

Oral Histories of the Post-1965 Lives of Asian Americans in Idaho

The Reminiscences of
Paige Hong Yang Harwood

Asian American Comparative Collection
University of Idaho
2020

PREFACE

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Paige Hong Yang Harwood conducted by Kathy M. Min on July 30, 2020. This interview is part of the Oral Histories of the Post-1965 Lives of Asian Americans in Idaho project, conducted in partnership with the Asian American Comparative Collection.

Readers are asked to bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of the spoken word, rather than written prose. The following transcript has been reviewed, edited, and approved by the narrator.

Transcriptionist	Kathy M. Min
Narrator	Paige H.Y. Harwood
Interviewer	Kathy M. Min
Session Number	1
Location	Virtually through Zoom. Both participants called from Boise, Idaho.
Date	July 30, 2020

00:00:01

Q: Okay! Today is July 30, 2020. I'm Kathy Min, the interviewer, and I'm interviewing Paige. And we're both calling from Boise, but through Zoom. And the proposed subject is an oral history of Paige's life for the Asian American oral history project. So first question, what is your full name?

Harwood: My full name is Paige Hong Yang Harwood.

00:00:25

Q: And how do you spell your middle name?

Harwood: H-O-N-G Y-A-N-G.

00:00:32

Q: And when and where were you born?

Harwood: I was born in Yangzhou, China.

00:00:37

Q: And what date, do you know?

Harwood: February 8, 2001, is the day that was assigned but it might not be accurate.

00:00:48

Q: Yeah. And then, what is your current occupation / educational background?

Harwood: I'm currently a sophomore at Boise State University. I'm working as an orientation leader, but I also work at the Student Equity Center at the university.

00:01:07

Q: What are you majoring in?

Harwood: Film.

00:01:10

Q: Cool. What are the names of your [unclear]?

Harwood: Sorry, you cut out.

00:01:19

Q: Yeah, me too. What are the names of your parents?

Harwood: My mother's name is Jill White, and then my father's name is our Twain Harwood.

00:01:28

Q: And can you spell those?

Harwood: Yeah, so my mom's name, J-I-L-L W-H-I-T-E. And then my dad's name, T-W-A-I-N H-A-R-W-O-O-D.

00:01:44

Q: And how did you and your family come to Idaho?

Harwood: So my mom and dad were here already. And then they adopted me from China when I was about a year old.

00:01:56

Q: Do you know how long your family has been in Idaho for?

Harwood: I don't. I know that my dad, his family has been here for a long time, several generations. And then my mom's family is sort of in between Utah and Idaho. I know that we have family in both states.

00:02:18

Q: And for your dad's side, are they all based in the Boise area?

Harwood: No. So they're in Idaho Falls, in east Idaho.

00:02:27

Q: So did your dad also grow up in Idaho Falls then?

Harwood: Yeah. My mom grew up there too, actually.

00:02:35

Q: What years were they born?

Harwood: Oh gosh. I know that my mom was born in 1961 and my dad, I believe, is 1957.

00:02:46

Q: And what do your parents do for a living? And what is their educational background?

Harwood: So both of my parents have their bachelor's degree. My dad works—he's a “project manager” at this energy company over in Idaho Falls. It's called the site. That's what we call it. But I don't know the actual name of it. And then my mom is a technical editor for the Department of Environmental Qualities.

00:03:13

Q: Cool. What did they major in?

Harwood: My mom majored in English and my dad majored in business, I believe.

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Q: Do you have any siblings?

Harwood: I have one sister. She's also adopted.

00:03:28

Q: Cool. What's her name?

Harwood: Kellee Harwood.

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Q: And how old is she, and what's she up to these days?

Harwood: Well, she is 21. She's in college right now. She's three years older than me. She's doing political science, so she's not entirely sure what path she wants to take. But I know that she's working for the Idaho Young Democrats right now.

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Q: Is she also at Boise State?

Harwood: Yeah.

00:04:03

Q: And was she adopted from China as well?

Harwood: Mhm.

00:04:08

Q: And then, describe your family members to me.

Harwood: Okay. Like their personality-wise, or what?

00:04:16

Q: Yeah, yeah, that's good.

Harwood: Well, my mom is super hard-working and determined. She doesn't really know when to give up, I guess is a good way to describe it. She always has to be doing something. Whenever we've been in a house, she's always doing something with the house, whether it's remodeling or painting or something like that. My sister, she's pretty determined. She's really good at school. She likes to research things and she does that really thoroughly. We're not super close, but yeah.

00:04:59

Q: Yeah. And what's your dad's personality like?

Harwood: Oh yeah. My dad, he's funny. He's really relaxed and laid back. He likes to do outdoors things. He bikes and hikes, skis a lot. So things like that. Yeah, he's just really fun.

00:05:23

Q: So your dad's family is mostly in Idaho Falls, and then is your mom's family—does your mom have any family members in the Boise area?

Harwood: Her parents—my grandparents—live in Meridian, so basically the Boise area. But she's an only child, so I don't have any aunts or uncles or anything.

00:05:48

Q: And how did your parents end up in Boise from Idaho Falls?

Harwood: So my mom originally went to Idaho State [University] and then she just moved over to Boise, because that's where she got a job. And my dad went to Montana State [University] in Bozeman, and I think he just came to Boise because, again, jobs. And I believe that's where they met.

00:06:11

Q: They met in Boise?

Harwood: I think so—Meridian, probably.

00:06:17

Q: Do you know what year they met?

Harwood: I don't.

00:06:22

Q: Tell me a little bit more about your adoption. Do you know why your parents wanted to look into adoption from China?

Harwood: So I know that my mom and dad wanted to adopt because of personal reasons, but I think my mom chose China, because when she looked into all these other adoption agencies around Meridian as well as adopting internationally, a lot of them [have really complicated adoption processes]—she looked at Russia, and their adoption policy is really interesting in the way that if you adopt a child from there, you have to bring them back after a certain period of time, and I guess, leave them there. And she didn't want to do that. So, China's was sort of the easiest and streamlined, I believe is her reasoning.

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Harwood: And then she also had a friend who was from China, and he kind of worked with the adoption agency. So, she got involved with him, and that's how she got me. But as far as my actual adoption, I was supposed to be adopted when I was about six months old, but then that was in 2001, so 9/11 happened. And they actually had to delay it until February the next year,

which is when my birthday was. So I had my first birthday in China, which was kind of fun. But obviously I don't remember it.

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Q: Did your mom use the same adoption agency for you that she did with your older sister?

Harwood: Yeah, she did.

00:07:58

Q: And then, how did she have that friend that was Chinese and helped them with it [the adoption]?

Harwood: I don't know, honestly. Yeah, I don't know.

00:08:19

Q: Describe a typical family dinner to me. Do you eat together as a family? Who does the cooking? What are your favorite foods?

Harwood: Well, we usually eat dinner together, if we're not working at the time, because we all have crazy schedules sometimes. But we'll usually cook together. If we're making something, my mom will do the main part, like if it's meat or something, she'll do that part. And then my sister and I will make a salad or something on the side that's really easy. But sometimes my sister and I will cook. We really like cooking. I think that's just something that we've always sort of done together. So it's a bonding experience for all of us.

00:09:03

Harwood: And then, I mean, we're pretty nice to each other. So when we eat dinner, we just talk about things. We talk a lot about politics, but not in an angry way. I think it's really good. It's just discussion, you know. And I really appreciated that, even growing up that we were allowed to have opinions about these things, and we weren't hidden from politics, and we were always encouraged to express our interests and our opinions. So I really appreciated that.

00:09:36

Q: Also, do you know if your sister was adopted from the same area that you were?

Harwood: I know that she was adopted from Nanjing province, so the same province.¹ But I don't know exactly what city she was from.

¹ Paige later clarified that her sister was from the city of Nanjing, which is in the province of Jiangsu, the same province Paige was adopted from.

00:09:55

Q: And do you know how long the process [of Paige's adoption] took for your family?

Harwood: I don't.

00:10:02

Q: Is it something that you talk about a lot at home or ask them about, or not as much?

Harwood: Yeah, I ask a little bit. It's not it's not something that we talk about a lot, but not because it's a hidden thing or anything taboo or anything. I think we're just comfortable, you know, with what we know. And as for me, I know some things about the orphanage that I was from. I know a lot of little stories about me when I was a little baby and when they were in China and bringing me back over here. But the actual technical things that went behind the adoption and all those decisions, I don't really ask about.

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Q: Yeah. Do you want to share some of the stories that you were mentioning?

Harwood: Sure. Yeah, so I know that recently, my mom just found these papers that were given to her by the adoption agency that sort of described my personality and all those things in the orphanage. And I think some of the things that I thought were funny was that it said that I like to steal toys from other children. I was really close with my cribmates, so I guess I had a cribmate. And then I liked noodles, I guess, which is really funny to me.

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Harwood: But she said that—when she went to get my sister, she was really, really easy. She slept all the time, she was really quiet, and my sister was a really tiny baby, so they just had a really easy time with her. But then when they got me, I was kind of a nightmare because I was quite a bit older than my sister was when she'd been adopted, so I was a lot more aware of things. And so I screamed a lot. I was really noisy. I didn't sleep very often. So they would always have to wake up in the middle of the night to take care of me. And when I first came to America, I got sick. So they also had to deal with that. And my sister was three when they brought me back to Idaho.

00:12:05

Q: And then, how are holidays celebrated in your family and does your family have any special traditions?

Harwood: I think as far as holidays, we definitely celebrated them more when we were children. So we aren't a religious family at all, but we always did a really fun thing on Easter. I'm not sure why Easter was the chosen thing, but it was really fun, because we would do the “Easter Olympics” and we would have our family get together and we would just play games and all that. And then, Christmas was another pretty big deal for us and then Thanksgiving.

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Harwood: We didn't really celebrate other holidays. We would decorate things or give little gifts or sign cards, but it wasn't a huge part of our family. My mom tried to celebrate Chinese New Year, but she obviously wasn't part of the culture, so she didn't know a ton about it. And I think that she didn't want to appropriate anything or do anything like that. So it was just like giving the red envelope and just trying to learn about our heritage a little bit.

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Q: Yeah. And then do you know anything about the names in your family, like if there's a particular reason why your parents named you Paige or anything like that?

Harwood: I know that my mom just used baby books. I don't think—like we didn't go off of other family members or anything like that. So my sister's name is spelled really weird. It's Kellee, but it's K-E-L-L-E-E, and I believe that she [Paige's mother] saw that name on like a restaurant when she was in China and just really liked how it was spelled. And I think that's how my sister got her name. But I don't think there was any special way that she named us, honestly. Just goes off with names that she liked.

00:14:00

Q: Do you know if there's any meaning with your middle name?

Harwood: Well, I thought for a long time that Hong Yang meant “intelligent woman” or something, because that's what my mom said that she was told. But then I did some research into it and—of course, the characters could be different. I don't speak Chinese, or I don't read it or anything. So I don't know everything about that. But when I was looking up. It was saying that, well, for one, it's not a very common name. And so I think what it said on the Internet—which is, you know, more or less reliable—but it meant “ocean” or “sea” or something like that. Also that it was a boy's name, so I'm not really sure if I trust Google.

00:14:47

Q: Yeah. And do you know if your family has gone to China before you and your sister were adopted? And have you gone since being adopted?

Harwood: No. So that was the first time. My sister is the first time they've been in China. I was the second time, obviously. And then, no, I have not gone back.

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Q: If that's something that you or your family is interested in?

Harwood: Yeah, I think so. It's kind of interesting to me, because for the first part of my life, I think I didn't want to go back. It wasn't because I had any resentment or anything. You know, people will hear that I'm adopted and they'll think it's some really sad thing that they need to be sympathetic towards, and then they'll pretty much always follow the “Oh, you're adopted? That's so sad” question up with, “Do you want to go back?”

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Harwood: And I don't know, I think the fact that they thought it was such a sad thing just made me want to say, “No, I'm happy where I am. I really love my family. This is great. So why would I want to go back?” And so I think that's sort of built into my mind. But recently, as I've started to sort of realize my identity a little bit more and dig into who I am as an Asian American woman, I've come to terms that I think it would be really cool to go back. And not for any purpose to find my parents or anything like that. Just because it is a part of me, you know, and it's somewhere that I come from.

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Q: Are there any kind of family stories that people like to tell about your parents, or your grandparents, or your grandparents' grandparents, or something like that?

Harwood: Well, our family's actually really small. My mom, I said, was an only child. And then on my dad's side, he had two siblings, but one of them passed away a while ago. And then past that, my grandparents. But, you know, my great grandparents are all dead. And I didn't really get to know them very well.

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Harwood: And on my mom's side, they don't really share a lot of familial stories. I know that a lot of their history is a little bit rough and they definitely had some conflict, but they do on my dad's side. My parents are divorced, so I'm not always with him, but they always tell stories when I'm around—usually the ones that involve me.

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Harwood: So just recently I was over in Idaho Falls visiting my dad and my dad and my grandpa were talking about going fishing, because we always did that when we were children. And he

had this stupid “fish call” that he used to do, where he would whistle really loudly and do this clapping pattern to “call the fish over,” right? So that we could catch them if it was a slow day. And so just little things like that. But there's not any major story that any of us really hold on to.

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Q: So do you spend most of your time living with your mom, then?

Harwood: Yeah.

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Q: And if you don't mind me asking, do you know the circumstances of their divorce and when it happened?

Harwood: I don't know exactly. I know that I was pretty young when it happened. I was in first or second grade. But I think it was just different personalities and falling out of love kind of thing. They definitely fought. But all in all, I think their divorce was a lot easier than most people's. I never had to go to court to choose between which parent I wanted to live with. I know some people have stories like that. So I feel pretty lucky that theirs was a pretty easy and mutual breakup, and it didn't turn into anything. I mean, of course it was hard on them and it was hard on us, but I feel lucky that it wasn't worse than it was, you know. I don't know the exact reasons behind it.

00:18:57

Q: And of all the things that you've learned from your parents, is there anything you felt that was the most valuable lesson?

Harwood: I think just from my dad, I think keeping a good sense of humor and just being really open to listening to everybody is something that has really translated into who I am as a person. And then from my mom, just how hard working she is. Well, she didn't necessarily really press that into us, like, “You need to do all this.” I think just by doing it herself, she showed us that's how we should hold ourselves in our lives and do our best in all the jobs that we're doing and at school.

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Harwood: And I know that even though I don't have Asian parents. So I don't have that stereotypical “tiger mom,” which is a terrible stereotype, but, you know, it's a thing. But she did impress on us that grades were really important and school's really important. So I think just that kind of thing.

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Q: I'm in the “growing up / childhood” section of my questions. So first question is pretty broad, but how would you describe your experience growing up?

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Harwood: Well, so I grew up, the first part of my life, on this one-acre piece of land, and we had horses and we had several dogs and cats. So it was really nice. It was kind of almost rural, but we were in Meridian, so it was still pretty suburban. But I just remember it was really quiet. It was always just us, and the neighborhood around us was mostly senior elder people. So it was really quiet and I just really enjoyed being there. And so I remember that part of my life being really peaceful, I guess. And then once my parents divorced, we moved to a different neighborhood that was more suburban. And there was this kid next door that we always hung out with. And so that part was always more fun.

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Harwood: And then as I was getting into school more and moving from kindergarten, first grade, on, I think school was—I really liked it. Learning was always something that I attached myself to and just really enjoyed doing. One thing my mom always tells me is that whenever I would get mad, I would lock myself in a closet and just read the alphabet. I don't remember exactly what I did that. But I guess that was sort of my way to decompress.

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Harwood: I know that there's a lot of things that happened at school that I, looking back on, realize were not good things. But at the time, it was just fun. You know, kids don't really see those things as microaggressions or or things that are bullying or anything like that. But it definitely happened. But I think I was lucky in the way that it never got physical or anything like that. It was just, you know, teasing on the playground.

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Harwood: We had this chant that they used to do, where kids would pull up the corners of their eyes up and down, and be like, “My mother was Chinese, my father was Japanese,” or whatever. “Look what they did to me,” and pull it in opposite directions. And, you know, obviously, as a kid I thought, “That's really funny.” But looking back, I'm like, “That really affected me in a really negative way.”

00:22:49

Q: What were the schools that you went to, elementary through high school?

Harwood: So I actually went to a preschool as well, I think for just a year. I don't remember what it was called, but after preschool, I went to this school called Pioneer Elementary School, which is also in Meridian. And it's our "art-focused" school, I guess. So that was really cool. And I stayed there from kindergarten through fifth grade, and then I went to Heritage Middle School.

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Q: And what high school did you go to?

Harwood: Rocky Mountain [High School].

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Q: And tell me a little bit more about your house and your neighborhood that you moved to, like what the neighborhood was like. Was it diverse? And things like that.

Harwood: I feel like I remember it was really weird—not *weird*, but I'll explain. It wasn't diverse at all. It was pretty much only suburban white Mormon families. But then there was my mom and my sister and I, and then our next door neighbors were Hispanic, and then our other next door neighbors were Black. And then across the street, we had another family that was, I believe, also mixed like us, but they were Black, I believe. And then it was like that corner was sort of the only diversity in that neighborhood, which I thought was very always really weird that you know we all moved in together. We didn't know each other beforehand, but we all ended up sort of on that same corner.

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Harwood: But my sister and I pretty much only hung out with the boy that was with the Hispanic family next door, because he was the only one that was around our age. And there were other kids in the neighborhood, but we weren't really close to them, and we never really wanted to be too far away from our house. But it was a really nice neighborhood. It was a good place to grow up. It was taken care of. It was clean. It was nice. So it wasn't like we lived in poverty or anything. We were a pretty solid middle class family.

00:25:05

Q: Yeah, and you've touched on this, but how would you describe your friends growing up?

Harwood: I think I never really had a lot of really close friends. I was pretty social. I talked to a lot of people. But looking back, I don't consider a lot of them friends. They were just, you know, classmates, people that I was around all the time. So, of course I knew them.

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Harwood: I remember in kindergarten, I had this one friend who was also adopted from China. And so that was kind of something that we shared that brought us together, but she moved away after kindergarten. So we didn't stay in touch, because we were kids. And then after that, I think I just kind of had one or two really close friends and they were okay. I remember that there was definitely drama that I didn't care about, like kids being like, "Oh, we're 'dating.'" And I'm like, "I don't care. Why?" You know? And that was elementary school. So I was just kind of like, "I don't really care about this and you do, so we're not really that close anymore." I feel like I was a lot closer to the boys that I rode the bus with to school than I was to anybody actually at the school, besides those two close friends.

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Harwood: And then when I moved from elementary to middle school, they changed the school boundaries. So I was in a different district than the rest of the kids that I went to elementary school with, so I actually ended up going to a different middle school than they all did. And so I kind of had to restart and make new friends, which was fine. I spent a lot of time in the library, so I was really close to some other girls who really liked to read. And we just always spent our time in the library whenever we had free time. And I kept those friends pretty much through high school. We kind of separated a little bit, like we weren't as close as we were. And then one of them moved away, and so I made new friends. And then, of course, leaving high school, we're all in different colleges.

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Q: Would you say that most of your friends are white, or they all come from different backgrounds?

Harwood: Definitely white. Definitely majority white. I know that it's not my intention, of course, to not have that diverse friend group. And coming into college has been way different. I think I only have a couple friends who are white, in fact, and only a couple who are heterosexual, cisgendered. So college has definitely been a good experience to sort of expand my circle, but Meridian itself is not a very diverse area.

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Harwood: I remember the elementary school that I went to, I think I was one of maybe three Asian students in the whole school. There was maybe one Black student, a couple of Hispanic students, but obviously we're all different grades, different classes. So we didn't really interact all that much. And I always do think that was a little bit of a factor, because I had all these different experiences, especially as I got older and started to realize these different experiences, that they [Paige's classmates] couldn't relate to, that I couldn't talk to them about.

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Harwood: And of course, a lot of them are Mormon, and my family, not being religious, we're kind of shut out by that, because Mormons are very close-knit. They're supposed to hang around Mormon students. And so that was always something that sort of stood in the way of me and other students.

00:28:48

Q: And as always, thank you for sharing. Growing up, did you have a favorite toy or hobby or thing to do?

Harwood: Definitely reading. I think reading was one of the biggest things, and it stuck with me. I still read a lot. But it was one of my favorite things to do. I was always really close with the librarians at all of my different schools. Even the public library, all the librarians knew me there. And I ended up working there in high school, which was pretty great.

00:29:26

Harwood: Favorite toys—I was a stuffed animal kid. I wasn't really into dolls or anything like that. So I definitely had stuffed animals that I was really [attached] to. I actually have one in my room that I got when I came to America. My grandparents bought me this cow. They gave it to me when I got off the plane. And I still have that. But yeah, I don't think I really got super attached to any toys specifically, but reading was definitely big for me.

00:30:01

Q: And did you have any family chores or allowance or anything like that?

Harwood: I never had an allowance. I think that was—I never actually asked for it. So maybe my mom would have given me one, I don't know. Our chores were not explicitly set. We never were told, “You have to do the dishes every single day, or you have to do this every single day.” It was just expected that we do something, whether that was just cleaning our room, or cleaning up after ourselves after we've eaten, or been in the living room or something like that. And obviously if we were doing something really messy. I always was really into art projects, and so my mom was always like, “You have to clean it up. Otherwise, you're going to get paint everywhere.”

00:30:49

Harwood: And so just cleaning up after ourselves, making sure that we're keeping our areas tidy, and then helping out in some way. With dinner, it was if someone cooked, then whoever didn't cook had to wash the dishes. And so things like that, that were not super explicitly stated, but just kind of understood within us.

00:31:16

Q: Was there ever a moment that you “realized” you were Asian?

Harwood: I honestly don't think it was anything that anyone ever let me forget. With my mom, my family, I always knew that I was adopted. They never tried to hide it from me. How could they, of course? And it was really encouraged for my sister and I to read books that had Asian characters, or were from Asian stories, like Asian folktales and things like that. But at school, of course there was the chant that I said earlier. So it was always there, that I wasn't white. I knew that. I knew that race was a thing from a very young age, because it was something that separated me from everybody else. And while it didn't necessarily stop me from making friends or anything like that, I was just always so aware of it.

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Harwood: Something that I do now that I even realized is something that started from a very young age is when I would go outside, instead of squinting, I'll either close one eye or just keep my eyes as open as I possibly can, because I don't want to look like I'm squinting. Because that was always something that people were like, “Are your eyes even open?” Blah, blah, blah. So for me, I'll bear the sun before I squint or anything, or I'll wear sunglasses, right? So that's always something that is kind of interesting for me looking back on it. Obviously, I'm kind of trying to deconstruct that in my mind. But now it's just a habit. So it's not super—and I know that it doesn't affect me in the same way it did when I was younger.

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Q: Did you have any childhood heroes?

Harwood: I don't know. I know that in school, they always try to have you do those assignments and things. And I always just wrote it was my mom because I didn't really idolize anybody else, I think. My mom is not super social, so I was not exposed to a lot of different people. And I was not super social, so I was not exposed to a lot of different things. Besides books and reading, there wasn't anybody that was really this amazing person in my mind besides my mom, who was amazing because she took care of us and she worked and she did all these things for us. But I don't think there was any person outside of that that was so amazing to me.

00:34:15

Q: Did you ever felt like you were represented in school textbooks or in media?

Harwood: I think for me, it's interesting, the question of representation, because you can go to works and be like, “Look, there's an Asian person in there.” But it's like, how are they being

portrayed? I know that, for me, I didn't really like seeing Asian characters in movies or TV, because they were always portrayed as this mysterious, mystical person. Have you seen the movie *Freaky Friday*? The person that gives them the fortune cookie that creates it is this weird, interesting Asian lady from this Chinese restaurant. And so just that sort of “mystic Orient” stigma and stereotype was always present whenever I saw an Asian character. So I didn't really like that.

00:35:13

Harwood: In school, I think we didn't really learn about any kind of Asian history. We were told Chinese people built the railroads, and that was maybe it. But there weren't pictures of Asian folks in textbooks. We didn't learn about anything that was like the Chinese Exclusion Act. I never learned that in school. I only learned about that from work, because I started to work within diversity and inclusion and stuff like that. And so yeah, I don't think I really—I didn't learn a lot about my history as a Chinese woman from China, and I didn't learn about other Asian Americans' experiences here [in the United States] either.

00:35:59

Q: And then you also talked about there are ways that your mom tried to kind of introduce Chinese and Asian culture to you. So I'm wondering what your reflections are on those experiences?

Harwood: I think that it's obviously difficult, because as a white woman, she doesn't know the culture, and efforts that she does do could be appropriated and understanding from a white American view. I know that when we did Chinese New Year, it wasn't anything big. We would do the red envelope and all those different things, but I haven't really spoken about this to her, but I'm not sure that there was that understanding of why they do that in that culture. It was just like, “This is a cultural thing that they do. So we should do it too.”

00:36:59

Harwood: But I think we didn't really do a lot around trying to bring that culture to us. My mom kind of let my sister and I choose if we wanted to do things like that. And I think usually my sister and I said “no,” because to us as children, we weren't part of that culture. And so why did we have to learn about it? We didn't really want to. And I'm sure some of it was just about not wanting to have another thing that made us different from all the other kids.

00:37:30

Harwood: My mom was friends with these people who own this Chinese restaurant in Meridian. And so we would go over there, and we were pretty good friends with them. They knew us really well. They would always hang out with us and talk to us. And they were from China as well.

00:37:47

Harwood: Yeah, and just reading books that had Chinese characters and had Asian influences were written by Asian folks was probably the biggest thing that my parents did, which I think, looking back, is better than them trying to force us to learn all these different things about our culture, because of course we're not there. And they're not Asian, from that culture. So I would be worried that it would turn out worse than their intentions.

00:38:15

Q: Is there something that you wish you had that they didn't do, or you felt that was the best they did?

Harwood: I mean, I would have liked to learn Chinese probably. I know that it's hard to find language courses for kids, but at the same time it's not that hard if you're really trying. But again, it was kind of my sister's and my choice to not do that as children. Yeah, and I think just not learning languages in general is something that I regret. Just in general, not related to being Chinese anything. But yeah, I think there was no really good way that they could have done it, and there's no really bad way. So I think that they did well considering the circumstances. And so I don't try to fault them for anything. But I also don't try to praise them too much for anything. I'm not saying everything that they did was perfect.

00:39:26

Q: I'm not as familiar with a lot of things related to adoption and identity related to it. But I'm wondering, was there any kind of community that you experienced with other folks here adopted or anything like that?

Harwood: Yeah, we had an adoption group. So the group that my mom went over to get kids with, they were all from Meridian, because they were all connected to that one person. And so we would do meetups every year. So for both my sister and I, we knew other kids who've been adopted, and we were close to those families. But a lot of those people, that meeting was the only time that we saw each other. So I didn't really get super close to any of them. We were close to this one family who had adopted girls from China, but they weren't part of our group. And we were pretty close with them as children.

00:40:24

Harwood: And then my cousin is also adopted from China. My mom's aunt—so I guess my great-aunt? I don't really know—she saw that my mom had adopted and was like, “Oh, that sounds like a really good idea,” because she also can't have children, so she went and adopted a girl as well.

00:40:45

Harwood: But as far as that goes, we [adoptees in the adoption group] didn't ever really talk about being adopted. It was something that we shared. So it was something that we had a connection to. But we never really spoke about it. It was just something that brought us together more than anything. And I know that there were a set of twins at my school that were not adopted but they were Chinese as well. And we weren't really super close, because we were never in the same class.

00:41:18

Q: And then with the adopted groups, were most of the other people—were they also from China, or was it more of a mix?

Harwood: No, they were from China.

00:41:29

Q: Was it a group specifically for Chinese adopted families?

Harwood: I think so. I don't know a ton about the agency that they went through. Again, I don't know a lot about the technical stuff that went behind my adoption, but I believe it was just a connection between—they adopted us in Nanjing, I believe, from, I don't remember what big city. But it was connected specifically to Boise and that area. So it wasn't a global thing. It was just a really small, local thing.

00:42:09

Q: Did you ever meet kids who were adopted from places outside China?

Harwood: I didn't, no, actually. No, I can't think of any.

00:42:21

Q: And then, again, this is maybe more of a technical question, but did you just receive citizenship upon adoption?

Harwood: I believe so. So the place that went through got those papers all set up. In China, my mom went to the embassy and they got my papers. But, yes, I was a citizen when I first came to America.

00:42:57

Q: What was school like for you as a child? I know you've touched a lot about school experiences already, but things like best and worst subjects, school activities, sports, things like that.

Harwood: Well, our school, so it was called Pioneer School of the Arts. I don't know. It wasn't an art school, so I'm not entirely certain, but I know that was really art-focused and the teachers tried to incorporate that a lot into their classes. But it was pretty standard. We had one classroom. Our teacher would teach us different subjects. But I was not super involved in anything sporty or any sort of extracurricular activities. We had PE [physical education] and recess. That was the only physical activity I did in elementary school.

00:43:54

Harwood: I was definitely more of an academic type of student. Reading, I was always in the library. I was always doing art projects in the classroom. I remember it was mostly focused on general math, English, science, that kind of thing, instead of—so I don't remember learning a ton about history. We had American history, so we learned about the presidents and those general things, but we didn't learn any world history or anything really past the Revolutionary War to the Civil War era.

00:44:43

Q: Are there any communities that you identify with? And I think you can define “community” how you want to.

Harwood: Well as now, so you know I'm not religious still. I don't affiliate with anything. The groups I usually hang around are mostly associated with my work. So I said that I worked with the Student Equity Center on campus. It used to be the Multicultural Students Services. And so people that I meet through there are really awesome. So we focus about student diversity and inclusion on campus. We work towards that.

00:45:25

Harwood: And I really just like hanging out with those people, because we can talk about our different experiences as people of color in Idaho, from wherever they have come from, on campus. And so being able to share those different experiences is really valuable to me, because having Mormon white friends in high school and middle school, I could never really talk about that to them. And I think that's kind of the only community that I would say I identify with. I am a part of a lot of different things on campus, but none of those are really who I am, and they're just certain fun things that I do, you know?

00:46:06

Q: And then I'm in the "identity" portion of my questions. But you've touched on different racialized encounters in school, and so the question is have you ever encountered stereotypes or discrimination? You can answer or add on to it how you want.

Harwood: I think for me, microaggressions, stereotypes, and those things are the primary form of discrimination, I suppose is a way to put it, that I felt growing up in Idaho. There's not a lot of forward racism towards Asian Americans. I feel like obviously we have that model minority stereotype that "Asian Americans are really successful. And so this is what other people of color should 'strive to be.'"² And I think that the way that that presents is no one's racist towards Asian Americans, but all the things that happen to us are so subtle, but they just build, like with microaggressions. The "your eyes are really squinty," "you speak really good English."

00:47:20

Harwood: And then another thing that I was always really aware of going into middle school, high school, was the fetishization of Asian Americans and especially young Asian girls. And so that was something that was always really scary to me, and really stopped me from wanting to be in any kind of relationship, because I was always like, "Well, I don't know what their intentions are. I don't know." Because that was just the dialogue that I heard, like "Asian Americans in relationships are *that* sort of relationship." And that's what you get as an Asian American, that's sort of like—or you date another Asian person. And so, I was always sort of steered away from relationships and dating and that kind of thing.

00:48:10

Harwood: And then, that we're bad drivers, that all we do is like we're really good at math. We all play the violin and that kind of stuff. You know, hearing it, it doesn't sound like it's super damaging, but after you hear it so often and after it's been so ingrained in you your whole life, it really starts to affect how you think about who you are as a Chinese person.

00:48:43

Q: Yeah. Were these things that you heard in popular media or from classmates? Where were you hearing these sentiments?

Harwood: Honestly, it was kind of everywhere. And, you hear it on the internet, and especially with social media, things like Tumblr and Twitter and all those things, and people just constantly commenting things.

00:49:08

² During the transcription review, Paige further clarified that this sentiment "misrepresents how Asian Americans are treated in America. It indicates that no one is racist towards Asian Americans."

Harwood: And then in school, a lot of people would ask me about these different things. And obviously their intention was most likely not to harm or to be discriminatory or racist or anything like that. But it was just like every person that I encountered, that I talked to, that I started to meet, that I started to get to know, would want to ask me about these things. And after a while, I just got so tired of it that I stopped wanting to talk to people.

00:49:36

Harwood: So for me it was like, I had this one person ask me if I saw less than them because my eyes were smaller. And I'm like, well, I didn't know how to respond when I was that age, because I was really young still at the time. And I was like, "Well, I don't know, maybe. I don't know how much you see." And I didn't know how vision works. So just things like that. And just always people feeling like I knew everything, and then they were entitled to me telling them everything that I knew, when, of course, I was a child and I didn't. When my parents first brought me to America, actually, as a baby, people would ask them if I spoke Chinese, even though I was a one-year-old baby. They'd be like, "Well no, she doesn't speak anything."

00:50:29

Q: Is race something that you talked about with your mom or your sister?

Harwood: Not really. Like I said, my sister and I aren't super close. We grew up together. We love each other. We're family. But we never really talked about those kinds of things. And so, being able to find people who do in high school and college—I worked at this one place called the Idaho Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence, and they were really awesome because they held these spaces for students like me. And so we could just express those things and talk about it, because, no, I didn't really talk about it with my mom, and I didn't really talk about it with my sister. It was partly because my mom didn't know what was happening, because I didn't tell her, because I didn't realize that it was a bad thing. And then just with my sister, I didn't know if it was happening to her. So I just never brought it up because I didn't see it as something that was bullying or anything like that.

00:51:31

Q: And then you've also touched on this already, but how would you characterize the role of gender and sexuality in your life?

Harwood: So for me, I identify as pansexual. And that was kind of a recent development, because in my family—so my mom has always been really open towards that. And I've kind of always knew about it. For me, it wasn't ever a shock that I learned that gay people exist. I know that some people have stories about learning what a same sex relationship is and being like,

“That's so confusing to me.” And I think part of it is me not growing up in a religion. I know that Mormonism has its own sort of dialogue around all of that.

00:52:20

Harwood: And so for me, it was never something that was taboo or bad. It was just that people have same-sex relationships the same way that my parents have a relationship. For me, it wasn't anything that was ever strange. It was kind of like being adopted. It wasn't ever something that was told to me. It was just something that existed. And so I never really felt the need to “come out” to my parents or anything, because I knew that they would be totally fine with it and I was always comfortable with it. And then, in addition to me not being in a relationship or dating or anything like that throughout my life, so it was never something that I thought about a lot, as far as my sexuality. But definitely that.

00:53:04

Harwood: So I'm cisgendered, female. But that was honestly not as big of a part of me. I think that obviously feminism is a huge part of what I believe and what I support. But it [gender] was never something that held me back in any way. Obviously, there was the kids on the playground that were like, “Girls can't do this,” or whatever. But it wasn't something that affected me as much as my race did or even my sexuality did.

00:53:44

Q: You've talked about how your friends in high school were mostly Mormon and white and how now it feels like it's a lot more diverse. So, how would you say that you get along with white people?

Harwood: I'm sorry, can you repeat that?

00:54:01

Q: Yeah! The question is how do you feel you get along with white folks?

Harwood: I've always, you know, been surrounded by white people. And so I'm really comfortable around them. I know, as I've grown up, I've kind of learned how to navigate conversations with them as far as who I am as a person. And people still asking me questions, I know how to navigate that now.

00:54:33

Harwood: But I think coming to college, and as I've grown up and become more aware of the political climate and what's been happening in America and things like that, I've become a little bit more wary around white folks. Not for any personal reason, of course. I would never be like,

“I’m not going to be your friend because you’re white.” And I always—I’m open to being friends with someone, but I just have found in the last couple years with the people I’ve surrounded myself with, just share similar ideologies as me and share similar experiences with me. And generally they just don’t tend to be white.

00:55:12

Harwood: So while I don’t fault any white person or anything, and obviously, my parents are white, it’s something that I am a little bit cautious of, as far as I don’t know how they think of me. I don’t know how much they know about privilege and all the kind of things that I started learning about that—of course not everyone has to think the same way as I do. But I’m always a little bit afraid that I’m just going to run into someone who’s severely racist or severely against everything that I’m [for]. So, I take those relationships with a little grain of salt, I guess.

00:55:55

Q: How would you describe the ethnicity of your friends these days?

Harwood: Definitely majority POC. And if they’re not POC, I’m pretty sure they’re all queer in some way. I’m trying to think of everyone that I’ve befriended. But I have a couple friends who are Mexican, Hispanic, Latinx. I have a couple friends who are Black. I’m just a lot of international students as well. And so I know some people from Nigeria, Vietnam, just different places around the world, which I really love talking to them about their experiences as well.

00:56:40

Harwood: But yeah, I like having those diverse experiences and those different things. Because a lot of students that I know who are white and straight, cisgendered, especially if they’re from Idaho, they have a lot of experiences that I kind of already have had in my life. And so it’s not anything new when I speak to them. And yeah, I think that just being surrounded by all these different people is really awesome.

00:57:15

Q: You say you’re also in a lot of spaces that you would call queer spaces, and so I’m wondering, what are your reflections on being in those spaces? Why is it something that it’s emerged through college? Things like that.

Harwood: Definitely—so the space that I work in is right next to the Gender Equity Center here on campus, which deals with gender-based violence and also LGBTQIA issues and things like that. And so I meet a lot of people through that, as well as MSS [Student Equity Center].

00:57:52

Harwood: And I think as far as it emerging in college, for me it wasn't something that I thought about a lot, as far as my sexuality and relationships and dating—I said that already, I guess. It's also just become more, I think, present in everyday life. I think a lot of people are being more willing to accept that part of them, or tell more people about it, be more open about it. We have pride parades all around the world and things like that. So even just for personal reasons, I think a lot of people in college are going through a lot of identity changes and accepting different things about themselves. And so it's sort of a natural thing, I think, that people start being more open about all that stuff in college.

00:58:56

Q: Do you think there's a difference in how you relate to different ethnic groups or different people of color? For example, do you feel like you have a different kind of relationship with Asian Americans or Chinese Americans versus another group?

Harwood: I don't know if I would say it was any different than just natural being different with different friends would be. I don't think it's based on their ethnicity that I change my personality or whatever. I don't remember, there's a psychological thing for that, but you know how we adapt to different groups of people, right? I don't think that I base it on their ethnicity. Unconsciously, possibly, but as far as me trying to be more aware of everything that I'm doing, I don't think I interact with anyone differently based on their ethnicity. And that's not to say that I don't ever. Of course I want to take accountability and say that I'm not perfect. But I'm trying to be more aware of, you know, that happens.

01:00:04

Harwood: I do think that with other students who are Chinese or who are adopted, I tend to be a little bit closer or want to be closer with them, just because we have that connection, because that's part of my identity. It's part of their identity. So I think that would be sort of the only reason I connect with someone, based on their ethnicity.

01:00:31

Q: And then, do you see yourself as Asian American? Do you feel like that label is appropriate for you? [Do you identify as] Chinese American, just American, et cetera?

Harwood: Yeah, I definitely say Asian American, or I'll say Chinese American. And I know that to say "Asian" is such a broad term. I think people don't really think about it, but Asia's the biggest continent on this planet, and it has the majority of people on that continent as well. And so it incorporates so many different ethnic groups. So I'll usually be a little more specific and say that I'm Chinese American.

01:01:20

Harwood: But also, just being comfortable with saying that I'm Asian is really cool for me because that's not something that I was always comfortable with. It [being Asian] was always there, so I could never deny it, but I didn't like to say it, I guess. But yeah, I'll say it now.

01:01:43

Q: You were also saying you, growing up, didn't want to associate as much with Chinese heritage and culture. And so you're saying these days that's something you feel a little differently about. And I'm wondering, if you've changed your approach to it, how has it changed for you?

Harwood: I definitely changed my approach to it. I think it's changed my entire life. I try to involve myself more in things that affect me, an Asian American citizen. And just trying to learn history about adoption in American history, about Asian American history, Chinese history, things like that.

01:02:35

Harwood: And I want to still acknowledge that obviously I grew up in a white family. And I'm not in China. So I didn't grow up with that culture and anything. So I am always careful that I don't want to appropriate anything, and I want to be respectful to that, because it's not my culture. My culture is the American culture, right? But it is my heritage. So I like to learn about it, though I don't practice it or anything, because I feel like that would be false and come off as me trying to become something that I'm not. And I think it would be a little disrespectful, even, to the people who have that culture and are a part of that. I've definitely changed my approach to it throughout the years, and I've become more comfortable learning about it and become more comfortable talking to people about it.

01:03:31

Q: I'm in the "looking forward" section of my questions. So how is the world today different from what it was like when you were a child?

Harwood: Well, very, very different. As far as my perspective I've definitely become a lot more aware of things that are going on politically, socially, different things. Obviously, as children, we don't read the news every single day. And so, as I've grown up, I do start reading the news and I get involved in politics and voting and things like that. But as a kid, I think I just didn't really care about it all. I didn't want to know about it. And I think that's a natural kid thing, but also, just for me, not wanting to be associated with all that and not wanting to do that. But I think that when I was younger, I just wanted to do what kids do, like run around at recess and at the playground every single day, and not have any responsibilities, and not think about the things that I didn't like thinking about.

01:04:51

Harwood: And so, as I've become more involved and started learning more about politics and different things that affect who I am and how it affects other people around me, I try to do my best to put myself out there and support the causes that I want to believe in. And also just be louder, I guess, is a good way to put it, because I think we're taught to stay quiet as kids about race and gender and sexuality, because we don't want to have those conversations, because we don't want to teach our kids those things. And so just learning that you know it's okay to talk about these things, like let's destigmatize all this stuff and actually have conversations. And so that's probably the biggest thing that's changed for me since I was a kid, just being able to express and have a voice in all these issues.

01:05:55

Q: And obviously we're calling at quite a major point in human history with COVID-19, so I was wondering has COVID affected you or your family in any way?

Harwood: I think it's interesting. I know that violence towards Asian Americans had increased at the beginning of the year, and we don't hear about it as often, because the Black Lives Matter movement of course is huge right now as well. But for me, at the beginning of COVID, it was definitely just feeling so uncomfortable with people saying it was the Chinese virus and getting stares on the street, or in grocery stores, feeling unsafe, like everyone was just expecting me to do something or give them a virus or whatever. I've had people avoid me in stores. And now, since we've done it for several months, it's not something that I notice anymore, because everyone's avoiding everybody.

01:06:56

Harwood: But at the beginning of it, it was definitely more obvious, because there'd be groups of white folks together, and they would just all see me and spread out or not try to be around me or anything like that, or go down a different aisle and things like that. And so, I'm glad that I'm comfortable enough with my identity that I understand a lot of the things that go into those racial sort of ideologies and so it hasn't affected me in a super negative way. I'm just more aware, I guess.

01:07:34

Q: And then, yeah, I think another obviously major part of this historical moment is the Black Lives Matter protests. I'm wondering what has been your experience with these protests? Have they caused reflection for you, for your family? Have they caused certain conversations? Things like that.

Harwood: Definitely has increased conversations for me, just with everyone around me. Talking to my roommates, talking to my parents, talking to just all my different friends about all these things. And social media is huge of course. Everyone's sharing these different resources and stories and information. And right now it's just kind of a cesspool of all this awesome information about all these different things and these resources that people can go to if they want to learn more about issues like this.

01:08:35

Harwood: So, for example, when the Black Lives Matter movement started,³ it was Asian Pacific Islander month. And so I was working on this zine, which is just a collection of stories about an Asian American experience from all these different students on campus. And we decided that we were going to delay it, because at the time, we didn't want to take away any kind of value or attention for the Black Lives Matter movement. And we wanted to respect it for what it was, which was this movement that really needed to happen, and that so many Black people—that their experiences were being so ignored that they deserve this spot. They deserved to have their voices at the time.

01:09:22

Harwood: And it's definitely—it's been interesting because I think around these times, this is really where those model minority stereotypes pop up. Because people are so angry, and there's so many emotions, and people are learning so much, that it's like all the issues that affect other people of color kind of get pushed on the backburner, which is fine. Personally, I obviously support the Black Lives Matter movement, and I'm not going to try to put my voice above theirs.

01:10:00

Harwood: But I feel like it has kind of—for me, it makes it harder for me to talk about my experiences, because I feel like I'm invalidating other people's experiences at this moment. And so I'm okay not speaking about my experiences, but I do hope that people are still thinking that it's not just Black folks anymore. Obviously the movement that's happening right now, but it's just the start of something that could be a lot bigger. So that's kind of what I'm hoping.

01:10:34

Q: I think I want to ask a few more questions about your sexuality, if that's okay. Was there ever a moment that you came out to your mom or didn't?

³ Paige is referring to the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020; Black Lives Matter first gained prominence in 2013 and 2014 after the killings of Trayvon Martin and Michael Brown. From Rachel Hartigan, "She co-founded Black Lives Matter. Here's why she's so hopeful for the future," *National Geographic*, July 8, 2020, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/2020/07/alicia-garza-co-founded-black-lives-matter-why-future-hopeful/>.

Harwood: No, I haven't. No. I think that if I ever date someone that's not a male, then I'll just, you know, and they'll [Paige's family will] meet them [Paige's partner], and they'll just know then. I think that I've been lucky in the way that I feel comfortable enough to do that with my family, but I know that they'll support me through that, because I know so many people are so scared of that, because they don't know how their families are going to react. And so I definitely felt comfortable with that, and feel fortunate that my parents are supportive of that and of me.

01:11:30

Harwood: But no, I never really felt the need to do that. I think my opinion for me has always been straight people don't have to come out to their parents, so why should non-straight folks have to do it? Obviously, I understand, parents have different ideologies and things. But that's just always been my hope, that eventually we could get to a point where it [any sexuality outside of heterosexuality] doesn't have to be something that is different that has to change in a person. It could just be them, right? And it doesn't matter who they date or who they fall in love with or who they want to become.

01:12:07

Q: Yeah, and then you're also saying that being pansexual is something that you've just always known about, kind of the same way that you've always known about your race. And so I'm wondering maybe if you could give an anecdote or something, just to kind of clarify how it was something you always knew. If there was a moment like, "Yeah, this makes sense to me," or something like that.

Harwood: I don't know if it was something that I explicitly knew about. I never as a kid was like, "I like girls and boys and all these different people." But for me, I thought about boys and girls kind of in the same way. And non-binary or whatever, but that was not really a concept that I knew about as a child.

01:12:55

Harwood: And so obviously—I keep bringing this up—but me not wanting to be in a relationship or even being interested in it really was a huge part of that, as far as my sexuality not affecting me because relationships were not affecting me. Thinking about other people was not something that I was doing very often, or at all. And so, as I've gotten older, started thinking about relationships and things, it's been more like—always was like why would I care if I dated a boy versus a girl? I don't think that matters to me. It's more about personality, like if I like them as a person. I don't care about their gender.

01:13:43

Harwood: And so I was always a little bit unsure. I didn't really want to say that I was pansexual or anything, because again, I've never been in a relationship. So I didn't really know, is this me being, "Oh yeah, I wouldn't care," or is this actually something that is part of my identity? So it was just interesting how it developed, just sort of grew as far as—I can't really say that there was ever a moment that I was like, "Oh, okay. Interesting." But there also wasn't like I always knew, I guess. If that makes any sense.

01:14:22

Q: Yeah. And have you been involved in LGBTQIA activism?

Harwood: I try to, as much as possible. I know that Idaho specifically, just recently had this whole thing about these three anti-trans bills that were going through the legislature.⁴ So I did a lot of campaigning against those. One of them did end up passing, so we're trying to work against those as well—to get it repealed.

01:14:57

Harwood: And I try to support all of my different friends and their identities and I try to support any—if they want to talk to me or anything like that. But the Gender Equity Center is really awesome, because they do events and things. And I've worked with them a little bit, just in partnership with MSS or Student Equity Center and Gender Equity. So that, I think, is the biggest part. But yeah, I try my best.

01:15:29

Q: Yeah. And then I'm wondering, have there been any sort of influences on you in terms of your identity, like things on social media, the internet, particular TV characters, or anything like that?

Harwood: Social media, probably, definitely huge. I think I can sort of trace back to where I started getting interested in all these different activities and things to when I got on Instagram, because I was suddenly exposed to all these different things. I was really late to the social media party. I didn't get Instagram until I was in high school. But after I got that, suddenly there was so much information and so many different things that I was suddenly exposed to. And that

⁴ On March 30, 2020, Idaho governor Brad Little signed into law HB 500, which bans trans girls and women from competing in women's sports, and HB 509, which would prevent trans people from changing their sex on birth certificates. HB 465, which would make gender-affirming surgery a felony, did not pass. From Betsy Z. Russell, "Gov. Little defends two anti-transgender bills he signed into Idaho law," *KTVB7*, April 8, 2020, <https://www.ktvb.com/article/news/local/capitol-watch/governor-little-defends-transgender-bills/277-c6200fdc-b0b5-47c6-8807-06d18a74a50f>; Joe Parris, "Crowd packs Idaho Capitol hearing for gender surgery legislation," *KTVB7*, February 25, 2020, <https://www.ktvb.com/article/news/local/208/crowd-packs-idaho-capitol-for-gender-surgery-legislation-hearing/277-8a9317d4-cc1f-4080-bc4a-d9939590bcf0>.

definitely helped start my interest and started me getting—educating myself and learning all these different things. And yeah, is there anything else you want me to say?

01:16:40

Q: No, no, I think all your answers make a lot of sense to me. And I think we can talk a little bit about your life in college. So, yeah, we can start [with] is there a reason why you wanted to go to BSU, and is there a reason why you're studying film?

Harwood: It's actually kind of interesting. So I never wanted to go to Boise State. I always wanted to go out of state and experience something different, because I've been here my whole life. In fact, I never even thought about going to Boise State once. It was not part of my plan whatsoever. But I think when I was applying to colleges, I just didn't really know what I was doing. I didn't know what I wanted to pursue. So I was just applying to colleges in cities that I liked. And so I ended up not being able to afford any of those schools or anything like that. And that's kind of how I ended up here, and I had to apply really late, because I missed the deadline, but they keep their application open, I guess—which was good for me.

01:17:47

Harwood: And then, I started as a biology major, because I didn't know what I wanted to do, but I just felt like I had to declare something. Looking back, I don't know why I didn't just say I was undeclared. That would have made it a lot easier for me. But I didn't. And then I took two film classes my first semester, and that's kind of how I started getting interested in it. It was always something I've really enjoyed. But to me, it was just like, “Well, I'm never going to get a job in film. I'm in Boise, Idaho. How am I supposed to get into that industry?” And so it was always something that I was like, “Well, it's just not possible. So I can't do it.” But definitely talking to advisors and talking to teachers and sort of coming to terms with the fact that, if it's something I want to do, then I should just go for it, you know —helped me make my decision.

01:18:43

Harwood: And yeah, being in college has been interesting. I think I am fortunate to be at Boise State rather than any other college, because I don't have to adapt to living in a new state or living somewhere really far away from home. And instead, I can focus all of my energy on all these different things like my academics and my work. And so I feel fortunate for that. And of course it's cheaper here, so financials are not really an issue for me now that I'm at Boise State.

01:19:23

Q: And what accomplishments are you the most proud of?

Harwood: Well, I think what I'm most proud of is just how much I've been involved in, I guess. I haven't really led any “social movement,” haven't organized a march or anything like that. But I am really—I am proud of the way that you know I am able to support those movements, even if it's just attending. Being a part of the Coalition Against Domestic Violence and the Equity Center has provided opportunities to get more involved in the back end, the actual creating those events, which has been really awesome. So those definitely are some of my favorite accomplishments.

01:20:16

Harwood: I know that when I worked at the Idaho Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence—it's a long name—we worked on this project. So Boise High School, here in Boise, used to have a Native American [Chief] head as their mascot. And so they were called the “Braves.” And so we were working to get them to remove that symbol as their mascot, and then also to remove as much as we could get them to from their school about appropriation of these Native lands and Native Americans. And so I helped with that. And they ended up, you know, taking it down, which was really awesome.⁵ And it was a huge success for everybody. So that was really cool to be a part of.

01:21:02

Harwood: We did—Martin Luther King became a state holiday or something like that, because previously, I think it's a national holiday, but not really a “state” official holiday here in Idaho. But they made it one this year. So that was really cool. And we had a march for that.⁶ And just things like that, I'm really proud of being a part of.

01:21:37

Q: What would you consider the most important and meaningful event or experience of your life?

Harwood: My whole life! That's definitely a hard one. I guess for meaningful event, definitely when I was a freshman in high school I attended the first women's march that was in Boise because of Trump's election.⁷ And so that was kind of what opened my eyes to this other world,

⁵ Boise High School modified their mascot in 2019. From Michael Lycklama, “The Boise Braves are no more. Meet the new mascot for one of Idaho's oldest schools,” *Idaho Statesman*, August 12, 2019, <https://www.idahostatesman.com/sports/high-school/article233803682.html>.

⁶ On January 20, 2020, Governor Brad Little formally proclaimed the day to be Martin Luther King Jr./Idaho Human Rights Day. From Betsy Z. Russell and Harrison Berry, “Idaho marks MLK/Idaho Human Rights Day,” *Idaho Press*, January 20, 2020, https://www.idahopress.com/news/local/idaho-marks-mlk-idaho-human-rights-day/article_259958da-8cc0-5506-b265-7be6da6510d8.html.

⁷ On January 21, 2017, about 5,000 Boise and Idaho residents attended the Boise Women's March. There were at least 653 reported marches in the US, with an estimated 3 to 5 million attendees nationwide. From Katy Moeller and

was that all these people—even though we were in Idaho—all these people believed a lot of the same things that I believed, even though I never really explicitly stated it, and it was just something that I believed. But I didn't know anybody else who believed the same things. And I didn't know how to talk about it.

01:22:36

Harwood: And so that event, being around all those different people and hearing those speeches from people, really made me realize, “There’s this whole community out here that I can reach out to, that I could be a part of.” And so I think that was probably the most impactful for me, just because it was what opened the door for my identity development and also just me, learning about the world and becoming a part of it.

01:23:12

Q: And what is one thing you want people to remember about you?

Harwood: Well, I don't know. I think, if anything, I just want people to think that I am a good person, I guess. I mean, everyone wants to be considered a good person, but I think it'll be easier—I don't want people to think that I was not supportive of causes like this, or that I didn't care about anything like this. I want people to know that I tried my best to use my privilege and my statuses—you know, Asian American middle-class person, able bodied—and I tried to uplift other people's voices, and I tried to do all these things.

01:24:10

Harwood: I mean, that makes me sound like I'm trying to brag or be like a “saint” or anything like that, but I'm absolutely not. I just want to do my part to make this world better for everyone, because it's not great. And I know a lot of people have it much worse than me. So just trying to do what I can to use the privilege that I’ve been given to help others.

01:24:36

Q: Can you see yourself staying in Boise or Idaho in the long-term?

Harwood: Probably not. Once I graduate. I'll probably either think about graduate school, and I'll probably go to film school, or I'll try to get a job with a studio or someone like that. I think that for film, it is something that, personally, I think it's more important to get experience in than it is

Nicole Blanchard, “5,000 attend Boise’s Women’s March: ‘[Trump] is our leader now. ... It’s important we have a voice,” *Idaho Statesman*, January 21, 2017, <https://www.idahostatesman.com/news/local/community/boise/article127984764.html>; and Erica Chenoweth and Jeremy Pressman, “This is what we learned by counting the women’s marches,” *Washington Post*, February 7, 2017, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/02/07/this-is-what-we-learned-by-counting-the-womens-marches/>.

to learn about in class, because you can learn about all these different things and you can learn about all these film techniques, but unless you're actually using them and practicing them and working in the field, I don't think that it's really as valuable. So I'll probably try to get a job, more likely, and yeah, those are all in big cities.

01:25:30

Q: And what are your dreams and visions for your future?

Harwood: With a film degree, I'd really like to go into directing or something like that. I want to do film because I think that media has such an influence over people. And with the representation thing, seeing yourself on screen instead of the same racist standard white person that you see every time.⁸ Every movie is really important for younger people, and I really want to be able to tell stories that wouldn't normally be told and to give people those opportunities to be on screen and have their stories told. So that's what I'd really like to do.

01:26:28

Q: So I'm kind of at the end of my questions, so the last question is just, is there anything you feel like we haven't covered? If so, you can just take this space to talk about something.

Harwood: I mean, out of my 19 years of life, obviously, we didn't cover everything, but I don't know if there's anything else that I have to say, I guess. Yeah, obviously, my race has always been something so obvious that it's always been a part of me and always been something that I've known about. And I'm really thankful for things like this where we get to express those experiences and to be able to share our stories, because that's kind of what I'd like to do eventually. So yeah, thank you.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

⁸ Although representation of women and people in color in films have slightly increased as of 2019, compared to previous years, directors and executives remain overwhelmingly white and male. Jessica Wolf, "2020 Hollywood Diversity Report: A different story behind the scenes," *UCLA Newsroom*, February 6, 2020, <https://newsroom.ucla.edu/releases/2020-hollywood-diversity-report>.

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