that to my grandmother. I think it would make her quite upset because she's actually probably the most religious in the family. Um so and my parents know that, and they don't care. And I mean, I'm sure they on some level care, but I think they also kind of respect where I'm coming from. That if I don't believe, then there's no-- then it's actually worse to-- to baptize Jun. Um because it's just a-- you know, it's just acting.

APRIL REYNOSA: Mmhmm.

TERESA ISH: It's-- it doesn't mean anything to me. So it doesn't-- it's almost kind of mocking what they believe in. So they're-- they haven't said anything-- concern or otherwise-- that she hasn't been baptized.

APRIL REYNOSA: And you were baptized?

TERESA ISH: Yeah. And my sister too.

APRIL REYNOSA: And how-- what's the process of that? How does that work?

TERESA ISH: Um the Methodist church baptizes as infants.

APRIL REYNOSA: OK.

TERESA ISH: So nothing. There's no-- I mean they put water on your head, and a bunch of people say stuff. That's kind of it. (laughter) And I-- you know, I did do a lot of church stuff growing up. I went to youth group, but it was not like the youth groups that my friends at Evangelical churches went to. I mean we raised money for (pause) for poverty alleviation, and you know [55:00] we did environmental programs, and we did outreach to homeless people. And it was very much kind of works based, and not a lot of like bible study based. Um we-- there was this thing that I don't know if it's just the Methodist church, but in the Central Valley, it's called Sierra Service Project, and it's essentially rehabbing buildings on Indian reservations around-- around the community. And so I did that a couple of summers, and we would do backpacking trips. And so it was very-- I mean it was a hippy church. There was like reverence for nature and service to other people as kind of your religion. And I feel like I took that with me-- or tried to. Um rather than the kind of formality like religious practice side of it so.

APRIL REYNOSA: That's really interesting.

TERESA ISH: Yeah. It was-- it was a great experience. And it um (pause) I feel like it makes me more tolerant of religious-- religion in general because um I think in the press, especially if you're politically liberal. Um most Christianity gets a really bad rap because of a pretty good section of the church. But I always feel like at least I have a point of reference to say well, it doesn't have to be like that. And if you choose to be religious, you can easily reconcile your faith and your politics, and that's not a problem if you-- if you want to go that route. Um so I-- I'm-- I feel really lucky to have that. And sometimes it makes me want to have Jun spend time in a church so she has that reference point too, and not just all the negative aspects about it. But again, it would be for more of the like social and cultural, and I mean the service to sort of faith through service type of approach than anything. Um cause I'm also absolutely terrified that without anything, that she'll-- if she is seeking, she will find like (pause) something that really takes her away from the morals that I think are important in terms of acceptance and, you know, and kindness, and doing the best not to judge, and that sort of thing.

APRIL REYNOSA: Mmhmm.

TERESA ISH: But yeah, who knows. We can try-- we can manage that if that comes along.

(laughter)

APRIL REYNOSA: That's-- yeah, wow. Um so I'd like to hear a memory or um a story about one of those youth outings that you did; one of the service missions.

TERESA ISH: Oh. Yeah. Um (pause) Well, again it's funny because there-- they were organized by a church, but not particularly religious.

APRIL REYNOSA: Mmhmm.

TERESA ISH: I mean the CRS Service project, I had a-- I had a lot of fun doing that. Um it was at Big Sandy Rancheria, I think, which is um in (pause) just like just outside of Fresno on the way up-- on the way up to Auburn. Um Auberry, not Auburn, Auberry. Um and they're kind of seeing-- seeing the reservations in the state that so many of them are in.

And the fact that this like little, old lady was living in this house that was basically just stick frame and-- and plywood on the outside. We-- um we insulated it, it's like 105 degrees, right? It's-- it's Fresno summer, and then winter since you're up in the foothills, it's-- it's not frigid, but it's-- it's cold. Um we insulated the house, put in the um put in wallboard, and that sort of thing. And it-- it was-- it was great. I mean I-- it was I think, a little (pause) a little disappointing that we didn't get to interact with the people in the community as much. But I can also see how as a matter of pride, that would be really uncomfortable for them. Um so (pause) I totally respect that. Um and we met her once or twice, but we basically we'd show up and she'd take off. Also wouldn't-- she wouldn't want to hang out in a place where there's construction going on all day.

Um it was-- I learned how to mud and tape wallboard, which was really exciting.

(laughter) Um so kind of like Habitat for Humanity. Like I kind of want to do more volunteers-- volunteer work there for the volunteer work and so I improve construction skills, like learn how to do this stuff. Um and then at night, we would go back to I don't know-- I don't know exactly where we were staying if it was some sort of campground. But we would all just like sleep outside um and sing songs, and like learn a bunch of words to, you know, Beatles songs and classic rock stuff that the people would sing. And

it was, again, very not-- very secular, very secular. I think the most that we got as maybe like prayer before meals, and I think kind of like a blessing to start out the week.

I don't know actually who organized it. If it was just our church, or if it was broader than that. I'm not-- I'm not really sure. But it was [01:00:00] it was a good-- it was a good experience. And I-- I really liked that there was never any like missionary work associated with it. I would-- I always-- I had my-- a lot of friends in high school who would try to recruit me to go to on those like trips to-- to Mexico where, you know, where you would do service work. But then a big part of it was also kind of conversion, and I was never comfortable with that. Um so it was-- it was nice knowing that you were just going out there, and you were helping people with kind of no-- no strings attached. Um yeah, I-- it was a really long time ago. It was like 15 years ago. (laughter)

APRIL REYNOSA: Yeah.

TERESA ISH: Or more. (laughter) Probably more.

APRIL REYNOSA: But it's interesting because it seems like it's things that have crossed over into your work, and your lifestyle, and the kind of person that you are.

TERESA ISH: Yeah.

APRIL REYNOSA: Um let's um-- so how old were you when this was-- when you would go on these outings?

TERESA ISH: Um I probably I only did one or two of those, and it was probably 15 or 16.

APRIL REYNOSA: Mmhmm.

TERESA ISH: Yeah.

APRIL REYNOSA: So tell me about what you were like at that age. Um--.

TERESA ISH: Um..

APRIL REYNOSA: What was school like for you?

TERESA ISH: S-- high school was something that I really enjoyed, but never would want to go back to.

APRIL REYNOSA: Uh huh.

TERESA ISH: Like I-- I don't have bitter memories of high school at all. Um I (pause) Fresno, being very conservative, I had people say stuff like you're never going to find anyone as

liberal as you are, Teresa. Like I-- I was known as kind of the outspoken, liberal in school. I-- I don't think I even knew what I was talking about. I mean I was-- I was a high school student, I was extremely passionate with not a lot of substance behind it. Um (pause) my friends and I, we weren't-- I think we were popular in the sense that a lot of folks liked us. We were like easy, but we weren't popular in the like football/cheerleader kind of like stereotypical popular way. We-- we had a lot of friends in a lot of different groups. And we were a really tight knit group of girls.

Um people that I'm still friends with now. One of them just the marathon-- the New York marathon-- last weekend like killed it. She beat Apollo Anton Ohno, I'm so proud of her. I mean she's-- she's a marathoner. She qualified, she didn't like get in the lottery, but you know, I saw her mom and we had dinner to-- with her and dinner-- or with her and her mom, and Jun. And we were talking about her sister just had a baby, and her sister's the same age as mine. And we were talking about how it's-- it makes you feel real old when your baby sister has a baby. And her mom was like how do you think I feel? (laughter) Like I-- I met her mom when I was in eighth grade. You know, I've known her. She's been-- she was at my wedding, and you know, we've-- (pause) I've known her almost my whole life. And you know, it's-- it's great that we're still-- that I'm still that close to all of those friends.

And when we go down to um back to Fresno for Christmas, I'm going to see all of them. One of them just had a baby, and bringing her all of Jun's baby clothes to hand down. I mean they're-- we don't-- we don't talk often, but we're still really tight. And I-- I feel like I'm really lucky to have a group of girls that-- that we managed to kind of go through life with-- without any like major, crazy drama. Especially when you-- when you hear kind of all the studies about how-- how girls treat each other, and how girls get along. And you-- there's all this stuff in the media about like how mean and awful people are to one another. And I don't know if we're just really lucky, or if that's actually the reality of-- of some groups of people that they can find that. But I-- hope Jun can have the same.

On the flipside, we had some male friends, but like almost no-- no male friends. (laughter) People would have boyfriends every once in a while, and you know kind of go back and forth in the group that way. And we had um (pause) a group of guy friends that was almost kind of the mirror of us. They're all still really tight now. You know, they were (pause) athletic, and smart, and you know, not troublemakers. And generally, a lot of people were good friends with them-- or liked them. And so we kind of interacted with them the-- the most. It was funny cause I mean we really were kind of like male and female mirrors of one another. Um and I actually still keep in touch with them every once in a while.

Um (pause) but yeah, our-- our-- I think the other thing that made high school a lot easier was um I went to a brand new high school. So there was only ever one class ahead of me. So we never had to deal with like the-- the senior freshman thing. So there-- when I was in seventh grade, and they were in eighth, and then when I went to eighth and they went into ninth we all moved to the new school together. And then progressed up like that through-- through graduation. Um but that move was hard because all of my friends stayed at the old high school, and I ended [01:05:00] up you know, to show up at eighth grade with like no, close friends was-- is I mean traumatic for anyone. Whether it's because you move or you know, for what other reason.

But all my other friends stayed at the other high school, and these were-- I managed to kind of meet some of these girls through classes. I mean really because of (pause) I was on like the AP track and stuff like that, and a lot of them-- a lot of them weren't. So it wasn't even really through classes. I-- I don't know how I just kind of fell in with this-- with this group of really great women. Girls then, but you know they're all really great women. And really um diverse, personality wise. I-- again for (inaudible) in particular, not-- not necessarily ethnically diverse. But really diverse personality wise. Um you know they're-- there are some very kind of religious, conservative groups. There was girls, there were me, there were people who were very athletic, there were people for-- who were maybe a little more academic. There were some who were just kind of like fun

and breezy, and it's just it was a really interesting mix. And seeing what people have kind of fallen out now is all-- is also a lot of fun. And seeing how people had changed too has been-- has been really interesting.

APRIL REYNOSA: Mhmm.

TERESA ISH: Um you know, maybe folks who at the time, seemed-- all right, then we were 16 so it's hard to really tell-- but you know, just kind of like easy, breezy. And not really just kind of rolling with the world are-- are ones who ended up you know, doing really cool things in their lives. Like one of my friends works-- is like the executive of a company that builds low income housing. And-- and so to see that sort of change is really-- that's really fun. Um but I guess that's you know, just part of growing up too. If we all stayed like we were when we were 16, that would be a scary, scary world.

APRIL REYNOSA: (laughter) What are some other things you are involved with? You-- you swam, didn't you?

TERESA ISH: Yeah. I swam all through high school. I um again, the good thing about the small high school and-- and no older kids is I swam varsity high-- swimming my freshman year, which means I got absolutely crushed in every race. (laughter) But I got, you know, a lot more experience and training than I probably would have otherwise.

Um I did student council leader, I was like class Vice President or Class President. I can't think of anything we actually do in student council. I don't know what I promised, I don't think I actually did anything other than put it on my resume. Um (pause) but you know, it's not like you have to worry about running for election again the next year, so why bother doing anything?

Um (pause) yeah. You know, I just kind of hung out with-- with my friends. I didn't do a ton. Like overload-- extracurricular overload. Those were my two main things. Um (pause) I never-- I never was like the super serious swimmer doing the club swimming and stuff like that. I just, you know, did it for the season and really liked it, and it's good exercise, and swim. When we lived in San Francisco, continued to do a lot of sort of

open water swimming and stuff like that. I haven't been in the water since January, but I'll get back in.

APRIL REYNOSA: (laughter)

TERESA ISH: Um yeah, (pause) we were-- we were good. We were good kids. We didn't give our parents I think nearly as much as grief as a lot of kids' parents did in high school. No one got in trouble, no one ever got arrested, no one got pregnant. (laughter) And k-- it was-- (laughter) we-- we were good. Um you know, I think like anyone, any teenage girl I-- we'd get in fights with my mom and stuff. And um (pause) I don't-- and I don't know if part of it is just because she didn't really have like kind of a reference for what-- how I was growing up. Or just because we were a mother and daughter, and that's just how it goes. But we would get in fights, and I remember her yelling at me, and I don't remember what she was yelling at me about. But I told her if you're going to yell at me for something, I'm going to give you something to yell at me for. And I didn't know what that was. (laughter) Like I don't-- I wouldn't have gone and done anything stupid, just cause that wasn't my personality.

But I remember walking in the room later and finding like challenging-- you know, raising your challenging teen. (laughter) And I was like that is ridiculous, if you think that I'm challenging, let me introduce you to some kids at my school. Like that's-- you have no idea. (laughter) And she found out later cause my sister was definitely more challenging than I was. (laughter) But they were also really lax with her. I think it's just part of being the younger-- younger sibling. But she ditched a lot of school, and you know, she never also-- never-- she never got in any real trouble. But she was definitely not as straight laced as I was.

APRIL REYNOSA: And do you-- would you say your mom was strict or would-- did she have rules?

TERESA ISH: No.

APRIL REYNOSA: Or things that she you know, would make you do? Or--?

TERESA ISH: No. [01:10:00] Not-- not really. I mean I-- (pause) again, I think personality wise, I wasn't inclined to do a lot of things that needed her to set a lot of rules and

boundaries. I'm guessing it's probably cause I set them there when I was really young. Um but you know, I had a curfew, I broke it occasionally. I you know, they would wait up for me. I had a really, really loud car so they actually told me they wouldn't wait up for me. They'd just wait in bed, and they could hear the car coming down the street, and they would know it was me coming home. Um but I-- I pretty much got to do whatever I wanted. I mean they-- they trusted me to-- I never wanted to do that much. I would go on camping trips with friends, especially like senior year of high school I would do kind of overnight trips with just my friends and I. And they were absolutely fine with that, and they totally trusted me. I had never given them any reason not to.

APRIL REYNOSA: Mmhmm.

TERESA ISH: Um...

APRIL REYNOSA: So you had a pretty good relationship with them.

TERESA ISH: Yeah, I still do. I mean they still make me crazy, but I-- I think that I-- and I wouldn't call us particularly close. Like we don't call and chat, and I'm not-- I'm not the kind of person who like calls my mom you know, every other day or every day. We never-- we never were like that. Um but they can stay in our apartment for two weeks without me you know, wanting to absolutely throttle them.

APRIL REYNOSA: Mmhmm. (laughter)

TERESA ISH: And I mean, and this is not a big apartment. (laughter) Um and-- and I like their-- I like their company, and we don't really have any kind of major beef to fight about. And um and-- and my friends all like them too. My friends adore my parents. Um they stop by when I'm not in town. (laughter) And I mean they-- they really-- and my parents go to their baby showers. My mom goes to their baby showers, and their weddings, and you know, it's-- it's not-- and-- and that was not just from my high school friends too. Um my-- my-- one of my roommates after college um (pause) a-- and this was after college too, so we lived there for a couple years. She just had her second kid, and my parents sent them baby presents.

Like (pause) they-- it's (pause) they have a really-- they're just really great people. They're really easygoing, they're up for anything. Um they're-- (pause) they're, you know,

they're still kind of like boring and straight laced, but they're totally up for anything.

We-- when we come out here, or when they come out to visit, I just kind of take them around and they're very low maintenance; very, very low maintenance. It's-- it's nice.

APRIL REYNOSA: Mmhmm. Tell me more about their relationship, their dynamic. Well, maybe first I didn't get to hear how-- I mean they met when you father was in the Peace Corps. But how-- did they tell you how? Like is there a story about their meeting or--?

TERESA ISH: Um not about their meeting. They-- they lived next to each other and nearby.

Um (pause) my mom worked in a bank. Um and my dad-- my dad said that um she (pause) she was considering moving to Germany. And as soon as she told him that she was going to move, he proposed. Um and they got married in December in Malaysia, which meant that none of my dad's family was there.

Um (pause) and-- and I think you know, again, my grandmother's family being as huge as it was, my current grandfather is gone-- was gone a lot because of his job. I think that my dad kind of like helped out around the house, and really kind of endeared himself to-- to the family. Um cause even now, I mean he (pause) his-- all my mom's siblings come over and he's-- there's-- he's totally-- it's like he's one of them. You know, they-- there's lots of teasing, it's very-- it's very relaxed.

Um my mom had this amazing hand crocheted dress that um-- that she wore a white slip under, and then she continued to wear the dress afterwards with different colored slips underneath. Um and my dad had this god awful crocheted tie that she made him. It was like orange, and brown, and yellow. It was like so 1972 and like big, you know, dark glasses. Um and there's this picture of my mom from when they were dating that I love. She's-- you know, her hair is long and straight before she got the old lady perm. And she's like in a black tank top with a baby tiger. (laughter) It's like the most awesome picture I've ever seen. I love it. Um (pause) and you know, they have all these stories about when they were dating and my dad had this little scooter, and they would drive around in the scooter in the rain. And the idea of my mom in the back of a scooter is just hilarious. Cause again, up for anything.

Every year we would make he try to water ski, could not water ski. We'd put the skis on her, and she'd basically just roll around in the water, never able to get the skis up in front of her. [01:15:00] And then she'd be like OK, I'm done. And then every year we'd-- she actually really liked it. We put her on um this-- I don't know if-- the ski bob. They're like the long, inflate-- the two-seater inflatable that you drag behind the boat. And she'd get on that and we'd tow her around the lake, and go in circles, and she would just hold on and squeal the whole time. It was-- it's hilarious. Um she's just game, and you wouldn't expect that until you kind of got to know her a little bit more. And I actually-- I don't think I appreciated that for what it was in high school. But now I think it's really hilarious, and lots of fun.

APRIL REYNOSA: Mmhmm.

TERESA ISH: Um yes. It's funny. Um so I'm sure they went on lots of adventures. (laughter)

APRIL REYNOSA: Mmhmm.

TERESA ISH: Um but you know, my dad had lots of Peace Corps friends. A lot of them they married local women too. And so they-- you know, I think they had like kind of a group of couples that they would-- they would hang out with. Um I don't know how long they dated. Obviously, it wasn't any longer than two years since that's how long my dad was stationed over there at KL. Um so I think it was all pretty quick and she was-- she was I think young by today's standards. I think she was 23 maybe when she got married. Um and when she moved over here, I can't imagine leaving your whole family at 22 or 23. Um she's-- she said that she left all of her Beatles albums, and like all of her Beatles stuff when-- in Malaysia when she moved. And then later found out that her aunt threw it all away, and she's still I think angry about that. (laughter) Um I mean which again, just goes to show she lived in a cosmopolitan city.

APRIL REYNOSA: Yes.

TERESA ISH: I mean she was really into the Beatles, like anyone was in 1972. Um (pause) so yeah, and you know, all of her sisters were at her wedding, and all of her friends were there. And in Malaysia that time, they had um (pause) they had some friends in the Peace Corps who can-- married women had to convert to Islam to marry the Muslim the men,

and they went to the weddings, and they were friends with those people. And they went to a bunch of Indian weddings cause a bunch of their friends were Indian. And-- and I mean it was very normal for them to-- to do that sort of thing. And I think-- I think it was a really great experience for my dad, especially growing up in kind of small-- small-ish towns. Um being in the US and stuff like that.

So um it was great, and he-- he still, I think kind of thinks himself-- thinks of himself as an adopted Malaysian. He learned Malay. His-- like his music skills, his language skills are atrocious. The two are probably related. Um so you know, we grew up with like little things. Like he would say brush your [geegees], which is your teeth. And when he'd call us for dinner, he'd say [na kanon], which is time to eat. Um I still use that with Jun sometimes. She knows geegees, that's-- ad that's it. And she named one of her stuffed animals geegee. (laughter) I don't know if she-- so I don't know if she's quite made the connection, but yeah, I mean and all about the spicy food, and the dur-- he loves durian. I think it tastes like rotten onions, but--.

APRIL REYNOSA: What is it?

TERESA ISH: It's this huge, spiky fruit in southeast Asia.

APRIL REYNOSA: Oh yeah.

TERESA ISH: It's really, really hard, very, very pungent. My dad loves the stuff. Um when he's over there-- he was disappointed the last time we were there it wasn't durian season, so he could only get frozen durian. And it was-- that was too much for my mom even for my dad. It was really heavy with it. Um so I-- it in some ways, I guess he's almost the kind of like any recent convert, he's kind of the bearer of the-- of the-- the love, the love of culture, I think. Um (pause) yeah. And yeah, it's-- he-- he's really excited about it. And you know, likes talking about it, and talking about his time there a lot. But I think it's obviously a very different perspective. I-- than I think my mom would have. And I kind of wish he would speak up more about that sort of thing.

Um (pause) the-- totally a non sequitur, but they-- they bought a house in Santa Cruz um a while ago. And it was a house that was built in the '40s. And that was back when

Chinese couldn't own property, and my dad has-- or my parents have the deed and it says on the deed that no Chinese can own this property. And my dad is kind of like really proud of that. Like he thinks it's really great and like wants to frame it, and put it up in the house. And I was like did you ever think to maybe ask mom what she thought of that? Given that-- I guess it's kind of irrelevant to her because she came so much later. If she had been you know, a Chinese woman who had-- whose family had lived through that time, it probably would have been a different feeling. But my dad was like ha ha, take that. And I don't-- I don't know if he ever kind of went back and asked her how-- how she felt about it.

APRIL REYNOSA: Mmhmm.

TERESA ISH: I'm kind of on his side. Like I think that's really cool to have something like that. Um but [01:20:00] I don't know, I can see some people being kind of upset and really bothered by it. I think it would be like you know, a black person now having their-- the bill of sale for one of their grandparents. Like it's both kind of a sense of pride that you're no longer there-- that the world is no longer there. But also, obviously nowhere near as serious. But also um uh kind of a reminder of like how bad things were. But again, I think coming over much later and not being part of all of that that was happening then separates him. Or separates her from any of those feelings.

And actually, when-- when Obama was getting elected, and they were you know, talking about um how he didn't really-- his family didn't grow up with the kind of reference-- African American reference point because his parents-- his dad was- was Kenyan. It kind of made me rethink that but then-- or think about that-- that similarity. But then at the same time, so when you're walking down the street, no one knows that. No one-- no one knows that my mom just came here. You know, she's in Chinatown, they could just as easily think that she's you know, like a long time you know, Chinatown resident with all of the baggage that comes with that. No one knows any difference.

APRIL REYNOSA: That's a very good point.

TERESA ISH: But--.

APRIL REYNOSA: Tell me-- tell me more about that.

TERESA ISH: Well, I mean I-- I don't know. I-- it's-- (pause) it's just thinking about the kind of immigrant experience, and how like-- how kind of insular the-- the Chin-- the old, immigrant Chinese community was. And I think now with kind of large-- any time there's large scale immigration, you get that kind of insular community. And because she kind of straggled in on her own, and straggled in married to a white guy. Like that was never part of her kind of American reference point. And therefore, never really part of mine too. Like I get really uncomfortable in Chinatown. I mean, you know not-- just because like I feel like there are expectations of me because they don't necessarily realize that I don't speak Chinese. Like my family actually isn't even from-- my recent family isn't even from China. I mean so their-- their cultural references points are still very different than a lot of Chinese in-- in America because they're from Malaysia.

So it-- in some ways, I guess it helps that I look very-- I-- I don't necessarily look like I might be mixed cause there's kind of no expectation. I think my cousins who look um much more Chinese than I do probably have a harder time with that. Um but you know, they also speak at least some Cantonese. So they can get by a little-- a little better and kind of fake it if they have to.

But you know, we were at-- um right after Jun was born, um we were having-- out having dim sum. Well, within the-- after the four weeks because a couple of Chinese ladies were very concerned that we had her-- that I had her out already. But it was after her four week birthday, so then they were like OK, that's fine. Um but the little Chinese that I spoke, I could hear them asking-- asking my mom if like her dad was white and stuff like that. Which obviously, she's got blonde hair and blue eyes. (laughter) Like either she was adopted, or her dad's white. Um but yeah, it was-- I don't know. I don't really know what that significance has. I just thought it was-- it was kind of a funny like (pause) a strange question. I don't know where that's going.

APRIL REYNOSA: No. I think this is really interesting because I think what you're voicing right now is um (pause) something very significant for people um of mixed heritage.

Because I think that there is that um there's these different kinds of stereotypes when somebody looks at you.

TERESA ISH: Mmhmm. Mmhmm.

APRIL REYNOSA: Where you have a huge story and this-- all this lineage that kind of describes very specifically your experience, but a lot of times it's you know, grouped in with a large group of people.

TERESA ISH: Right.

APRIL REYNOSA: But now, I think there's so many people like you that have these very unique stories.

TERESA ISH: Yeah.

APRIL REYNOSA: But it's hard for people to understand that by just looking at you.

TERESA ISH: Yeah.

APRIL REYNOSA: Cause I think that those are really interesting points that you brought up.
(laughter)

TERESA ISH: Well, and one of the things that I always kind of-- I-- I would always get you know, the well-- the what are you question?

APRIL REYNOSA: Yes.

TERESA ISH: And then I would tell them and they'd say but you don't look Chinese. And I was like well, you know, I don't really know how to respond to that. (laughter) Like I'm half. Like I'm as much Chinese as I am white. And um I always find it-- found it very surprising that my-- my friends that were half black never got that question.

APRIL REYNOSA: Mmhmm.

TERESA ISH: You know, and there's-- and like again, Obama. He's our first black president. Well, actually, he's just as much white as he is black. Like technically, no one-- if I were president, no one would refer to-- [01:25:00] I mean I'd probably considered then the first woman president or female president. But which would override it, but um no one would ever look at me and be like oh, she's the first Chinese president. And I think part of that is (pause) is because it's not necessarily the first thing you see because it's less (pause) it's less obvious maybe. You get kind of the mystery of like what are you?
(laughter)

And I mean I dated a guy in high school who was-- who was half Mexican, and again kind of blonde hair, bright eyed. Like light-- dark blonde hair, light eyes. He'll get the same thing. What-- what are you? He's like well, my name is [Diego Mareno], what do you think? (laughter) Like you know, and (pause) and it was um (pause) I don't know, I think he probably had kind of a similar thing. It's kind of like well, I'm-- I don't look whatever. I-- sorry. (laughter) Sorry? What-- how do I respond to that? I'm-- I'm not really sure. Like what were you expecting?

APRIL REYNOSA: Mmhmm. Yeah. Exactly. And I think yeah, your definition of Chinese is so much more um you know, interesting when the average person thinks of what a Chinese person is, you know what I mean?

TERESA ISH: Yeah. Yeah.

APRIL REYNOSA: Cause you have the whole Malaysian side and all of that. And so yeah, that's really interesting.

TERESA ISH: Yeah. Well, I mean I'm sure it didn't help that I was like good at math, and a good student. (laughter) You know, the whole good kid. The whole stereotype there too, but whatever. I was OK with that.

APRIL REYNOSA: Mmhmm.

TERESA ISH: (laughter)

APRIL REYNOSA: Um OK, let's talk about um college. Where did you go to college?

TERESA ISH: Um I went to UC Santa Cruz. It was-- um my grandmother lived there. It was kind of this nice hybrid of-- of pu-- somewhere that I was familiar with, and somewhere new. Um I had gotten into most everywhere-- everywhere that I applied: Berkeley, Davis, Reed, um (pause) Humble, Oregon State. I got a whole bunch of places that I had really thought about wanting to go to, and I'm really glad I ended up at Santa Cruz. It was-- at the time, it was a small school. Um it was-- I think there were maybe 12,000 students total. Which for-- for a UC is really school. I think most have targeted like 20,000.

Um (pause) I-- I met Eric like the second week of school. Um I-- I had done this thing called Wilderness Orientation, which is a 10 day backpacking trip before the-- before the school year starts for freshman; 10 or 12. And um had met this-- this girl who was in my classes who had also done wilderness orientation. Because you know, in college you have to establish yourself very quickly when you don't know anyone. And we all had on our wilderness orientation t-shirts like the first week of school. So you could spot out everyone who went there.

Um (pause) and-- and she went to high school with Eric. And um the three of us became like absolutely inseparable. We were on the same-- same course track. And so all of our classes were together, we eat meals together. We were-- we were just really, all really good friends.

And then um the next year Eric and I moved into an apartment together with a bunch of other people. Still just friends, and then that's when we-- when we started dating. Cause we had been-- we had been together like eight years before we got married. Um (pause) and you know, I-- it was-- it was great. I-- I loved college.

I-- for a while, I thought that I had made the wrong mistake-- or mistake not going to Berkeley. I thought that I was somehow kind of like sacrificing my future. I didn't really know what I was going to do. I was in-- I was in the biology program, I had a politics as double major for a little bit, and then went back to like an environmental studies in biology program. Cause already-- I was pretty focused. But some like leeway on both sides. Um a guy I dated freshman year taught me to surf. Never got-- we never dated long enough for me to learn how to turn from him. I could get up and go straight, and that kind of like set the path of where I guess I was headed. I um ended up doing kind of a marine bio focus, and was a research scuba diver, and did a ton of volunteer work for the Surfrider Foundation for a long time. Um eventually running their water quality testing lab. While I was in college, ended up making Eric do a lot of the work cause he

would go with me, and he was the lab guy anyway. So he did all the work, and I would like deal with all the volunteers coming in.

Um but I-- I loved Santa Cruz. It was a great town for me. Really kind of immersed myself more in the community I think in part because of surf rider than I did with the university. Um I was never really kind of like college, school spirit focused. Um which is especially funny coming out of high school, cause I think I got nominated like done most for class in the yearbook. Or something that was very like school, you know go team, school thing. And it-- I loved [01:30:00] the fact that there was no football team. That there really wasn't a frat, you know scene. It was very kind of mellow, and I got my hippy out pretty quick. Like about a year-- freshman year of like going to drum circles, and you know, wearing thrift store, which I still wear thrift store clothes. But you know, wearing like intentionally kind of thrifty looking thrift store clothes. (laughter)

APRIL REYNOSA: (laughter)

TERESA ISH: Um you know, like apron shirts with no bra. That-- that I got that out pretty quickly, and got a better sense of who I was after that. (laughter) Um but you know, after two years on campus, I moved the complete opposite side of town. I wanted to be far away from-- from the university. And amazingly enough, like very-- I feel like a very-- well, got accepted into the kind of local Santa Cruz community. Which, they have a very significant dislike of students from-- from the university. I mean they just they feel like they come over and take over their town, and raise housing prices, and everything. And I-- I think because of what I was doing with Surfrider, I-- and the fact that I lived away from campus, I was able to kind of better fall in with the surf community there. So even now if I go back and visit, and I get in the water. There are-- there are people there that-- that I know. Um that I've known for a long time and that makes it easier.

Um (pause) but I've-- I finished a quarter early. Sometimes I kind of regret that because it would have been another quarter to just kind of goof around take some fun classes. But I was-- I was done. I was ready to be done with school and I stuck around Santa Cruz

like four years after college, I think. Um just working and then went back to graduate school there too. Um (pause) yeah, I-- I made really good friends there. Um one of my closest friends that I lived with after college, she-- she lives in San Francisco still. And again, another thing where you know, my-- I know her parents, she knows mine, she's perfectly happy going to-- going down to Fresno and staying at my parent's house. You know, helps herself to things out of the fridge. It's very-- very easy.

Um and you know, a couple of other friends from college. Noel, the girl that Eric went to high school with, we've sort of lost touch. We don't see-- we don't talk as much. But you know, with Facebook, there's always little updating here and there.

APRIL REYNOSA: Mmhmm.

TERESA ISH: Um and when we're up in Portland, where she lives now, we see her. So um (pause) yeah, I mean it was-- it was great. It was really, I think more about the town than the college experience. Um (pause) I-- it was-- it (pause) I don't want to say it was non-- I guess it was kind of a nontraditional college. I liked that there was-- the campus is kind of fragmented. It-- it was-- when it was designed, it was intentionally set up so there was no central gathering place. They didn't-- it-- you know, it was built when all the protests and everything were going on in Berkeley. So you had these very separate colleges and no kind of central quad where a lot of people could gather.

Part of it is the terrain, it was really hilly, and you know it's very heavily forested and that sort of thing. Um so you never kind of get like a big, student union like campus pride thing. Which perfectly fine with me. I-- I was basically just there to go to-- to go to school and then lived as much of my life as I could outside of it. Um (pause) which was great.

I-- I mean I still, to this day, love Santa Cruz. It's a really small town. Um (pause) and it got to the point where I was ready to be done, but I like going back there and spending time there. And spending-- you know, seeing people, and (pause) it's-- it definitely is kind of my second-- my second home. I remember feeling um (pause) not that I didn't--

you know, didn't love going to see my family. But you c-- as you come-- came over highway one, and you'd get out of pa-- just past Watsonville, and you could see the-- the beach at Sea Cliff. And it was the first time you could like look out and see the ocean after coming from the Central Valley. I would just kind of breathe this sigh of relief and be like oh my God, I'm home.

Like it always felt so good to come back over. And even when we lived in Emeryville, when you'd drive over the 17 and you'd hit the summit, and you could see the marine layer just like a flat layer of fog. It would be like ah, I'm back. Like this feels good, this is right. Um (pause) so it-- I mean I still love it. I'm very nostalgic for it, and with nostalgia comes overlooking all the-- all the bad stuff that-- that you know, goes with you know, looking at the rosy-- rosy times only.

APRIL REYNOSA: Mmhmm.

TERESA ISH: But you know, cause it's-- [01:35:00] it's-- it's got problems, and they're getting worse. Like there's a lot of homeless people, there's a growing gang activity. There's a lot of I think good intentions and not a lot of follow through. And you know, crazy, crazy housing prices-- prices in a really awful you know, a commuter community where a lot of people leave um town everyday and like-- like to commute over to Silicon Valley. And you know, they don't have the kind of reference in the community that they live in. But I think there are towns probably like that or-- all over; California especially.

APRIL REYNOSA: Mmhmm.

TERESA ISH: Um.. so yeah. And then-- and then graduate school was a lot of the-- the same sort of thing. Um my graduate advisor was great. He's like my second dad. I still go to him for references. He flew out or uh he flew-- one of the undergrads who was in my lab um when I was getting my Masters um got married in New Hampshire a couple summers ago. He and his wife flew out for her wedding. We saw them at the wedding, we had breakfast with them. Like whenever I'm in Santa Cruz, we stop by and visit. They-- he-- I-- I have his banjo. That's his banjo. He told me it's on loan until his grandson's old enough to play it. Um it's-- it's great. I-- (pause) it-- it was-- I couldn't have asked for a better graduate advisor. And espec-- Eric had some-- has had some really, really rough

um mentors through school. And Mark's actually been there if Eric has had questions. And-- and for some of my other friends in-- in the same program as I did who didn't have good advisors, Mark was like the one who helped out. And he has-- he has two daughters and almost an all female lab for a long time. So I think that he kind of took the dad role on in-- in a real way.

APRIL REYNOSA: Mhmm.

TERESA ISH: Um... but during graduate school, um a friend and I started a nonprofit called Fish Wise. Um it started out we were just working with really small grocery stores to help them label their seafood according to red, yellow, green sustainability. Um this year, Fish Wise just signed Target as a partner, last year they signed Safeway as a partner. So it's-- it's like that's my first baby. (laughter) My first child is all grown up now, and (laughter)--.

APRIL REYNOSA: Wow.

TERESA ISH: -- is really doing great, great work.

APRIL REYNOSA: Tell me more about that. How did that all start and--?

TERESA ISH: This is just what I spent four hours talking about on Wednesday at that interview. (laughter)

APRIL REYNOSA: (laughter)

TERESA ISH: Um so I-- I was going to do fisheries work um in my-- in my program. And my friend Shelly was working on remote sensing. So that's using satellites to track changes in water quality, and contaminants, and stuff like that. Um so not fisheries, and we were taking this kind of very general overview marine conservation, marine science class. It was basically like watching a Discovery Channel show. And they were talking about fisheries, and the two of us were-- or she was like wow, I didn't know all this stuff was going on. This is really terrible. You know, (pause) I wonder what we could do. And I was like oh, there are these sea-- seafood watch cards, which-- which rank the fishery-- the different seafood products red, yellow, green based on how sustainable they are. Um and their environmental impacts.

So we were shopping-- both of us shop at this local, natural food store. And you know, they can tell you everything about where their chicken comes from, and you know have all this organic produce. And then their fish counter was like (makes a sound) here's the ocean. You know, (laughter) like no-- no thought, no conservation behind it. It was totally out of-- out of synch with the rest of their-- of their store. And um (pause) so Shelly and I were like yeah, we're going to sit outside and protest. Then we're like maybe we should talk to them first. Maybe we-- maybe we can help them and then we don't need to do that. And um we talked to them, we developed this program, and it just kind of took off from there. We got our first grant that was like \$25,000. We were so excited. I mean that's not even one year's salary. (laughter) It was nothing. We were so excited. And with that \$25,000 we signed like four more stores, and they've got like a \$600,000 budget now. They're, you know, partnered with the second largest retailer in the country.

Like (pause) it's-- it's great. It's-- it's really exciting. And I actually got to kind of put marine science into something I feel is making a measurable and meaningful difference, without ever seeing a live fish. I-- my degree was a modeling-- mathematical model prog-- or my thesis was mathematical modeling work. So I actually did my entire thesis without seeing a fish. I mean I still could do research diving, I would help out with other folks just to kind of keep in the water. And my advisor had just gotten a research certification, so we would go diving for you know, "work". Um so we'd take a morning off and go diving in Monterey. But um yeah, it was-- it was um (pause) not expected.

At one point, I got really mad at my mom cause she at some point was like [01:40:00] well, when are-- when are you going to go get a job? And I was like mom, don't you understand? Like I'm making something big here. And I was like I was in the newspaper. It was like the local Santa Cruz newspaper. But you know, I have also been quoted in everything from like the *Washington Post* to, you know, the *Chronicle* and all these. You know, so it's-- it was-- it-- we weren't sure at the time where it was going to end up, and whether it was going to be this kind of one off project or something that's--

that's growing. And it's-- it's big. It's-- it's great now. It's doing really well. Um and I'm really proud of them, and I'm still on the board, and still get to see what they're doing. But it's exciting.

APRIL REYNOSA: Very.

TERESA ISH: Yeah. I kind of set a track.

APRIL REYNOSA: Uh huh.

TERESA ISH: It's made me kind of one of-- weirdly, one of the like matriarchs in the community-- in the sustainable seafood community already. Just I think by the fact that when we started it, I was 24. So (pause) you know, I've-- I've got 10 years under my belt now. (laughter) And it-- not a lot of people do cause it was relatively small back then. And it's kind of scary that you know, I'm like one of the old-- the old guard already. (laughter) But I guess, that's how it goes if you stick with one thing. (laughter)

APRIL REYNOSA: That's great.

TERESA ISH: Um but yeah, and that's still you know, more or less what I'm doing now. Except on the-- on the grant making side.

APRIL REYNOSA: You want to talk about that a little bit more?

TERESA ISH: Yeah, um I-- I work-- I consult um almost full time now for a foundation; The Walton Family Foundation. Um and I manage their-- their work funding. The sort of using the people who buy seafood-- both grocery stores and individuals-- to-- to change how the fisheries-- how the-- how the fish are caught. So the-- the whole idea behind it is if-- if you can-- if you can create um demand for this better caught stuff, the people who are catching fish will change how they catch it. And um it's seen in complement with also you know, changing the legislation, and-- and how they're managed in what the government is doing. But I mean the idea is really if you can get Safeway to change how they're buying one product that has the potential to make really big, positive impacts on-- on that fishery. And so I-- I look for organizations who are doing that sort of work or who are supporting that sort of work in one way or another.

APRIL REYNOSA: Mmhmm.

TERESA ISH: I like it. I get to-- I get to see what a lot of different folks are doing without being kind of stuck with one, specific tool to use. And part of the challenge I think sometimes

working at um advocacy organizations are that they've got the way that they do stuff, and you have to try to solve every problem they're working on with that one tool. Um I think it's just how you have to work when you're very focused on trying to solve a problem. Um if you try to bring in too many tools, it's easy to not do any of them well. Um and so now I get to say well, you're doing this, and that works over here, and you're doing this, and that works over there. And so I get to kind of put together everything instead of trying to do one thing at a time. It's like multitasking.

APRIL REYNOSA: Mmhmm. (laughter)

TERESA ISH: Which um I have a tendency to do a lot. (laughter) Not always with good results, but it work-- it works most of the time.

APRIL REYNOSA: So this is a pretty big career. Like you're full time working?

TERESA ISH: I'm-- I work four days a week now. I started this job, I got the job offer the night before Jun was born, and um (pause) the night before I went into labor, and um started in like-- they said whenever you're ready, you can start. I interviewed like 36 weeks pregnant. Um that was-- that was fun. I-- I made sure I had scheduled my doctor's appointment like the day before I was supposed to take the train down there just to make sure I wasn't going to get stuck in DC you know, going into labor. So yeah.

APRIL REYNOSA: (laughter)

TERESA ISH: Um so I-- it was- in a way, I recommend starting a new job immediately after having a baby. Because then the people have no idea what your actual performance bar is. So they don't know what to expect out of you, and you can either chalk it up to I'm at a new job, I'm clueless. Or I just had a baby, I haven't slept in three days. And so you know, they-- they have no standard for you. So everything from there has to be an improvement. (laughter)

APRIL REYNOSA: (laughter) That's great.

TERESA ISH: And it was also really nice that they let me start in part-time. And so I increased my-- my day's working over time. But I love what I do, and I love the travel. And you know, I-- and the travel has meant that Jun got to see my parents like every six weeks up until recently in which she's been way too squirmy to sit in my lap and do a free ticket. And the fact that my parents are retired, and-- and relatively comfortable means that they

can take a lot of time off to spend with her. [01:45:00] Um I had a-- a four day meeting in Paris, and so um she was about six month old-- six months old. So it's like you know, a couple hundred dollars to buy her a bassinet seat. And we flew to Paris, and they went out there and took a vacation and babysat while I was at the meeting, and [tooled] around-- tooled around Paris on their own with this baby. I guess they got to go to the front of all the lines. Like the Parisians were very nice to this old couple with a baby. Um and I still got to-- to you know, have her to there to she was nursing, so I got to breastfeed her, and didn't have to go five, six days without seeing-- without seeing her. Eric was totally lonely, but (pause) that's how it goes sometimes because (laughter) there are plenty of wives who get left behind for days on end with-- with infants and newborns. And he's-- he's a really good sport too when I-- when I go on trips. Um kind of going on single parent duty for a little while. So it's good.

APRIL REYNOSA: Let's talk more about Eric.

TERESA ISH: Yeah.

APRIL REYNOSA: Kind of you know, you told how you met him, and how did that kind of evolve into a relationship?

TERESA ISH: Oh God, it's so embarrassing.

APRIL REYNOSA: Your friendship. (laughter)

TERESA ISH: Um (pause) yeah, we were just really good friends. And-- and even you know, when we were friends I was like oh, I can totally-- you know, we have so much to talk about. I would-- can never date him. He's like one of my best friends. Could not date him, no interest. And then, you know, sometimes things just happen, and the next thing you know you're like kissing on the couch, and you're like OK.

APRIL REYNOSA: (laughter)

TERESA ISH: Guess-- guess this is happening now. (laughter) So um and then you know, it was-- he um-- it was actually really great. When he was applying for his Ph.D. program he-- he looked out in New York. He had done an internship out here, and spent the summer out here and he applied to a few programs out here. And decided that for us, he would stay-- stay at Berkeley. I think Jun is awake already. She doesn't take long naps. Um (pause) and it was-- it was actually really nice cause I lived in Santa Cruz with my

girlfriends in our house, and during the week I kind of just did whatever I wanted. I mean obviously, not whatever I wanted. We were-- we were together, but um and not that I wanted to like hook up with a bunch of people, but you know what I mean. I was just kind of like living the-- the single girl life.

APRIL REYNOSA: Mmhmm.

TERESA ISH: And going here and there, and not worrying about you know, having to check in or anything like that. And then on the weekends, we'd get-- spend the weekends together. Um he didn't have a car for a long time, so he took the train-- the train and then the bus cause there's a bus that would go over-- um 17 from-- from San Jose. It's kind of pre-cell phone days, so I'd have to like wait on Friday at the train station to make sure he made the train and see what time it was coming in, and there were no delays. And of course, there are always delays. And so um there was a lot of back and forth there, and then we had a friend who worked at the Amtrak like headquarters not too far from him. Um from where Eric's apartment was. And so he'd get up on Monday mornings at like four in the morning and go back over the hill with this guy. So (pause) yeah, it's-- it's a wonder that uh that survived. (laughter) But I mean I thought it was really good. I think it gave us both a chance to kind of grow on our own and still check in with one another. So that we didn't totally diverge.

APRIL REYNOSA: Mmhmm. Mmhmm.

TERESA ISH: So it was good. It was a good experience.

APRIL REYNOSA: And um when did you decide to get married?

TERESA ISH: Um, well we had talked about it a long time. I mean basically, (pause) when we graduated from college, you know we were both kind of like well, we're making sacrifices on what, maybe we would really do-- I wanted to go off and do some like crazy field study in you know, Papua New Guinea for a year and like help a research. I had this research diving degree, I could have done whatever I wanted. Um so pretty early on we had said like look, we're in this, and we're going to get married eventually. And um (pause) it was always kind of put-- put off and like didn't want to do it while I-- I was in school in Santa Cruz when we did long distance. And then I was starting Fish Wise, and I wasn't ready to move yet, and then I moved to Emeryville, and um (pause) which is

right next to Berkeley. And I think we lived there three years maybe? Three years? No-- yeah, that sounds about right.

And um (pause) and (pause) there-- I mean there-- I felt so bad. We were-- we were on this camping trip, and I was like when are you going to propose? I've been waiting all this time, and moved to Emeryville, we're living here now. And he was like well, I don't know, I don't know. Well, it turns out he had already bought the ring, it just wasn't-- he was planning on doing it on that trip. It just wasn't ready. And-- and so (laughter) he was like yeah, well. Or either that, or (pause) no-- yeah. Yeah. Yeah. So that-- that's-- he wanted to do it on the trip. And then when we got [01:50:00] home from the trip, my-- one of my best friends from high school who lived in-- in-- right near us called us like right when we got home and she was like we got engaged. And he's like damn it, I can't do it now either.

APRIL REYNOSA: (laughter)

TERESA ISH: And so he waited even longer and it turns out the night that he was buying the ring, we were supposed to have friends over for dinner. It took a lot longer than he expected. He was really late coming home, and I totally like-- his-- his excuse-- he said he was going to play hockey uh or um he plays-- he played in line hockey. And um (pause) and when I call him and check in, he's like I'm sorry I'm late. I'm-- I'm having beer with a couple of the guys I'm playing with. I'm like get home now. Dylan and Steve are here, like we're going to have dinner without you, where are you? And he's like oh, I'm just having a beer. I had one too many, I'm going to hang out for a couple hours. I'm like uh, really? Like I was so annoyed. He was buying my engagement ring.

APRIL REYNOSA: (laughter)

TERESA ISH: Poor guy. He never gets a break. Um (pause) yeah. And then you know, we had-- it was a-- we got married in Santa Cruz. It was a great, like really laid back wedding. We did most of it ourselves. Um we went super on the cheap. A lot of-- it was a lot of fun. We um we did an Andy Warhol theme. Um (pause) uh we made silver-- I don't know if you've seen the Silver Cloud exhibit. It's at the Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh. We had-- his family-- Eric's family is from Pittsburgh, and we had seen that.

APRIL REYNOSA: OK.

TERESA ISH: So you know, he and my dad the night before the wedding, ironing Mylar balloons into big squares. We had to figure out like the helium to air ratio to make them neutrally buoyant. Um so when you walked into the reception area, there's like domed room. And we had fans blowing and like these silver clouds blowing around. And um it was a lot of fun. It was very casual. It was a good time. A beautiful day in Santa Cruz; warm, sunny, sunny in the afternoon. It was amazing. So yeah, it was--.

APRIL REYNOSA: Um tell me like an Eric story. Like something that describes him, like what he's like or--.

TERESA ISH: Uh he-- he's def-- I mean-- I mean I know we have-- both have science backgrounds, but he is definitely the scientist in the family. And um (pause) for that, he's been deemed the baker of the family. Not that he bakes that much, but when he does, I won't let him cook because scientist in him means he's very, very precise. Like wants to measure everything, level every measuring spoon. And it is like infuriating because I don't know if this says more about me or him. (laughter) Um it takes so long. He is-- if you hadn't figured out from the fact that we had been dating for so long, he's very methodical, and intentional, and likes to really think things through, and make sure that he knows what he's doing. And it's all very like very slow.

And I'm just kind of like ah, I'll just do it. You know, like whatever. We're not going to plan this ahead. I'm just going to do it. It's a-- it's-- the part of the reason why I did mathematical modeling for my masters because if you screw it up, you could just go back and change something in a program. But if you're actually planning an experiment, a pl-- especially an ecological experiment that takes weeks and weeks to run. If you screw it up or don't plan right, you just like wasted a ton of time. So um (pause) yeah. So he's-- he's very methodical. Um he has to-- he-- that's why he has to bake. Because in baking, you actually have to be fairly precise. And so he spooned the flour in, level the cup off, measure it exactly. Like it's all very measured and accurate, and the stuff turns out beautifully when he does it.

Um I mean mostly, he's just like this amazing, like laid back, good sport. I feel like that's kind of my theme in life. I am surrounding people who are will-- willing to just kind of go-- go with the flow. I mean yeah, there's the precision. He's-- he's definitely got like his stubbornness, and you know all that. But he's perfectly happy to let me drag him along to all kinds of things. I mean he-- I don't know how-- again, having a tight group of girlfriends, I don't know how many weddings the poor guy has gone to. More than he really wanted to, I'm sure. And he get-- he just gets swept up in all of my stuff. Like he just has to kind of go along with it, which is great. Um whether it's me traveling, or whatever like crazy scheme I've got at the time. He just goes along with it.

Uh he tells really funny story. He laughs maniacally and he has like one eye like cranks up, and he-- and he makes this like crazy, maniacal face. Um he let me cut his hair a couple of times, which was a true test of a relationship. I got halfway through it and started crying. (laughter) And told him he looked like [01:55:00] Billy Ray Cyrus, and that I couldn't finish it, and he made me finish it. And then he let me cut his hair again. (laughter) So that seemed like a really bad idea. (laughter) It's a good thing our downstairs neighbor cuts hair now because he-- she cuts his hair.

Um (pause) he-- yeah, he's just like great, and laid back, and fun, and (pause) tolerates my dad's endless stories. And um yeah. He's a great dad, amazing dad. Um (pause) yeah. He's great. It's good to remember that too sometimes. It's easy to forget about it.

APRIL REYNOSA: Mmhmm. Mmhmm.

TERESA ISH: Um (pause) yeah, his um-- and I think uh my family I think definitely takes the (pause) not the-- the priority, but we do a lot more stuff with my family than his. In part because we-- my family is in a better position to like come out and visit, and stuff like that. Um (pause) and I've-- I try to make a conscious effort to-- to do stuff with his family. Like we're going to his uncle's in Pittsburgh for Thanksgiving. Um and we'll probably keep doing that even after we move. I mean right now, obviously, it's convenient. It's an hour flight or a long train ride, but um I'd like to kind of keep doing that so he gets to see his family.

APRIL REYNOSA: Mmhmm.

TERESA ISH: Because I could easily-- I could easily, basically shove him into doing stuff with my family all the time. Um

APRIL REYNOSA: What's his family like?

TERESA ISH: His-- his family's great. His um-- his mom is very, very reserved. Um (pause) she's a-- she's a-- went to culinary school. Um but she-- she's always-- she worked in like a halfway hou-- a rehab house, and um now in a prison doing food. So you know, she's done food stuff, but she's not like um you know, a foodie. Um (pause) they-- she makes Pizzelles every Christmas. Like she's got some of her like old family food traditions as well. She's-- she's really quiet. Um but she's obviously super excited about Junie.

Um (pause) she-- his dad is funny. They-- they look a lot alike. His dad's just like this kind of old, burnt out surfer. He's had-- had some problems in the past, and he's not doing so well now. Um like he's not totally stable. Which I think also makes my family great to have because they're-- they're very, very stable. Although my dad's brothers are kind of like going through the same sort of thing. Like they're getting to an age where you're having to do a lot more care than you know, you realize that you-- you have to.

Um his brother is really funny. His brother is three years younger. When I met his brother, you know he was still in high school. He was a stoner. He was growing pot on the roof of their flat apartment with two story apartments all around; totally got caught. Um, but he's really-- he's fantastic. They're about-- they're pregnant. Or his wife is pregnant now too, so that's going to be fun to have some cousins. Cause Lord knows when my sister's going to-- if she is going to at all, have kids. Um (pause) when-- at our-- at our wedding, um Eric's dad referred to Eric as the smart one, and Jesse as the aggressive one. Which isn't what he meant, but-- and-- and all of-- everyone who knows him and knows Eric and Jesse knew that was the case. It was actually really funny. But um I-- I can see that. Although Jesse, his brother, is also very smart, just in a different way than Eric. He's-- you know, he-- he's-- he went from being this kind of could have

been a total screw up, to having a real-- and having a really great job. He's-- he runs the - manages the sales team for a like a skateboarding clothing company. Um and actually his-- his girlf-- his wife does uh for a different company as well. Um Krew is the company he works for. I don't know if you--.

APRIL REYNOSA: Mm.. (inaudible).

TERESA ISH: With a K, yeah

APRIL REYNOSA: Uh huh.

TERESA ISH: Um so-- they-- and they live in L.A. We're going to see them at Christmas. Um yeah, and-- and his uncle. I-- I know his-- we know-- I know his uncle fairly well; the one that we're spending Thanksgiving with. Um he and his partner have lived in Pittsburgh for a long time. They're really, really funny. He's, you know, a mid-50s gay man, so he's not really sure what to do with a toddler. He-- we got to dinner with him when he comes into town to visit um some clients. And he suggested this dinner. Fortunately, he's also in some ways, kind of a crotchety old man, so we eat dinner at like five. Which is great with Jun. (laughter) [02:00:00] For six. But it was kind of this like shi shi restaurant with carpet on the floor, and I'm like oh God, carpet on a floor and Jun, that's a really bad combination.

APRIL REYNOSA: (laughter)

TERESA ISH: But it turns out the wait staff were really nice. And he was like ah, if I thought about it, I might have suggested something different. (laughter) I'm like you know, if I were really worried, I could have (pause) could have warned you. But yeah, he didn't-- he's not really sure. She-- she would squawk, and he'd be like oh my God, I don't know what to do about this crying child. Um but he-- he likes her and thinks she's funny. But um he doesn't really know what to do with her. So it's going to be-- they have this gorgeous, kind of mid-century house, and like nice furnishings, and you know grown up stuff. It's going to be interesting to see how um (pause) how it goes when we show up for Thanksgiving, and she goes tearing through their house. (laughter) Um so that should be fun. (laughter)

APRIL REYNOSA: (laughter) Uh let's talk about Jun now.

TERESA ISH: Yeah.

APRIL REYNOSA: Um when did you know you wanted to be a mom? Had-- is it something you'd always wanted to do or wanted to be since you were young or--?

TERESA ISH: Uh, not really. I-- you know, I-- I don't want to say I hadn't really thought about it. It was always just kind of assumed that that was where it was going to go. Um (pause) I-- (pause) I don't-- I don't really-- I don't-- -I can't really explain like why. Why I wanted to have kids. I mean I think that-- I think that having kids is inherently selfish, and I don't have a problem with that. Um because it's not like you're doing it for them, they don't exist, you know. Every-- everything that-- you become a parent because of something that you want. It's completely selfish and I'm totally willing to cop to that. And I don't know why I wanted a kid, I just you know, I wanted a little person there. And um it's been better than I've expected.

I still-- when-- when I was in the hospital after she was born, and they would refer to me as mommy, I still wanted to like punch every nurse who called me mommy. I'm like that is not who I am, it is part of who I am. It is not who I am, plus my name's on the chart out the door. If you can't really be bothered to look at that and call me by my name, I don't really want to talk to you. Like really, it-- and-- and to this day, it still kind of-- it still kind of bothers me. Um to be defined by her. Um she's awesome. I love her, she's fantastic. I'm constantly amazed by her. Um (pause) and I feel like I'm doing an all right job. Like I'm-- I'm holding it together. She seems OK. Yeah, things seem to be--.

APRIL REYNOSA: She's fantastic.

TERESA ISH: (laughter) They seem to be going great. Um so (pause) you know, it's-- (pause) but it-- it's part of who I am, and it's not all of who I am. And I-- I sometimes wonder about some of my friends. Not necessarily my friends here, but some of my friends back home. Um and it could just be cause I don't know them as well as adults, but some of my friends I really feel like are kind of defined solely by their kids. And I wonder how that feels to them. And if that's what they intended or if that just sort of happened. Um cause I think if that's your intention, then that's-- that's great. You know, if your-- if your main goal in life is to-- to raise children, then that's awesome. Um but I know, I always kind

of-- kind of wonder about that. And I don't-- I don't know if that's (pause) I don't know if that's something that ever-- anyone really kind of honestly answers too.

APRIL REYNOSA: Mmhmm.

TERESA ISH: I think it's a really hard thing to be answer-- answer to. Cause on the other hand, while I don't want to be defined by that. If I raised her to be a really amazing person, that's all I end up accomplishing, I'm OK with that too. You know, there are other things I want to do, but if she ends up being my main accomplishment, that's fine. Um I hope not, but (pause)--.

APRIL REYNOSA: Well, we already know that you've already accomplished quite a few other things.

TERESA ISH: -- it'll be OK.

APRIL REYNOSA: So, she--.

TERESA ISH: Well, again. I mean-- but it's kind of the same thing, right?

APRIL REYNOSA: -- she's another one of them.

TERESA ISH: Like if-- if I you know, peaked at 24 when I founded Fish Wise, that's not really so awesome either. (laughter) That's not what my plan was. (laughter)

TERESA ISH: [00:00] Um but yeah, I just-- I just want her to be-- to grow up to be kind of a strong girl with a good sense of self.

APRIL REYNOSA: Mmhmm. Tell me um about the significance of her name?

TERESA ISH: Oh so I wanted to give her a Chinese name. Um but didn't want to call her Mei because that's like what every Chinese girl born in America is named. Um and I had been reading this book uh by this woman named [Lisa Tse]. Um Chinese last name, but she's like a 16th Chinese. She's basic-- they have a picture of her on the back of the back. She has like blonde hair-- or red hair. You know, just-- it's-- but it's just because the culture that she continuously grew up in, she always got more kind of drawn into the Chinese side than-- than the-- the white side.

And she was talking about one of her aunts, who is named Jun-Ai, which is true love. And um I know that her family speaks Cantonese, and so I knew that that was a

Cantonese name. Cause it's actually not-- it's more often a Chinese men's name because it means handsome. Um and it's much more like June, instead of Jun, which is what-- closer to what hers is. Um I say closer because I probably still can't pronounce it totally right. But um I liked it. I liked the name. Um Eric, right away, was like yeah, I like that too. And it's-- it's an easily kind of anglophied and not at all um (pause) not like a super traditional Chinese girl's name.

And weirdly enough, like right on trend I think. Like there are lots of little girls now named June with an E, like the traditional month June. I've-- I've met a couple people with kids named June already. Um which is a little disappointing, but you know, that's how it goes, right? Um (pause) so I-- oh, it was just kind of this kind of funny like confluence of-- of time and coming across the name, and having a-- it means true. And which is you know, something that I hope that she grows up to be. Um (pause) yeah, it-- it just kind of all worked out.

Now if we have another kid, I may end up being like me and my sister, where the other kid doesn't get a Chinese name. Especially if it's a boy, I think it's a lot harder for boys. Um (pause) to have a Chinese first name that's not like super, super Chinese sounding. Which is, I don't think, quite as many words.

APRIL REYNOSA: Mmhmm.

TERESA ISH: Umm not that I would have a problem, you know, to name a boy a real Chinese name. I think it would throw people off if they are-- look at all like Junie looks, who's again, blonde haired, blue eyes. I mean God, if she gets-- if I got the what are you? She's really going to get it. And you know, she says she's part Chinese, she-- they're going to be like no, you're not. Like (laughter).

APRIL REYNOSA: But describe what she looks like. I mean there are things about her appearance that you can tell.

TERESA ISH: Yeah. She um-- she has slightly you know, slight kind of the-- of the double-lidded, almond shaped eyes.

APRIL REYNOSA: Mmhmm.

TERESA ISH: They're blue cause my dad is Swedish and Eric is-- has blue eyes too. So that was kind of going to happen. Um she's got kind of the-- the flat, Chinese nose. The-- the [Gun] nose, like my-- my um family calls it cause that was my grandmother's maiden name. Um (pause) uh you know, kind of like fuller-- fuller lips. Like a little more Asian lips, I guess. Um (pause) it's hard-- with a nose, that's hard to tell whether that's just a baby nose. Cause they're all-- they all kind of have that like flat, round nose or if she's going to stick with it. But you know, who knows. But I think it's mostly-- mostly the eyes. Um the shape-- the eye shape. Um and she gets comments on her eyes all the time. All the time. And then she has kind of like blondish brown-- blondish brown here.

APRIL REYNOSA: Mmhmm.

TERESA ISH: And she's a wee, little one. She's super, super skinny and tiny. Um which is not at all from my side. Eric saw pictures of me at-- at like three or four months old, and he was like did you get stung by a bee? Cause I have just like these massive cheeks, and these rolls. And we-- we called my sister the laughing Buddha for a long time cause she was-- she was like nine and a half pounds when she was born. Like she was a beastly baby, huge cheeks. I mean we were both enormously huge babies. And Jun's got Eric's like beanpole, little stick. I held a four and a half month old on the flight over-- or when I was coming back from California on Wednesday who weighed 16 pounds. And I'm like yeah, my 20 month old daughter may be 20 pounds, if we're lucky. She might have just broken 20 pounds. She's teeny.

But she's got a lot of spunk, she's got a lot of heart, and she runs around [05:00]. She's-- knows what she wants, and she's-- I'm really excited to see what she's going to look like, and act like as she grows up. Um (pause) and you know, I-- (pause) whether or not she like feels like telling-- explaining to everyone why she has a Chinese name is totally, totally up to her. She may just decide to add an E when she's older cause she's tired of people calling her Jun or spelling the name wrong. But maybe she'll really be into it. So I don't know.

APRIL REYNOSA: You talked about wanting to um expose her to Chinese, the language and things like that.

TERESA ISH: Yeah.

APRIL REYNOSA: Um are there specific stories or things that you would want to instill in her to kind of--?

TERESA ISH: I didn't grow up with any of that.

APRIL REYNOSA: Yeah.

TERESA ISH: I don't know-- I don't know any kind of Chinese fairy tales, um customs. Like I don't have any of that. Um and I-- so I found with-- with one of my-- I think along the line of-- lines of people of kind of my age who are mixed who never-- or you know, had two language households who never learned the language. I feel like from people that I've spoken to, there's this kind of desire in their kids to try to make up for it, I guess. So it doesn't get totally lost. I mean I get-- I get worried that she won't have any-- I mean she'll-- she won't have anything. And so I-- I try to kind of at least keep up the Chinese New Year, some of the food stuff. But once my grandmother passes away, you know there-- there goes the little bit that we had. My mom barely-- she by now speaks very, very minimal. You know, rough-- very rough Chinese with her siblings, and that's kind of it. She can't write, she doesn't-- she can't cook a lot of the stuff that my grandmother cooks. Um that it just slowly trickles away.

And I also-- you know, I think it's (pause) in-- in terms of kind of cultural heritage that's appreciated in the US. I feel like Chinese just isn't one of them. Like (pause) all of a sudden, everyone's Irish on-- on St. Patrick's Day. Like everyone who has the slightest drop of Irish blood like comes out and proclaims it. And you know, people always talk about oh, I-- you know, love your accent, where are you from? It's-- it's never people from China or like India, or Asia or something where people are-- are commenting on how much they love their accent. You know that-- it-- and so I think there's-- there's less incentive or opportunity to kind of keep a lot of those things really, really going. I mean at least if we're living in like San Francisco or New York, there'll always be China-- Chinese New Year parades, and you know, stuff like that in some sort of very like not commercialized, but very kind of sanitized (pause) acknowledgement of it. Not that my experience is that much you know, less Americanized than that. But you know, if there's

a little bit. But I think it's-- it-- I think it would be very easy for her kids to have absolutely no sense of it.

APRIL REYNOSA: Mmhmm.

TERESA ISH: And I mean just you know, from not-- not through any intention or anything. But the communities that I live in, it-- you know, she's probably going to end up-- if she's straight, probably end up marrying a white guy. Just you know, numbers. Numbers and the people that I know now. That's probably going to happen.

APRIL REYNOSA: Mmhmm.

TERESA ISH: And so that's just like-- and if she did marry a Chinese guy, he'd have to come from a fairly non-traditional family because like I think a lot of immigrant families, they want to keep up their culture and keep people intermarrying. So-- and the chances of him you know, being from Malaysia or having that same reference is probably pretty low. So you know, it's kind acknowledge the fact that it's going to go away and do your best to save what little bit you can.

APRIL REYNOSA: Mmhmm. Mmhmm. Do you think um (pause) like I think that some people um with mixed heritage backgrounds sometimes feel a kinship with other people, even though it may not be Chinese American or things like that.

TERESA ISH: Yeah.

APRIL REYNOSA: Maybe there's that kind of group that um maybe she'll find um camaraderie in.

TERESA ISH: Yeah. Yeah, and I always-- I kind of wonder um with uh all the international adoptions.

APRIL REYNOSA: Uh huh.

TERESA ISH: Particularly, the adoptions of girls from China if that might be where she kind of finds her niche.

APRIL REYNOSA: Mmhmm.

TERESA ISH: Because in a lot of ways, it's the same thing. It's like you've got this kind of exterior that makes people think one thing, not necessarily her as much. But you-- and you've got kind of these small glimpses into what the culture might have been like. But ultimately, you've grown up in kind of white, middle class, American culture.

APRIL REYNOSA: Mmhmm.

TERESA ISH: Um and-- and whether or not [10:00] that-- that that is kind of the closest-- uh other than mixed race kids, that that's kind of the closest that-- that she's going to find in terms of-- of people who are kind of living a similar experience. Obviously, they're going to have a whole different set of-- of um issues and experiences to-- to refer or work through and refer to. But you know, I mean just being from an international adoption. But I think the kind of context and the (pause) in a disassociation from kind of your heritage might-- might be a bit more-- might be similar.

APRIL REYNOSA: Mmhmm. Yeah. I agree. Yeah, and just the way that she interacts with others is going to be affected.

TERESA ISH: Mmhmm.

APRIL REYNOSA: Because of who she is: her background, and your background, and your parents, and all that.

TERESA ISH: Yeah.

APRIL REYNOSA: So in a different way. (laughter)

TERESA ISH: Yeah.

APRIL REYNOSA: Mmhmm. That's great. Um (pause) tell me a little bit about your parents' relationship with Jun. Cause they do come out here, and they do see her a lot, and--.

TERESA ISH: Oh my God. They-- they adore her.

APRIL REYNOSA: And what is that like for you to see them with her and--?

TERESA ISH: It's really-- I-- I um (pause) I mean I guess I kind of expected how they would react to her what has been much more fun is watching her react to them. Um after they left, she was asking about them constantly. She um-- so my-- my dad is called [Ah Cong], which is mother's father. And my mom is [Popo], um so mother's mother. And um she would-- she would walk around going Ah Cong? Ah Cong? And I would say oh, he's not here right now. He's in Fresno. We'll see him soon. Um they were in Times Square, and he took a picture with this guy dressed as Elmo, and sent it to her. And she picks up the picture, she goes Ah Cong, Elmo! And it was like she was so excited. (laughter) It was the two of them together. She's like Ah Cong and Elmo. You know,

she sees them on Skype, and she's really excited. And they um (pause) yeah, they love her, and she's-- she has a lot of fun with them.

Um my parents (pause) the-- the-- not maybe the first time we were out or the first time they saw her, but the second time they had spent a lot of time when she's actually kind of interacting and has more of a personality. Um my dad told me and Eric that we were doing a good job, and that meant so much because I--. I think they were great parents. And if we can (pause) if we can um (pause) if she can look at us the way that I look at parents, I think we've done a really great job with her.

APRIL REYNOSA: Mmhmm. Yeah. (pause)

TERESA ISH: And I hope she does. I think we've turned out-- Eric and I have turned out all right. So you know, hopefully, hopefully she'll take some of that and you know, transfer it out. But yeah, that meant-- that meant a lot. And it's funny, cause I've never (pause) you know, I talk about how kind of good I was growing up. Which is-- which is true, but I also (pause) I also had no-- have no problem kind of disagreeing with my parents. And obviously, more in high school when everything is as huge deal. You know, high school and college everything is like so dramatic. I disagree with them on everything. But you know, I've never really actively kind of sought their approval I guess, in a way. Um I've always wanted to kind of make them proud. But I've never been like I-- you know, I need to hear them say nice things about me. It's never been like that. But that was just like (pause) I don't know, I think that's the nicest thing that a parent can tell their kids.

APRIL REYNOSA: Mmhmm. Absolutely. (pause)

TERESA ISH: So it'll be-- it'll be good if we move closer to them. I think that (pause) I like them to be a big part of her life.

APRIL REYNOSA: Mmhmm.

TERESA ISH: I don't-- um you know, again, I feel so lucky that they're in great health, they're comf-- financially comfortable that they-- they can do a lot of things with her that I think a lot of-- a lot of people don't have the opportunity to do. So I mean the fact that they can-- are actually retired, and not having to work even when we move out there. If we're living in San Francisco or something, they can come up and you know, stay with her, and

let us go out and do something. You know, for a couple of days, and they can take that time. And that it's all OK for them to be able to do that. And I think that's really nice to have.

APRIL REYNOSA: Mmhmm. That's great.

TERESA ISH: So.

APRIL REYNOSA: Yeah.

TERESA ISH: Yeah. She's a great, little bean. (laughter) I'm (inaudible) with her. And I-- and a lot of it has to do in part too of the community that-- community that we've managed to put together out here. It's been a lot easier.

APRIL REYNOSA: Let's talk about that.

TERESA ISH: Yeah. I mean well, as you know April. (laughter) Uh there's a group of us that you know, [15:00] all took pre-natal yoga together, and managed to keep up afterwards. And it's-- I think we're also a very diverse group in terms of backgrounds and-- and how we are approaching raising our kids, and family situations. And (pause) that sort of thing. Um but it's-- it's so great to have sounding boards. And I think we've done a pretty good job of finding people who are kind of open to everything. Like I know a lot of people always talk about how judged they feel as-- as um new parents; especially new mothers. And (pause) despite the kind of diversity in our group, you know sometimes I think things maybe slip out that people don't often intend to commenting on-- on some people's parenting styles. Things pop out every once in a while.

But I think in general, we've managed to kind of go through it relatively judgment free, and just as a support group. Which has been great, especially without having family out here. I also don't think I ever really asked my mom for like parenting advice right now. Just because I think her reference points are so different than-- than mine. I mean she was giving me like rice cereal at four months-- or two months old in-- in a bottle. And I-- just very different from-- it's just the time and everything. But um but I really (pause) I love how international our group is. Uh it-- um the idea that Jun's going to grow up with all these friends speaking all these different languages who you know, have been all over the world, and it's so like Park Slope stereotype that I don't even care. Because I think

it's-- I think it's great. I think people are doing-- they're really successful women that are great role models for all the girls that are part of this group. Um (pause) they're-- people are very confident. I feel like a lot of times in themselves and the decision they're making-- they're making. Which I think is-- is great to see. Cause whenever you doubt yourself and you see other people just kind of full steam ahead, you're like ah well, whatever. If I just go you know, go through it too, that helps. And um people also have lots of really helpful advice, and have no problems with you taking or leaving it.

And-- and plus, they're just fun. It's just fun. People like you know, they talk about like oh, there's-- you know, I hear other people going like oh my-- my mommy friends and stuff like that. But I don't necessarily for-- for a good chunk of the group, if we didn't have kids and were somehow managed to be pulled together uh independently, I think it would be like a very similar group of friends. I also think it's hilarious we've managed to like find all these Californians. Like somehow, we just all found each other again.

APRIL REYNOSA: (laughter)

TERESA ISH: So (pause) I don't know if that's a personality type thing too that (laughter) makes it that much easier. (laughter) But it really-- I mean there are a lot, a lot of us from like Northern California, especially.

APRIL REYNOSA: Mmhmm.

TERESA ISH: Or who have been-- who are married to people from there. I don't know. There's just-- there's a lot of-- of Californian connection there.

APRIL REYNOSA: Mmhmm.

TERESA ISH: So (pause) it's been-- it's been great. I'm going to be really sad um when-- when we move. And I think it's going to be tough to kind of rebuild the same sort of community.

APRIL REYNOSA: Mmhmm.

TERESA ISH: But I mean cause I think Brooklyn itself is just conducive to that um in terms of the ways there are to get together. Um like through the Y and that sort of thing. And then also um, the way that a-- any city is set up where you're out, walking around. You're not just kind of in your backyard, playing. Like you're bound to run into people

and talk to people. And-- and I think that's going to be really hard to lose if I go somewhere. Where I end up. E-- I mean even like San Francisco, which is a huge city. I think you still end up being a bit more insular there.

APRIL REYNOSA: Mhmm. Yeah, that's a really good point. There is something unique about the way Brooklyn is that--.

TERESA ISH: Yeah.

APRIL REYNOSA: -- invites you to be part of the community.

TERESA ISH: Yeah.

APRIL REYNOSA: You just can't avoid it. (laughter)

TERESA ISH: Right. And I don't-- I wonder if like Manhattan would be the same way. I think with small kids, it might be because you're still going to the playground and you know, that sort of thing. And you run into the same people. Um (pause) but I don't know if all places are. I'm sure a lot of big cities are more conducive to that than-- than like suburbs. But um it's-- it's a nice-- it's a nice community we've got here.

APRIL REYNOSA: Mhmm. Absolutely. That's great. Um yeah, so I mean this would be a good time to start closing.

TERESA ISH: OK.

APRIL REYNOSA: Um but there's definitely room if you'd like to bring up any other points or anything else that I may have missed. Um something actually we didn't talk about your sister that much.

TERESA ISH: Uh huh.

APRIL REYNOSA: So if we could talk about her just a little.

TERESA ISH: Yeah. Uh [20:00] well, she's a lot younger than me. Uh I left for college when she finished elementary school. But and-- and we're very different in a lot of ways. I mean I think-- I think you could-- like I'm very kind of goal oriented, and you know, much more ambitious. And she's just kind of-- she's got all the baby stereotypes where she's kind of like flee-- you know, flitters around from this to that. And she's-- she's much more artistic than I am. And she's much cooler than I am, and much more like stylish and creative. And she's-- I love her, she's great. Um sometimes I think we share a brain. Like we-- we were playing that-- that game Catchphrase. It's like the little,

electronic game where you give a clue to your partner. I think she had said like one word, and I guessed what it was, and I can do the same thing. And we get these jokes that like no one else thinks are funny. So the very, very tragic show *Toddlers and Tiaras*, have you heard of that? It's about all the baby-- like the child beauty pageants and how we-- we both find them-- find it both horrifying and attract-- repellent and attractive at the same time.

APRIL REYNOSA: (laughter)

TERESA ISH: And I was telling-- and they have these things where they put in these fake teeth in the little kids so they have like even teeth. They're called flippers. And I was telling Eric wouldn't it be hilarious if you entered like a six month old in one of these beauty pageants with a full set of big, shiny, white teeth. And Eric was like oh my God. And I told my sister that, and she was like oh my God, that'd be so funny. We'd get the fake hair, and the nails. (laughter) I'm like thank you, I'm glad you get this. (laughter) We went to the um [Muter] Museum in-- in Philadelphia together. The Medical Oddities Museum. When she came out to visit, that's what we both really wanted to do was go to the Medical Oddities Museum. We just like (pause) we share a lot of very bizarre similarities, yet on the surface I think are very different. But we're really the same. I mean we're product-- we're product of the same family. We have the same sense of humor. She is witty and wry, and hilarious. And can-- can like throw these lines out absolutely deadpan that are just destructively funny. Um (pause) so you know, she's-- she's taken a little while to get kind of her-- figure out her-- her life, and she doesn't always make the best decision. She was definitely kind of more trouble than I was growing up, but she's still a great person. And I'm actually really excited to be in the Bay area just so she can see Jun a lot more.

APRIL REYNOSA: Mmhmm.

TERESA ISH: So yeah. She's-- she's wonderful. I don't talk to her or see her nearly as much as I wish. But I did. But I saw her-- I had lunch with her when I was in San Francisco driving through. On the way to the airport, we stopped and grabbed lunch, and then I went on. But I probably hadn't talked to her in like two or three weeks before that. So it's funny cause um we're not a tight kit family by any sort of traditional sense. Like we

just don't like-- we don't talk that often. But it's not for any reason other than I think sheer laziness. But all everything else is-- and personality, probably. But everything else is there. Like we all get along. At least the immediate family, we all get along really well, and we all really enjoy each other's company. And you know, we just probably don't check in and stuff like that as much as we want. Just because everyone's busy.

APRIL REYNOSA: Mhmm. Mhmm.

TERESA ISH: So.

APRIL REYNOSA: But it doesn't mean you're not as close as anybody that does.

TERESA ISH: Yeah. Yeah, exactly.

APRIL REYNOSA: Yeah. Mhmm.

TERESA ISH: So I don't feel like I need to talk to her every week to-- to keep that.

APRIL REYNOSA: What's a favorite memory with her?

TERESA ISH: Oh well, I mean a lot of them for-- are when for she was really-- when she was young. God, there are so many hilarious ones. We used to have these railings inside the house, and once she got her head stuck between the railings. We had to butter her ears to pull her out.

APRIL REYNOSA: (laughter)

TERESA ISH: Um she used to love to play dress up, and her favorite dress up thing was Missy, which is the waitress; her waitress persona. And so she'd put on her apron and her head scarf, and she'd like walk around and taking all-- take all menus or our orders before dinner. She used to dip Cheetos in chocolate pudding, which I used to think was really gross. But now that I have a toddler, that's nothing. Cheetos in chocolate pudding is the least of my food combination concerns these days. (laughter) Um (pause) she-- she gave the-- such a great wedding toast that was like (pause) sweet, and funny, and totally I think captured our relationship. (laughter)

And it was-- she's rea-- she's really, really smart, and she does not get nearly enough credit [25:00] for how smart she is. She's smart in a different way than I was always-- thought I you know, was told that I was smart. Like I'm kind of like logical, and book smart, and she just-- her mind works so fast and so creatively, and so--. And then like I

said, she's so witty. Um (pause) it's-- (pause) it-- I almost feel like sometimes when we talk, we're like an episode of the Gilmore Girls with like the rapid fire like (imitates sound). And everyone else is trying to kind of keep up or get a word in. And her-- I can only do that with her because she's the only one who like sparks my brain to work in that way. Um I can't think that fast with anyone else. It's like she put out the challenge, and I have to try to keep up with it.

Um (pause) God. (pause) I don't know. I mean, I think it's all very kind of normal, sibling things. We-- (pause) we-- we were far enough apart in age that we like just kind of led very different lives as-- as little kids. Um but again, like I said, that-- as we become more similar, we've come home after not seeing each other for a while with the exact same haircut. So you know, that-- I find that always quite hilarious. But it's happened more than once. Um (pause) yeah, and-- and I-- I need to sometimes not always treat her as the younger sister too. I think she definitely deserves kind of more-- more respect and responsibility I think than-- than she often gets. Because she's the baby. (pause) And-- and the baby of the cousins too. So not just you know, the baby in our family, but everyone has always been older than her. But yeah, she's a-- she's funny. (pause) She's one of my favorite people.

APRIL REYNOSA: That's great. Yeah. I have a close sister as well.

TERESA ISH: Yeah.

APRIL REYNOSA: Mmhmm.

TERESA ISH: The one who's living with you?

APRIL REYNOSA: Yeah. Mmhmm.

TERESA ISH: I could not live with her. We would kill each other.

APRIL REYNOSA: (laughter)

TERESA ISH: So con-- congratulations to you.

APRIL REYNOSA: (laughter)

TERESA ISH: We went on-- we went on vacation. Um my best friend from college, Eric-- only guy-- my sister, and her friend. Um and it was-- it was really funny. Like she-- she and her friend would sleep 'til noon. Eric and I would be like up at six or seven ready to go,

and start looking at things. And finally, we just-- we stopped waiting for them.

(laughter) We're just like all right, you go do your own thing, we'll see you later. We'll meet up at dinner. And she's just like keeps a totally different time schedule. She's-- I think she's late to everything. Now I'm the one who's late to everything, but I blame it on Jun. Um (pause) she's you know, she just goes at her own pace. She's like doing her own thing. She's funny.

APRIL REYNOSA: (laughter) (pause) Um so what about when your whole family gets together? What's the dynamic?

TERESA ISH: Um--.

APRIL REYNOSA: Like--

TERESA ISH: My mom--.

APRIL REYNOSA: Like your relation-- their relationship; your sister and your parents.

TERESA ISH: Oh, I mean they still-- they still totally treat her sometimes as she's not capable of doing things for herself. And she lets them. Um (pause) I mean my mom, when we go home, my mom is definitely like does all the cooking, does all the cleaning. Does-- you know. She-- she's-- she's still mom. Um (pause) but you know, my mom will-- my mom I remember once when Kim was in college, she called me and she was like can you look up the train schedule so-- so Kim can take the train home? I'm like she has the internet too. I don't know why I need to look up a train schedule for her because she's 18 and there's the internet. You know, it's not like it's hard to get. And they still kind of do that stuff. They're like will you do this and this for Kim? I'm like no. She-- tell her to do it. She's old enough, she can figure it out.

So yeah, but I mean (pause) I-- I mean we still kind of-- you slip back into the old way she sleeps 'til-- she sleeps late. You know, she-- my parents give her gas money to go home. Like (laughter) she goes out with her friends. Most of her friends are still single, so when she's in town, she'll go out with her friends from high school 'til like two or three in the morning. And you know, she's-- she's still-- she's still the kid. (pause) But um but it's good. I mean we-- we still sit down, and have family dinner. And then she'll go out with her friends, and the whole family will come over. All my mom's siblings

will come over and she'll sit down and have dinner with us, and then-- and then take off. So that was always-- I mean we always did that. We always had dinner together as a family. At the table, all the time.

APRIL REYNOSA: Is that something you do now with Jun and Eric?

TERESA ISH: Oh, we don't have a table. (laughter) [30:00] So that's the first problem. Eric didn't grow up like that. Eric, you know, grew up with a TV tray in front on the couch and I've fallen into that, but I'm really-- once we have more space, I'd really like to get back down to the table. And I've already kind of started with Jun. In the morning I'll have breakfast at the bar next to her while she's eating. It helps her eat more, and it's just kind of nice to-- to not be in the living room.

APRIL REYNOSA: Mmhmm.

TERESA ISH: Not that there's a huge separation between the two. (laughter) But still, yeah. (pause) Yeah.

APRIL REYNOSA: That's great.

TERESA ISH: So it's fun. And then-- and then when all-- when everyone's over it's just chaos. I mean one thing they did do well carrying through in Chinese stereotypes is they are loud. My family is loud. They're all like yelling-- shouting at each other. Not in like angry shouting, but just like you always have to take up the volume one notch to get heard over the other person they're standing next to. And you're not mad, you're just yelling because that's how everyone gets heard. And so it's like ah, crazy, running around, lots of too much food. Every week, it's-- yeah, it's fun.

APRIL REYNOSA: And this is something every week everyone would come over?

TERESA ISH: Every week. Yup.

APRIL REYNOSA: That's significant.

TERESA ISH: I think they still do that. For whoever's left. I mean my cousins-- none of the kids live in town anymore. Um so but you know, I think-- I'm sure if we move back and we'll go down more. My um-- my uncle, the one who's just a little bit older than me just had a baby. His wife just had a baby um in June or July. So (pause) yeah, so maybe I'll start again with the whole next generation. I don't know. It'll be fun.

APRIL REYNOSA: Um I saw when I came into your house the pictures.

TERESA ISH: Yeah.

APRIL REYNOSA: Do you want to talk about those?

TERESA ISH: My grandmother with each--?

APRIL REYNOSA: Yeah.

TERESA ISH: With each-- um with each of us girls. So um I don't remember her. Someone gets a really big kick out of it's like the oldest-- oldest daughter, of the oldest daughter, of the oldest daughter is kind of where we are. So there's a picture of my grandmother in some very stylish clothes and glasses I might add, with my mom when she's about two, and there's a picture with my grandmother and me in a Strawberry Shortcake shirt. And I'm probably-- I have to be older than just about three or three in a half in that picture. And then there's a picture now with Jun when she's-- last Christmas with her. I want to keep-- I want to get um one where she's closer to the age that we are in the-- in the pictures. But um (pause) yeah, I think it's-- I think it's fun to have that--.

APRIL REYNOSA: Yeah, what a wonderful thing.

TERESA ISH:-- continuity. Yeah.

APRIL REYNOSA: That's great. Yeah.

TERESA ISH: So and she's also really excited to have babies in-- around the house. And she has a new grandson, so of course she's-- she's exciting. A grandson-- a grandson and a great granddaughter. Who are about the same age. (laughter)

APRIL REYNOSA: And do you-- how do you keep in touch with her, yourself?

TERESA ISH: I don't nearly as well as I should. Her English isn't great. Um I don't call her as much as I should. I'm a bad granddaughter, basically.

APRIL REYNOSA: (laughter)

TERESA ISH: I send her a birthday card, I see her on holidays. But I haven't seen her since Chinese New Year last year. So yeah.

APRIL REYNOSA: Um OK. Well, is there anything else you want to say about your family? Any other memories that are coming to mind?

TERESA ISH: No. I didn't talk about my dad's family at all, but they're great too.

APRIL REYNOSA: Yeah.

TERESA ISH: I mean they're wonderful. My dad has a twin brother, and my cousin's almost the same age. My um eldest cousin, she also just had a baby. She's single and decided that if she hit 35 and wasn't married, she was going to do it on her own. So she's a single mom, and she's rocking it. She's-- I call her and talk to her, and she's like totally cool and collected about the whole thing. Just kind of letting everything-- she's just going with it. And she also-- she lost her mom a couple of years ago. So she's like really, really alone. And I think my mom has stepped in a bit to fill into that. And you know, just kind of about you know, families merging. When my mom came over here without her family, um (pause) uh she was basically totally taken into my dad's family. And my grandmother died a couple years ago, she got up and basically said like it's like losing her mother. Um and she called my grandparents mom and dad, and I don't feel like-- I would never feel comfortable calling Eric's parents mom and dad. There's just something different there in-- in our relationship. But-- but she totally felt like-- like she was, you know, their-- their daughter.

APRIL REYNOSA: And do you think that always-- she always felt that way? Was there ever a transition time? No, there always--?

TERESA ISH: Um I mean I'm sure there was, a little bit. But knowing my grandparents, they just brought her in. I mean it-- if the little I remember about my grandfather, I knew my grandmother. They probably folded her right in and kept on going with whatever they were doing. They um-- they've a-- they had always owned properties as investments. And so the family would get together and work. They co-owned it with, you know siblings and-- and that sort of the thing. The family would get together and work, and paint, and you know fix up the houses between winters and that sort of thing. And her pictures of my mom [35:00] like two weeks off the jet, painting a house. (laughter) Like you're-- you know, you're in it for better or worse. Like you're-- you're in the family and you're getting all of it right off the bat. Um (pause) so yeah. I-- and she's-- she helped them out when they were sick and you know, kept my mom encl-- and my grandmother enclosed when she was in a-- in a nursing home. Like made sure that she had stuff that she needed, and you know, I think it as just-- it was just how it went and that was her family.

APRIL REYNOSA: Mmhmm.

TERESA ISH: But yeah, I'm fairly close to my cousins. The one who is my age is kind of nuts in the like frat boy sort of way. So we're very different personalities despite my grandmother calling us double cousins because our dads are twins. Um we are like polar opposites in personalities, but they're-- he's really funny, and he and my sister do stuff all the time cause he lives in the Bay area. So she kind of goes-- hangs out with him with like a roll of her eyes and like an all right, here we go ahead. Let's see what antics we're up to this time. But it's all in good fun. So yeah, it's-- I-- I love my family. They're fantastic.

APRIL REYNOSA: That's great. This has been a wonderful life history.

TERESA ISH: Thank you.

APRIL REYNOSA: Yeah. It's--.

TERESA ISH: It's-- it's-- it must be really fun for you getting to kind of know all your friends much better.

APRIL REYNOSA: Absolutely. Yeah. This has been great. Um is there anything else I missed? There anything else you want to talk about?

TERESA ISH: I don't think so.

APRIL REYNOSA: OK.

TERESA ISH: We don't have that much life behind us yet.

APRIL REYNOSA: (laughter) Then we'll have to do this again in--.

TERESA ISH: I know. (laughter) Another 30 years.

APRIL REYNOSA: 20 years. Sounds good. OK. Well, then um thank you so much.

TERESA ISH: I'm happy to.

APRIL REYNOSA: Again, for being a part of this and contributing to this project. And um I'm going to sign off.

TERESA ISH: OK.

APRIL REYNOSA: OK. Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW