

People's History of the I.E.

Interview Summary

Item Number: 2025.001.003

File Name: 2025.001.003_Meiko_Inaba_Transcript_Womens_History

Interviewee:

Meiko Inaba

Interviewer:

Kahleia Corpuz and Cathy Gudis

Interview Date:

February 27, 2026

Interview Location:

Riverside, CA

Interview Summary completed by:

Kahleia Corpuz, 2026

Description:

Meiko Inaba was born in 1938 in Hollywood, California. She was about 4 years old when she was incarcerated at the Santa Anita Racetrack, later being transferred to Heart Mountain, Wyoming. From there, she grew up in Gardena until she went to study at UCLA and briefly taught for a while before moving to Riverside after she got married in 1961 to Mitsuru Inaba. When she first moved to Riverside to the Inaba farm, it was a big change from her life in the Los Angeles area, and she talked about how isolating it was. When she moved into her current home, she was met with racial discrimination regarding the housing prices and vandalism that depicted racial slurs. Later, she got involved with the Japanese American community through her children's schooling through the PTA, later meeting Sumi Harada and getting involved with the Riverside chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL). She helped the JACL in preparing for the Sendai festival, Thanksgiving, Christmas parties, and Easter Egg Hunts for the community. She is also very active in historic and cultural preservation. Her father-in-law had

saved a lot of the documents associated with the Inaba property as well as photos, and she was able to donate some of the materials to the Harada House and UCR.

Subject Topic:

- Activism
- Affirmative Action
- Agriculture
- Asian American
- BIPOC
- Civil Rights Activism
- Community Life in Riverside
- Cultural Celebrations
- Discrimination
- Farming
- Harada House
- Housing Discrimination
- Internment
- Japanese Americans
- Japanese WWII Incarceration
- March Air Force Base
- Racial/Ethnic Discrimination
- Racism
- University of California, Riverside
- Vietnam War

Key Organizations:

- Japanese American Citizens League (Riverside Chapter)
- Harada House
- University of California, Riverside

Spatial Coverage:

Spatial coverage refers to the geography covered by the interview. Add general locations (street names, cities, areas, etc.) and addresses – use newspaper searches & google searches to find addresses when possible (but note source).

Name of Site (if relevant)	General Location/Address
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West Side Market	Los Angeles County (Calif.)
Inaba Ranch	Rubidoux, Riverside (Calif.)
University of California, Riverside	Riverside (Calif.) / 900 University Ave, Riverside, CA 92521
Woodcrest Area	Riverside County (Calif.)
Riverside Plaza	Riverside (Calif.) / 3639 Riverside Plaza Dr, Riverside, CA 92506
Canyon Crest Town Centre	Riverside (Calif.) / 5225 Canyon Crest Dr, Riverside, CA 92507

Temporal Coverage:

1940s - 2020s, primarily 1960s-1970s

Related Materials:

N/A

Interview Index:

Media Format	Time (hh:mm:ss)	Topic Discussed
Transcript	00:03:57 - 00:09:21	Brief mention of Heart Mountain concentration camp, early life in Los Angeles / Gardena / Hollywood, family produce stand in Hollywood and Redondo Beach
Transcript	00:09:21 - 00:17:32	Early life in Riverside, living on Inaba farm
Transcript	00:17:32 - 00:21:38	Community engagement
Transcript	00:21:38 - 00:40:30	Political activism and ideology, brief talk of Vietnam War, affirmative action, racial discrimination, housing discrimination
Transcript	00:40:30 - 01:00:22	Being Japanese American in Riverside, Japanese American cultural preservation, JACL, Sendai Festival

Transcript	01:00:22 - 01:15:34	Historic and cultural preservation work, oral history
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Full interview transcript can be found below.

Cathy Gudis: [00:00:02] Okay.

Kahleia Corpuz: [00:00:04] I'm also going to record on my end. So after I say a question, I'll end up muting just so I can have the audio recording from my speakers. But just to start us off for right now, just to introduce this, it's My-ko. Is that correct?

Meiko Inaba: [00:00:20] Meiko.

Kahleia Corpuz: [00:00:22] Okay, Meiko. Alright, awesome. So hi Meiko, thanks for talking with us today about your life and memories of living in Riverside so we can learn more from you about the history of the region. We are especially interested in talking with you because of your experiences working and living in the Inland Empire. We believe that when you tell the stories of your life, you'll contribute to the education of younger generations. We would like to record and archive this interview to make it available for other students, teachers, and your own family members. Our process, as we said before, is that after the interview, we will send you a copy of the audio and the transcript for you to review. If you would like remove sections because they are sensitive or you have any other revisions, then you can mark up the transcript so we can make those changes. If at any time afterwards you wish to remove the recording from the digital archive, you can let us know, and we will take it down and either destroy the recording or save it for a later time. This information is in the permission slip that you will have a copy of afterwards. But overall, we think that this project is vital because unless we understand the racial, ethnic, gender and religious diversity of the Inland Empire from its very beginning to present. We won't be able to fully understand how this area developed and the important piece of U.S. History this region plays. We hope these oral history conversations will help you build community between generations and preserve historic knowledge. We know that you were previously interviewed by another UCR student, Carol Park, related to Catherine Violet Kim and the friendship between your families and Alison Wells for the Harada House. We hope that this interview does not feel repetitive, hopefully not. But just to let you know, some topics that we do want to cover was how your life was in Riverside, navigating ownership, and leasing practices pertaining to the Kim and Inaba houses, and your home, and your family experiences in the region, and your work with JACL, J-A-C-L, Harada House, UCR, and more. We are also interested in the roles of women in work, business, education, and community building. And additionally, if any locations come up in this interview, we would love if you could share the address of these places if you can remember. Again, it is completely fine if you cannot. So if that all sounds good to you, if at any time, I will say this again, but if at any you would like to pause or stop recording, please let me know. So just to start off the recording, I'll do my introduction and then we'll go from there. Awesome, alright. My name is Kahleia Corpuz. Today is Friday, February 27th, 2025, 2026, and I am here today in Riverside

doing an interview with Meiko Inaba for A People's History of the Inland Empire. First, I wanna make sure that you are comfortable with me recording this interview, just a verbal confirmation.

Meiko Inaba: [00:03:11] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Kahleia Corpuz: [00:03:12] Okay, awesome.

Meiko Inaba: [00:03:13] Yes, I am.

Kahleia Corpuz: [00:03:16] Awesome. Alright, so we're just gonna start off with some basic introductions. So your name, date of birth, and your childhood. For the record, can you please spell your first name on the tape as well as your maiden name if you're willing to share it and your date of birth.

Meiko Inaba: [00:03:29] Okay, my first name is Meiko, M-E-I-K-O. My maiden name, Mikami, M-I-K-A-M-I, and my married name, Inaba, I-N-A-B-A.

Kahleia Corpuz: [00:03:46] Thank you so much. Just to start us off, just a little bit about your life, kind of before Riverside, can you tell us a little about where you grew up?

Meiko Inaba: [00:03:57] Okay, I was born in the Hollywood area of Los Angeles before World War II, and in, when the war broke out during the Executive Order 9067, I always forget the numbers anyway. [laughs] The internment took us from Los Angeles. We went to San Jose because my parents wanted to be relocated with her family. My father didn't have any family here from Japan. He was here by himself. Then they put us on the train and sent us back to Pomona or to Santa Anita where we went to the Santa Anita racetrack. And we were interned there until we went to...Heart Mountain Wyoming. I spent from, I think it was about probably '42 to '44 in Heart Mountain Wyoming—the camp. There was a few months that we moved to Minnesota because my folks thought they might want to farm in Minnesota, but they decided no that's not what they want to do so we went back to camp, then I went to Utah. And I lived in Utah for about a year and a half. Then finally, we—my folks bought a place in Gardena, California. And that was in 1947. And from there, I grew basically all my school years. I grew up in Gardena until I graduated high school. Then I went to UCLA. I went away for four years. I went to UCLA. Then when I graduated, I did some teaching—elementary school. And then when I got married, I moved to Riverside in 1961. And that's when I really got to know, I started to get to know Riverside. My husband was born and raised in Riverside, and there was a house on the farm available [laughs and smiles] we could move into, so that was convenient. [Smiles.] So that's how I ended up in Riverside.

Cathy Gudis: [00:06:14] May I ask you a question, when you were in, when your family moved to Gardena, were they farmers?

Meiko Inaba: [00:06:23] No, they weren't. My father, before the war, ran a produce store— a

retail produce store. And his store was on Sunset Boulevard.

Cathy Gudis: [00:06:37] Yeah.

Meiko Inaba: [00:06:38] In that area.

Cathy Gudis: [00:06:39] Where on Sunset? Do you know what neighborhood?

Meiko Inaba: [00:06:44] Uhm—

Cathy Gudis: [00:06:44] —Was it by the [cross talk]—Was it—.

Meiko Inaba: [00:06:46] The West Side Market. And the building is still there.

Cathy Gudis: [00:06:51] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Meiko Inaba: [00:06:51] It was an area where a lot of upcoming actors would live and [cross talk] everything because they knew a lot of these actors from that their time that were just starting out and then that they just kept knowing them until you know—we left there.

Cathy Gudis: [00:07:10] The West Side Market on Sunset, and it's more towards Western part of the city, it's not in the Hollywood area?

Meiko Inaba: [00:07:17] Well, it was called the West Side Market. In—I want to say Beverly, near Beverly Boulevard.

Cathy Gudis: [00:07:26] Yeah. [Cross talk.] But was it Beverly around Vermont or was it Beverly like further like into—

Meiko Inaba: [00:07:32] —I think further out.

Cathy Gudis: [00:07:34] Oh, okay. Gotcha. [Cross talk.] Sorry. No, I, yeah, I've done some research on the flats, which were—on, around Virgil Avenue.

Meiko Inaba: [00:07:46] Well see, we lived on Virgil Avenue.

Cathy Gudis: [00:07:47] Oh, you did. Where did you live on Virgil?

Meiko Inaba: [00:07:51] [Cross talk.] I don't know. I just know it was on Virgil.

Cathy Gudis: [00:07:54] Oh.

Meiko Inaba: [00:07:55] That was before the war. That's where—they were living when I—they were in the process of looking for property to build a home—.

Cathy Gudis: [00:08:06] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Meiko Inaba: [00:08:06] Build a house, which, maybe it was advantageous for them that they didn't commit the money, and—you know, 'cause, so they still had the money at least. They might not have had the property.

Cathy Gudis: [00:08:18] I see. Yeah. Okay. So they were living in Hollywood. They were living on Virgil in a rental, and then [Meiko nods affirmatively] they were going to buy, but then were incarcerated, came back, and moved to Gardena.

Meiko Inaba: [00:08:30] Right.

Cathy Gudis: [00:08:31] Got, gotcha. And the place they bought was in Gardena and they, but they—was the shop, was the West Side Market pre-war?

Meiko Inaba: [00:08:40] That was pre-war.

Cathy Gudis: [00:08:41] Yeah, yeah [affirmative].

Meiko Inaba: [00:08:42] And after the war he worked for different people, and then he started his own little produce place in Redondo Beach, and so that's where he did most from—I think it was probably around the late '40s, '49, '50, somewhere around there 'cause he worked a couple years for other people—.

Cathy Gudis: [00:09:04] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Meiko Inaba: [00:09:04] And then—he started his own business, and he worked there until he retired.

Cathy Gudis: [00:09:10] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Meiko Inaba: [00:09:11] Yeah, which would have been probably in about—[thinks]—'68, '69, somewhere around there, yeah.

Cathy Gudis: [00:09:18] Got it. Yeah, that's that's really interesting. Thank you.

Meiko Inaba: [00:09:21] Mm-hmm [affirmative]—So anyway, then after I came to Riverside, I moved to the [Inaba] Ranch, or which was out in West Riverside, which some people called it Glen Avon. It was the unincorporated area of, in, in the county. So, some people call it Glen Avon. Some people called it Rubidoux. Some people call that West Side. [Laughs.] Depending on who you talk to, you lived in different—places. [Laughs.] It was all the same place, but—

Cathy Gudis: [00:09:56] And that, was that area, were your neighbors of different races and ethnicities? Or were they white or?

Meiko Inaba: [00:10:04] They were—When I moved there, they were mostly white. There were a few other, a couple of the Japanese families out there that were farming. My son started school at Glen Avon School. And at that time, Glen Avon had some Hispanics, there were Hispanic people. And [thinks]—there weren't any Black families that I could recall. [Thinks.] But they were white and Hispanics. Yeah—but when my pictures I see of my husband, when he was little, when they took school pictures, they seemed to be mostly white families out there then. [Nods.] Yeah.

Kahleia Corpuz: [00:11:03] Just a quick question.

Meiko Inaba: [00:11:07] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Kahleia Corpuz: [00:11:07] You said you moved to Riverside 'cause you got married in '61, is that correct?

Meiko Inaba: [00:11:15] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Kahleia Corpuz: [00:11:15] Before fully moving over here, did you, like, did you visit Riverside beforehand, or did, was it just like a complete like blind move?

Meiko Inaba: [00:11:25] When I would come out here—periodically—you know, for a weekend or something like that. But in those days, I remember when I started dating him, one of the things my mother told me was, you're not going to be spending the weekend out in Riverside. [Laughs.] Which is a lot different than things are now [Laughs.] So, when I did come out to Riverside, it was like I spent the day here, and that was about it. And then I'd go home, you know, it'd be a long day, but—I really didn't spend a lot of time. I knew more about Riverside from my, I think my third and fourth grade classes when I was in school, where we learned about the citrus industry and the parent navel orange tree and the Mission Inn, and—this was from my childhood, I learned all that, rather than learning it here, you know, first hand. So, it was kind of fun though, to, to say, oh, I learned about that [laughs], see the real thing.

Kahleia Corpuz: [00:12:37] Well, you said only for a day. Was there any like places like in specific that you remember going to during like these like one day visits, or is it, was it just like, you came just to see him and then—came back home?

Meiko Inaba: [00:12:52] Yeah, mainly we would just spend the day out at the farm. I remember—the first, first visit out here that my husband brought me out—he wasn't my husband then, but, Mits brought me out to Riverside. We went on a ride through Riverside, and he took me down Victoria Avenue. And I was really impressed with that. And the other thing he did was he brought me out here, and it was the tulip orange, the tulip company, cup company, the paper company. And there was that big—replica of a paper cup, and I couldn't believe [laughs] a company would spend that much money on a paper cup [laughs]. And then the other thing that really impressed me was I asked him how Riverside was able to swing getting a freeway in Riverside—because there weren't any cars on the freeway. And I said,

someone must really had pull in Sacramento to get a freeway here in Riverside. It's all different now, though [laughs].

Kahleia Corpuz: [00:14:03] Super different. Super packed [laughs] now.

Meiko Inaba: [00:14:10] Yes.

Kahleia Corpuz: [00:14:11] But yes, so you, once you finally moved to Riverside, you said you moved onto a vacant house that was on your husband's farm—.

Meiko Inaba: [00:14:18] —It was on the farm, yeah.

Kahleia Corpuz: [00:14:19] Yeah. So did you have ownership of the house or was it just kind of like a rental situation?

Meiko Inaba: [00:14:26] Well, it belonged to his parents. And so we moved into it. We didn't pay rent, but my husband worked on the farm too, so—and—and then he worked for Caltrans. So—I think he paid more than rent [laughs].

Kahleia Corpuz: [00:14:45] It's the family connections there [laughs].

Meiko Inaba: [00:14:50] Yes.

Kahleia Corpuz: [00:14:50] So like how—since like, this is your like—you had like some understanding, some—kind of knowledge about Riverside before, but how overall was like the move for you? Do you have any early memories from when you first moved to Riverside, or specific—

Meiko Inaba: [00:15:09] —Oh, yes. [Cross talk.] It was like, why did I commit to this? [Laughs.] You know, I had gone to UCLA and lived in LA and I was used to going to—the theater in LA and everything, and it was just different here. Things weren't as handy, and they, they didn't have the department stores I was [laughs] in love with. Not that I needed any clothes to— anymore because I was on the farm [laughs]. My wardrobe changed drastically. So yeah, it, it was a culture shock for me. It really was. But the more I, you know, lived out here—[shrugs]—there were just so many more advantages living out here than in the LA area. I thought, anyway. I've [shrugs] never regretted it. Yeah [smiles].

Kahleia Corpuz: [00:16:13] That's good to hear! Can you kind of talk a little bit more about what those advantages you would say are about living in the Riverside area, the I.E. area?

Meiko Inaba: [00:16:24] Well, one of the things that I found, and—I kind of feel like I have two lives here in Riverside. My initial few years when I lived on the farm, I felt more isolated out there—because I just didn't get as involved in the community yet. I didn't have the kids. The kids weren't in school and that kind of stuff. So mainly, my life, centered around the farm. And

then, in 1969 when we bought our house up here in Riverside—by then my kids were older, they were in school, and then I got involved with school activities, and then that led to other meetings of people in the community, and, I think the opportunities to get involved with such a big community was just very, very advantageous. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Kahleia Corpuz: [00:17:32] So—kind—I'm like really interested because you said you were working with the school, and then that kind of snowballed into like more community organizations.

Meiko Inaba: [00:17:42] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Kahleia Corpuz: [00:17:43] Can you kind of talk about your journey through that from— what were your responsibilities, what were you doing in the schools, and then kind of how—'cause you are very involved in the community from what I've seen, so how did that kind of, journey kind of just track to where you—are or like, just like a little farther from when you first began?

Meiko Inaba: [00:18:04] Well, I first started getting involved with the school through PTA and things like that because of my kids. I wanted to know what they were doing, and I wanted to be involved. And then I met some people and—I started getting to know more Japanese people in the community also. There were some people, more Japanese people that lived close by, here in the community, you know the area of Riverside that I live now. And so then I got involved with, well, I should back up as I got involved with PTA and the kids' campfire, boy scouts, that kind of stuff. I was complaining one day that I just didn't have enough time for everything, and my husband facetiously said, "[imitating Mits] You might as well just go out and get a paid job for all that you do [laughs]." And it made me think, you know, maybe I should, but what would I do if I—wanted to go back to work, because I knew I didn't want to go into the classroom. The more I volunteered up in the classrooms at school, it was like that, I don't want to go back and do that anymore. So then I saw an ad in the paper from the LA, I mean, from Riverside County. It just said, bachelor's degree, no experience necessary. So I, trotted down there to see what kind of a job is this where you just need a bachelor's degree and no experience. And it ended up in the personnel department as an analyst. And so I worked there for 18 years, and it gave me an opportunity to grow. So I went in as a trainee, and when I retired, I was the assistant director of the County Personnel department, so—one of the things I distinctly remember during my interview was the supervisor that was interviewing me said I'd have to work with a lot of people. "[Imitating supervisor] Why do you think you could do this?" And I just related it to all my, you know, PTA and kids activities where I did have to deal with all these people. And I ended up getting the job [laughs]. And it gave me, you know— a good career—a working career, and then I met Sumi Harada. Well, the family knew Sumi, but I got to know her more and more, and she was the one who, got me more involved with JACL. And then the JACL started doing a lot of other things, too, in the community, that—they were cultural things that I got involved with. So—I think that's how I ended up getting—and then, as people knew about, you know, my background. They wanted to do a couple of exhibits of the Inaba family, and I was the designated person with all the photos and everything [laughs] for the family so—that kind of pulled me in too. Mm hmm. [affirmative].

Kahleia Corpuz: [00:21:27] Sounds like a really fun journey, you know, kind of, what is it, connecting with the community and all that.

Meiko Inaba: [00:21:34] It really is. [Kahleia laughs.]

Kahleia Corpuz: [00:21:38] Just for my timeline purposes, when did you—like what year did you move from the farm into your house in Riverside now?

Meiko Inaba: [00:21:47] Okay, it was in 1969 that I moved here, to the UCR area, because I walk, I live right here walking distance to UCR. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Kahleia Corpuz: [00:22:00] During that move, that was, what is it the '60s, so it's a very big time and moment in history like how—what's it called—were you involved in any of the civil rights movements that are going on, or like, like aware of it, or the women's movement, things of that nature, like kind of how was your political involvement or your viewpoint during that time or—

Meiko Inaba: [00:22:29] It's funny 'cause my sister and I often talked—I had a younger sister—she passed away a couple years ago, but she was, nine years younger than, almost ten years younger than me, and when I went like she went to UCLA too, and so when I went to UCLA, it was just a very quiet campus. I went to school went to my classes. By the time she went there, ten years later, it was sit-ins—you know, in—all that political stuff was starting to go on, which kind of blew me away because none of that had happened when I was on campus. And things were just really opening up, I think, in the '60s. Even this area where we live, when we moved up here, there were a lot, a lot of military families that lived around here because of March Air Force Base. But then within a few, you know, the Vietnam War ended, and then all of a sudden they were all gone, so it was a different—group of people that were living here in the area. Our neighbors were changing because as the military pulled out people, our neighbors were [laughs] leaving, so yeah. It, it was really different because—and then—since we were here during the Vietnam War, and there were so many military families, there were a couple of times when like our kids, they would come home, and they would be in tears because, they had a friend whose father didn't come back, you know, things like that would happen. It was growing, time for them. I mean, you know, a lot of times kids aren't exposed to those kind of emotions and things, but, they learned to live that this is life and how it really works [laughs]. Yeah.

Kahleia Corpuz: [00:24:33] Yeah, that sounds a little, what is it called? Yeah, it sounds like quite a moment, especially for you as a mother during this time as well.

Meiko Inaba: [00:24:42] Mm-hmm [affirmative]. It was. Yeah.

Kahleia Corpuz: [00:24:46] If it's not too uncomfortable, can you kind of like, tell more about that experience just from, your perspective, especially seeing your kids being in this environment and political moment?

Meiko Inaba: [00:25:01] Mm-hmm [affirmative]. It was, one of those things that—I kind of sat on the fence. I wasn't one of these that was, you know, on either extreme. I was kind of on the fence, 'cause, I wanted to support the military people and the people that were my neighbors and everything. And yet, when I talked to other people who were very, very anti Vietnam War—you know, I understood their side and everything. And so I kind of tried to sit on that rail and not [laughs] fall off. And, I pretty much did that that whole time. Although, I think it was being so close to so many of the military people that I tended to more, feel badly for them that, you know, they weren't recognized for what they were doing, during this time. Yeah. And then it's—I don't know if it's because we live, there were a lot of military people here. You know, when we bought our house—we weren't welcomed in the neighborhood. Because—we had graffiti written—between the time—the sellers, emptied the house, and we moved in—somebody had come written some graffiti on the—water heater in our garage. They had gotten in there, and they said [writes in air], "Go Home Japs." And then one time, on the front, sidewalks in big bold letters with spray cans, someone had written, "Remember Pearl Harbor." They were trying to send messages to us, I guess, that we weren't welcome here. So, it was still happening in the '60s here. [Nods.] Mm-hmm.

Kahleia Corpuz: [00:27:08] I'm sorry to hear about that experience, it was a bit jarring, especially since you were moving in during that time period as well, right?

Meiko Inaba: [00:27:16] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Kahleia Corpuz: [00:27:24] So, other, well, you were talking about your neighbors kind of moving in this process, kind of, how did your neighborhood transform during, this kind of period as well like what did they look like, or like what did the neighborhood look like, and kind of how, that has either continued or [laughs] changed.

Meiko Inaba: [00:27:43] I wasn't really aware, when we moved in, I really wasn't aware of—maybe it was my naivety. I didn't—I wasn't really into—you know, who did, who lived in the neighborhood and all that kind of stuff. I found a house where I wanted, and I thought would be neat. But after I moved in here, I realized this predominantly, it was a predominantly white neighborhood at the time. There were a number of Japanese families that I'm aware of that were, they were mostly affiliated with, UCR. They worked in different capacities at UCR. [Phone vibrates.] I think it must have been about a year after, we were here, maybe not even a year. I had a woman that lived around the corner here come knock on my door, and I didn't even know her. She, she told me she lived around in the corner. And a Black family had moved in a couple blocks away. And she was so upset about it. She says, "[imitating the lady] We've got to move." She says, "[imitating the lady] Do you know what moved into?"—And I thought it was kind of funny that here I am an Asian lady standing in front of her, telling me about this Black person—the family that had moved in—and that I should be concerned, and I should, and I, I was so blown away, I didn't know what to say to her. I just told her, you know, it didn't bother [laughs] me. That he had a right to move in down there too! So then I think we've gotten more, mixed in this area than when I, I first came here. [Nods.] Yeah.

Cathy Gudis: [00:29:37] When, when—I, I know that there had been an enclave of Japanese and Japanese Americans in the East Side area and, and shops. Now, during war, when they were incarcerated, they left. People didn't seem to go back to East Side, but by 1969, when you were in Riverside, did you look at East Side as a location? Or, was that, not where people—like were there other Japanese American families that were moving back in there?

Meiko Inaba: [00:30:12] Well, you know, it was through the—most of the Japanese—I didn't realize there were that many Japanese Americans living up here in the UCR area. We had been looking out toward, Victoria Woods and that area, and we had had an experience out on, Golden Avenue, Golden West, at that—Woodcrest area, I guess that would—where we would we thought we would like to buy property and build a house, and we just kept getting these strange signals that we weren't welcome there. Like, the price of the property would go up by \$10,000 overnight. Oh, well, they don't have the utilities in like they thought they did. Or we would be offered an alternative to the one we were looking at. So we just kind of decided, well, they don't want us here. We don't wanna live there. [Laughs.] And we didn't want to go through the headache of building, in, in that atmosphere. And I don't know, we just ended up finding this house here in the UCR area, and it looked like a comfortable area. And then the pool—the Islander was down the street, which we thought would be good for the kids. We wouldn't have to build our own pool. So it was after I moved in here, that I started meeting people at school, and then, they would tell me who—most of the Japanese Americans that were living here were after the—much, much after the war—they came because of UCR. They were working either—they were working and working on their Ph.D.s, or they were faculty members, or they were research people. [Nods.] So—UCR brought them more than them returning. None of them were really returning. Yeah [nods]. So they were—mostly educated because [nods]—they were here for the university. Yeah [nods].

Cathy Gudis: [00:32:38] Yeah, I do think the, the period is really interesting, because I had known just from demographic data that people didn't return, especially to, or at least to that area. But you know, it's very difficult to, to trace where people went. So, I wanted to just go back to something you were talking about. So was it the realtor who shifted tracks in terms of the changes, "[imitating realtor] Oh, well, why don't you look here?" Was it your realtor, or was it—I'm just curious because I know that for the African American community, there were a few Black realtors because in part, it was so challenging.

Meiko Inaba: [00:33:22] Well, when we were running into the issues when we're looking in the Woodcrest area, we didn't have a realtor at that time. And it would just be things that we'd see in the paper, and then we'd go out to look, and then we, and then we'd talk to whoever was there, like if there was an open house or something. And, all of a sudden, what was in the paper was different than what they're telling us. And—when it first happened, it didn't even occur to me. But after the second or third time, I started to think, "Mits, I don't think they want us here [laughs]. It's, it can't be a coincidence." So, when we decided—I wanted to get a house before the school year started at that, that time. And so, I said, "We better get a realtor to help us here." And I flat out told him, I said, "I wanna know whether I'm

gonna be accepted, or if my bid's gonna be turned down or what? Be upfront with me." And so, he, he really was, but he didn't—I happened to see this house advertised, and that's— and then I, you know, talked to him about it. So it wasn't that we were, directed here or anything. It was happenstance, I think.

Cathy Gudis: [00:34:54] Yeah [affirmative]. And when the spray painting happened, you'd already bought the house [laughs]—.

Meiko Inaba: [00:34:57] —Yes.

Cathy Gudis: [00:34:59] And you were moving in, were, what were your reactions, and what did—I mean, you didn't have kids yet? No, you had kids—

Meiko Inaba: [00:35:06] —We had kids.

Cathy Gudis: [00:35:07] You had the kids. So, were you worried about them? Like, how did you? Yeah, I mean that's, that's horrible—but also, like, just knowing the idea of like having kids, you're just moving in. [Shakes head.]

Meiko Inaba: [00:35:21] You know, our—our concern was to, and, and when I think about it now, I was much more naive in those days than I am now. I would have dealt with it a lot differently. Our first concern was get the spray paint and cover it up. Don't let anyone see it, and be quiet about it. Well cause, we kind of—that's how Mits and I grew up. Keep your head down. If it pops up, it's going to bang down, you know? So, I, I think I would have, you know, handled it differently. I would've called the police [laughs]. I probably—we did none of the above. [Nods.] Yeah. So things have changed [nods]. Yeah.

Cathy Gudis: [00:36:14] So can you trace your own change? In other words, you know you said that you maybe were naive. It, you sound like—it sounds like you really, really were [laughs], but in a wonderful way, right? So, what, what changed, you know, that you might like handle things differently, do you think? And then, Kahleia, I'm so sorry. I keep interrupting, and she, you know, she had things that she wanted to ask you about so.

Meiko Inaba: [00:36:45] I don't know if I can say that it was one thing that changed. I think it was becoming, just becoming aware. Going to work for the county, I went to work for the personnel department right at the time affirmative action was just being implemented. So I got right on board at the beginning of affirmative action plan—in things like—in the early 70s. And so, I think it was a combination of things that had taken me from there to where I am now. [Nods.] Yeah, yeah. My sister and I would always laugh about how different we were, and it was we—feel that it was just, the timing on when we were born and how we were raised by our parents and during that, period of time, and even how society had changed, because we used to laugh about how styles changed and everything during our time. When I was in high school, I remember my father telling me my skirts were getting too long that, I shouldn't let them get down there too long, and [laughs] then she comes along in the mini skirts are here,

and he's telling her, "[Imitating her father] It's too short! It's too short." You know, just funny things like that throughout our lives it seemed like she did all the sit-ins at UCLA, and I—I just went to class and, you know. [Laughs] [Nods.] So.

Cathy Gudis: [00:38:21] But were there any notable cases that you, like really, that maybe you remember from your work with the county and related to affirmative action, you must have seen a, a lot go by. Do you remember a particular, and was there anything that stood out?

Meiko Inaba: [00:38:40] I don't think I can remember just any one particular thing. [Shakes head.] It was just, I think it opened the doors for me, and it opened an awareness that [shrugs] maybe I didn't have before. Uh-huh [nods].

Kahleia Corpuz: [00:39:05] With—for your work with affirmative action, were you—you were there at like the beginning of this initiative, or like this program, or, what was your kind of like closer involvement with it? Was it just because it was your work or?

Meiko Inaba: [00:39:20] Well, one thing, it got me hired. [Laughs.] It was—this program—and I met all the criteria that found under, within the affirmative action thing, and in some ways I thought am I taking advantage of the system or what and then I thought well no these programs are there for certain reasons, and they found a need there, and if I meet all the criteria I've met the, you know, the needs, and that was, you know, one I was an older woman. Now, I wasn't fresh out of high school or college. One, I was a female. [See], I was an older woman, I was female—oh, I was Asian—which, made me a non-white. So, you know—and Asians in Riverside County at that time were like less than 1%. I mean, so we were just [the] sliver. Yeah. So, just one hire, made a big impact. Yeah.

Kahleia Corpuz: [00:40:30] So, I am kind of interested in the Asian American community, especially in Riverside, so you're talking about it being a very small percentage like how was that—I mean, you did face a lot of like—racially, charged harassment from what you were telling me about like the spray paint. But like overall, from '61, and kind of that period, especially when there was a lot of things happening. How was it—like what was your experience as, everyday experience or just like experience in general, as an Asian American woman during this time period where you're not in a neighborhood with a lot of—I wouldn't—a lot of people who look like you.

Meiko Inaba: [00:41:17] I grew up in Gardena, which in Gardena, it had a very, very high percentage of Japanese Americans. Or and, so—the majority of my, growing up, I ran, and I played with [them.] Like, even my neighbors, we had Japanese kids in the neighborhood. My school, schoolmates, the kids I played with at school were mostly Japanese. We tended to cling together. I don't know. And so all the way through school, well, as long as I was in—all the years I was in school, I'd say—my friends were predominantly Japanese Americans. And when I came to Riverside, it was kind of—that was another shocker because there weren't as many here, as there were over there. Even just, finding Japanese food to buy—in Gardena, I could go to the Japanese grocery store and buy my Japanese foods. In Riverside, I used to have to wait

until the fish man came—because there used to be a man and—with a fish truck. He would come once a week. You had to wait for him to come in. He didn't have a whole store on his truck so—

Cathy Gudis: [00:42:42] Where did he come from?

Meiko Inaba: [00:42:43] Huh?

Cathy Gudis: [00:42:44] Do you know where he came from or what the name was—do you remember?

Meiko Inaba: [00:42:47] I don't remember his name—he came out of Los Angeles.

Cathy Gudis: [00:42:51] Yeah [affirmative].

Meiko Inaba: [00:42:52] Yeah, he came out of Los Angeles, but the, the—all the farming communities, they had their own fish man. Yeah. That, there were—we used to just—I never knew their, his name, we just called him the fish man! Yeah [crosstalk]—

Cathy Gudis: [00:43:09] —Yeah [affirmative].

Meiko Inaba: [00:43:10] And every community that was kind of isolated, you know like in the farming communities, or even outskirts of L.A. and stuff—the fishman had a route—they would go to, and they would have fish and Japanese foods. And they would take orders for things that they didn't carry on their truck. Mm-hmm [nods]. Yeah.

Kahleia Corpuz: [00:43:38] Were there [audio cuts out]—sorry—

Meiko Inaba: [00:43:42] —Yeah, go ahead!

Kahleia Corpuz: [00:43:42] Were there other like vendors, like that that would come to these more remote farming communities that—because I'm under the assumption that this particular fish man that you're talking about had, primarily like Japanese American food and ingredients or—

Meiko Inaba: [00:44:06] —Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Kahleia Corpuz: [00:44:06] So, were there any other people who were kind of like that during that, or was it just like everyone knew that the fish man was coming, on this day, and everyone in the community kind of like, knew that—

Meiko Inaba: [00:44:17] —Well, they would have designated farms that they would stop at. So if you were within a certain area, you all met at one farm, you know. We were fortunate he stopped at our farm. [Laughs.] On the West Side, so, yeah, once a week he would come and

he'd—he'd always have fresh fish, and tofu, and you know, some Japanese vegetables and things like it. But not too many—we raised most of our own vegetables, so we didn't need that, but, and then had a few standard canned goods. But if there was something special you needed, he would, take the order for it and bring it the next time.

Cathy Gudis: [00:45:04] And he did this also when you were in your home where you are now, like near the university? Did this continue?

Meiko Inaba: [00:45:10] No, he had stopped—let's see. He used to—I guess he was there until—maybe it was in the late '60s he stopped coming, because by that time a lot of the—people that, older people that lived out in West Riverside that would come over where he would stop—they had left. Yeah, so.

Cathy Gudis: [00:45:37] So then where did you go? So when you were in your new place—

Meiko Inaba: [00:45:41] —Well, the one thing I would do is my folks lived in Gardena, and we would go and visit them. We would go visit them maybe, every other week or, you know. So, I'd be going into Gardena all the time, and so part of that Gardena trip was the market trip [nods]. So I always had—it's even now, I don't find things out here I like. So, I still have to go into—I wish they would bring a Tokyo Central or something like that out here but. [Nods.] [Laughs.]

Cathy Gudis: [00:46:16] So how did you get your kids involved in Japanese American culture?

Meiko Inaba: [00:46:23] Well you know, one of the things was at—in the elementary school, in the fourth grade, I think it was, they taught Japan—as a culture. And I got roped into it when my son was in the 4th grade. His 4th-grade teacher at that time asked me if I would help her, do a—unit on Japan. So I said, yeah. And then I just kind of ended up getting involved with that. It became almost like an annual, affair up there with us [nods]. Yeah. And then—we started—then the Japanese American Citizens' League, the JACL, started what we call Sendai Festival. And it was at the old plaza, Riverside Plaza, we did that. And then a part of the festival was serving Japanese foods, you know, bento foods and things. Plus we used to do [Ondo]. We had a teacher, Doris Higa, whose mother was a [Odori] teacher and a hula dance teacher in Hawai'i. And so, she always taught Doris all the dances. So Doris in turn would teach us out here. And we'd perform at the Sendai Festival. And I had grown up, because they were like dances that we would learn to do at Obon. I don't know if you're familiar with the Japanese Obon? [Nods.] Yeah, in August.

Cathy Gudis: [00:48:01] Yes, but can you, can you talk about it for the video?

Meiko Inaba: [00:48:07] Oh, Obon is when you kind of remember your ancestors, and it usually happens in late August, around there. In the Los Angeles area from about the

beginning of July all the way through August, different Buddhist churches have their Obon, and so they have their festival. But you're basically honoring your—the dead or your ancestors. And so, I just kind of grew up—go dance for your ancestors, you know, every year. And I lost that when I moved to Riverside until Sendai Festival started, and Doris revived doing the Ondo out here. And, so then I got involved again because it was something I used to do as a younger person. Yeah, so.

Kahleia Corpuz: [00:49:02] I just wanted to ask—Sendai, that's what it is, right?

Meiko Inaba: [00:49:06] Uh-huh [affirmative]. Yeah, it was named after our sister city—the Riverside sister city Sendai.

Kahleia Corpuz: [00:49:14] Oh I see. So you said the old Riverside Plaza. Do you remember the address of it, or was it, what is it called?

Meiko Inaba: [00:49:21] Well, you know where the plaza is now, the open plaza?

Kahleia Corpuz: [00:49:25] Yeah [affirmative].

Meiko Inaba: [00:49:26] It kind of went through a metamorphosis. It started out as an open plaza and we—that's when we used to do it. Then they enclosed it and said we couldn't do it there anymore because it was all enclosed, and we couldn't do the barbecues and stuff. And then, they opened it up [laughs] again. But it's in the same place, where the plaza is. I guess I called it the old plaza because the old plaza for us was when it was an open air plaza, that was when they enclosed it, but now it's all open again.

Kahleia Corpuz: [00:50:01] Yeah, super busy too. [Laughs.]

Meiko Inaba: [00:50:07] [Laughs.]

Kahleia Corpuz: [00:50:07] This Sendai Festival sounds really interesting especially since it seems like it's a big, Japanese cultural moment or event. What was—what exactly happened? Like, like what were kind of like the activities you mentioned, barbecue, anything else in particular that you remember, or your involvement with any activities during that?

Meiko Inaba: [00:50:27] Oh, for the festival, we used to bring in a lot. We used to have Ikebana, the flower arranging. And then we would have bonsai exhibits. And then, if we could get judo, or Aikido, or any of those martial arts. So we would cultural things going on there too [nods], in addition to serving the food. It was—it started out as a moneymaker for us, you know. So, and then I, you know, it becomes a two-way street, you know we're sharing our culture with people. And, it, it was really—we used to serve, I don't know how many hundreds and hundreds of plates, you know. It was a lot of work, and, it got so big that it got to be so much work we couldn't do it anymore [laughs]. So, unfortunately, that's what did us in. It was just too big. We couldn't keep it up anymore. [Nods.] Yeah.

Kahleia Corpuz: [00:51:35] But you know, that's also a good problem to have, it's too [laughs] big that you can't do anymore.

Meiko Inaba: [00:51:39] Yeah [affirmative]. We just couldn't get the young ones to come in and take it over [laughs].

Kahleia Corpuz: [00:51:44] [Laughs.]

Cathy Gudis: [00:51:45] Was that the JACL's?

Meiko Inaba: [00:51:46] Yes.

Cathy Gudis: [00:51:47] Oh.

Meiko Inaba: [00:51:50] Uh-huh. And then when we had to leave the plaza because they, they wanted to enclose the plaza—we moved to town center here, the Canyon Crest Towne Centre, for a few years. And then—after that—we just said, no more, and it stopped. [Nods.] Yeah. I think that the other thing, too, is we didn't have a facility where we could prepare our things, and, we used to rely on churches and things to—help us—or let us use their facilities, their kitchens, and things like that. And, as things got bigger and bigger, we needed more and more space and more and more time, and, it just conflicted with their schedules, and we ran out of places to find that could—be easily used. Uh-huh. Yeah.

Kahleia Corpuz: [00:52:58] Speaking of the—

Meiko Inaba: [00:52:59] —But—.

Kahleia Corpuz: [00:52:59] —Sorry, go ahead.

Meiko Inaba: [00:53:00] The hardest part was the people. [Laughs.] The people said, too much work, we can't do it [laughs] anymore.

Kahleia Corpuz: [00:53:08] Speaking of the JACL, I kind of wanted to talk about how'd you—because you were kind of hinted towards before how you got involved in it, kind of, when did that involvement happen, how has the JACL kind of changed over time, especially in Riverside, and are there any groups that have kind of, picked up the work of the JA, JACL, that's kind of like, happening in tandem here.

Meiko Inaba: [00:53:39] Well, our JACL—Riverside's JACL started in about '68, I guess it was. At that time, different cultural events in Riverside were run by different community groups: the Gardener's Association, a church here, a women's club, and different things. They did all different activities that were going on in the community. And in '68, when Riverside JACL was formed—a lot of the members of all these other community groups became part of JACL. So then JACL started taking over. We used to do a Thanksgiving dinner. We used do—a Christmas

party for the kids and an Easter egg hunt. And then we did a—a picnic. And so, these were all run by different groups. And so when JACL came into the picture, it started being the primary coordinator of everything and running everything. So, we had the JACL that was running these cultural and—you know—community events for us. And then, the one—the people that started JACL, we had some people that had moved into Riverside that had been active with the JACL, and their respective communities that they came from. They came from bigger communities: Washington, D.C., L.A., Philadelphia, other places. And they had been active in JACL, and they felt that Riverside should have one too. And so, then we had a group that helped us get that started. And they were tended to be civil rights-oriented people that were more interested in civil rights. So we kind of had a group that were doing—focusing on cultural, focusing on civil rights, and—education. So—as long as we were big, and you had people that were interested in the different things, it kept going. But as our group had gotten smaller, and, I think different people's interests have changed. Our Riverside JACL right now has not been able to maintain the level of input and community involvement that we had in the past. Just the sheer numbers aren't there to support it. [Nods.] [Cross talk]. Yeah.

Kahleia Corpuz: [00:56:41] You were saying that the interests changed. Can you kind of talk about—because you said it started kind of like cultural, then civil rights, and education—have they changed from those interests, or have they just kind of like, been like slightly altered? [Inaudible.]

Meiko Inaba: [00:57:01] I don't know. I think there's, and I hate to say groups of people and [all] categorize them, but, there are—those that—when they were growing up, there's a group that—they've never really had issues, or they don't understand that they're having an issue. So as far as they're concerned, it's kind of like out of sight out of mind, you know, that they don't need to be involved with—and, and civil rights tends to be one of those areas that that happens to. And then, and for some the cultural parts, some people just say, "[imitating aforementioned people] I'm an American. I just have American culture, and they don't care about—you know, cultures from other countries or anything else, and that's what to me makes our country interesting, you know? And then—I think there are so many other areas that people find interest in, that they get pulled—in different directions. Or maybe there's so many opportunities for different activities for people nowadays that—they all go off on different directions. [Laughs.]

Kahleia Corpuz: [00:58:34] I wanted to ask a little bit—also like—were you—like were— was the JACL during this time kind of like a mixture of like men and women, or like were you involved in women's organizations or groups?

Meiko Inaba: [00:58:51] I think, at the peak, we were a combination—you know there were, there were men and women—a lot of them were couples, but equally active. We both—we had men presidents, and we had women presidents, and you know, that led the organization. They were involved with women's—some of them were involved with some women's groups. Some of them, directly in—community women's groups—some through their churches. I'm just trying to think of the different people that were involved. And they weren't necessarily

involved, with, certain activities just because of JACL. It could—you know, some of it came from other—involvements in their lives too. [Nods.] Mm-hmm [affirmative]. So.

Kahleia Corpuz: [01:00:00] So beyond your membership in the JACL, was there any other like kind of social or labor organizations, that you were also involved in, and if so, kind of like tell us, also kind of like—what, what work you did with them, or like how you also got there?

Meiko Inaba: [01:00:22] [Thinks.] Not really—I can't think—well, when I was working, I belonged to, you know, the Personnel Management Association and things like that, but that was more work-related. Other than that—other than being supportive members, you know—I just never really got on the bandwagon of—making leadership roles and everything. I would be members of different groups and everything, but—not a leader. And, and—primarily membership to show support, that was it. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Kahleia Corpuz: [01:01:11] But—yeah, so talking about your membership, you've—I kind of also want to talk about your, like, historic preservation work as well you've done a lot!

Meiko Inaba: [01:01:22] [Laughs.]

Kahleia Corpuz: [01:01:22] And I would say it's—it is very incredible—I'm going to be quite fair and honest, but, how did you kind of like, like start getting involved with these like historic and cultural, like, heritage preservations, and like—

Meiko Inaba: [01:01:40] It was all kind of happenstance.

Kahleia Corpuz: [01:01:43] Yeah [affirmative].

Meiko Inaba: [01:01:44] You know, living out at the farm. My husband ended up being the keeper of the farm after his father passed, and even when we weren't farm—they weren't farming out there anymore. My husband maintained the property out there and everything until it was sold. And—as a part of that, there was all this history that his father had accumulated over the years, because his father was a pretty good—saver. Anyway, so we had all of this stuff out there, and when we were getting ready to—sell—the property was sold, and we were getting ready, to pack up the place. My son, who was living out there at the time, he says, "[imitating her son] Mom, what are we going to do with all this—stuff that's grandpa's?" And it was like his old immigration papers, and, letters he had written during the war to reunite with his family because he and his brother had been, incarcerated under the Department of Justice, under different federal rules and stuff. And so I said, "Well, we can't throw them away. We've got to keep them." And that included, pictures and—you know, clothing and everything! So—we just ended up with all of that. And then—my son was really interested in it. He says, "[imitating her son] If nobody else wants it, I'm going to take care of it." So, he, he kind of took it. And then, I—over a period of time, too, I became friends with Catherine Kim, and—I became her keeper, so to speak, and I saw all her stuff that I didn't

know—I was running into the same issue. What am I going to do with all her papers, and all her work, and pictures, and everything? What do I do with this? Then I happened to meet—Lynn Voorhees from the—museum. She used to be with the historic—buildings, I think—that she was over at Harada House. Long time— this was years and years ago. Anyway, I got involved with her right about the time the Harada House was—donated to the city. And—I started—archiving with her, some of the—Harada things, and I kept thinking, "Gosh, all this stuff that they've saved! They think it's important, so what are we going to do?" And so, you know, I've just made connections with Judy Lee, Carol Park, and—then, at least I found a home in UCR [laughs] for a lot of this stuff. And my father-in-law had been interviewed by a Morrison Wong at UCR who was a grad student about, you know, his incarceration and everything. This was years and years and years ago. So, we just kind of knew there was some kind of, importance, to keep all of this stuff. [Nods.] Yeah.

Cathy Gudis: [01:05:23] Did you donate your—did you—the, the material that you said your son was interested in? Did you give that to Lynn Voorhees also, or does your son—

Meiko Inaba: [01:05:32] —No, we still have that.

Cathy Gudis: [01:05:33] Oh, nice.

Meiko Inaba: [01:05:34] And I talked to Carol Park, because I was telling her, "You know, my son has, you know, kept it, and—because he thought it was important to have and everything." And I've talked to a couple of other kids, because I feel like I'm not the Inaba. I married into the Inaba [laughs] family. But nobody wants to step up, and take accountability, or be responsible for it. So, I've been talking to my son, and I said, "You know, maybe we should make a package and just give it to UCR, they might be interested." So, we've been toying with that idea.

Cathy Gudis: [01:06:22] Is he in Riverside?

Meiko Inaba: [01:06:26] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Cathy Gudis: [01:06:26] That's great, yeah, yeah. That's wonderful, and I know that, Carol and other people have been really helpful with all of that. Definitely call upon us as well if you, you know, want any help in putting things together or what have you.

Meiko Inaba: [01:06:41] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Cathy Gudis: [01:06:41] That's amazing.

Meiko Inaba: [01:06:42] Yeah, but it's kind of, you know, here and there, and it's not—in a nice neat package somewhere [laughs]. And it seems like it gets—you know, different people in the family have said, "You know we think we have this, and we would like to show it for this," and then they show it, and then they send it back. You know, they don't want to keep it. They don't wanna be—but they would like to have it accessible. And so I— well if it's at UCR,

they can still have a copy of it and whatever. So, we're still thinking about, getting it all together and doing something.

Cathy Gudis: [01:07:22] Yeah, you know, A People's History started because we were using a lot of the collections at UCR, but we were also experimenting with an idea that archivists had begun about 15 years ago, maybe longer. That's community-based archives where nothing is taken from people. It's actually scanned—.

Meiko Inaba: [01:07:47] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Cathy Gudis: [01:07:48] —And made available in that way. And so, much more formal libraries and archives like, UCR, are slowly coming around to this idea, but it started in smaller frameworks like A People's History. So yeah—so we've been—as we're working on, trying to explore particular histories, for instance, we've sort of done very fast scanning of people's photo albums. So for instance, there's a couple of families who moved from East Side to Pasadena, and we just sort of hit it off during COVID went and sat out in the front yard [laughs]—

Meiko Inaba: [01:08:29] [Laughs.]

Cathy Gudis: [01:08:30] —A lot. And then, when they had a—after COVID, they had family reunion and asked everyone to bring their boxes of stuff, and, yeah, we just sat inside and scanned and scanned and scanned, and then everyone brought it back home and we're slowly putting it—we sent them copies of it all, of course, and now we're slowly putting it into the archive. So universities, because they hold the real thing, have been a little slower to embrace this idea.

Meiko Inaba: [01:09:01] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Cathy Gudis: [01:09:01] And Cal State San Bernardino has been, supportive, if we do the work [laughs]. Yeah. So, but that's sort of the—exactly what you describe is sort of the genesis of, yeah, how we kind of started. Yeah.

Meiko Inaba: [01:09:16] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Cathy Gudis: [01:09:17] Anyway, just—that's a sidebar.

Meiko Inaba: [01:09:23] [Laughs.]

Kahleia Corpuz: [01:09:23] I wanted to ask super quickly—you talked about, like Judy Lee and Lynn Voorhees, correct? So like frequently, like preservation groups, are particularly like dominated by women. Is, like, is this the same case for the Harada House, JACL, other institutions, or would you say that it's a pretty good mix, or is it more male dominated, in your cases?

Meiko Inaba: [01:09:48] Oh, that, I couldn't answer [laughs]. I really don't know, because I just know what my involvement with different people have been, you know? And—I don't know. I think women by nature, kind of tend to, be better about preserving things. Maybe that's a little sexist, I don't know. Although my husband was a saver—he wasn't a preserver, he was a saver [laughs]. There's a distinct difference [laughs]! But, he always— you know, I've always heard that people who live on farms, you never throw anything away because you never know when you're gonna need something, and yeah.

Kahleia Corpuz: [01:10:45] My parents are the same way. We have too much stuff [laughs].

Meiko Inaba: [01:10:47] [Laughs.]

Kahleia Corpuz: [01:10:51] But, my parents also grew up in like rural areas, so that may be [laughs] why!

Meiko Inaba: [01:10:56] Yeah, you can't go run down to the store, and get it, so you better have it in your yard, or [laughs] wherever!

Kahleia Corpuz: [01:11:00] [Laughs.].

Meiko Inaba: [01:11:02] Even if you have to redo it, you know, some other form...

Kahleia Corpuz: [01:11:07] I kind of wanted to ask, I know you kind of touched on, like, you continued doing this work because—nobody, nobody else really wanted to, be kind of like, the person who like—who was being asked or giving this information. But, like, why do you think personally, it's important to continue preserving these histories, and if so, like do you have any specific contributions or stories you want to share pertaining to preserving Riverside history?

Meiko Inaba: [01:11:38] Well, there's that thing that says, "What goes around comes around, you know, kind of history repeats itself, and everything." And so, in no matter which way you, you preserve history—I think it's important because we've got to remember that some things just should not be repeated in history. Ever. And as we see what's happening now. Oh. I think it were almost like, you know, going back to where we were like 80 years ago when we were—the Japanese were incarcerated, and everything. And so, it can happen again, and so, we need to have the history to tell the stories. So, the good things can happen again. But—not those things that don't need to be.

Kahleia Corpuz: [01:12:42] You have like a specific story of watching your preservation, like efforts, kind of, impact someone that you were able to see, or like someone came back to you and was like, "Sharing your story created an impact in this way."

Meiko Inaba: [01:13:01] Hmm. [Thinks.] No, I think I kind of hear the other side of it: "Why

do you keep it, you know [laughs]?" More than I hear, "Oh, that was great that you kept it [laughs]." But...No, I think it's more of a, self-satisfaction. And, it, it just makes me feel good that it's been kept, and it's there for, you know the future, with others to see. Yeah. And then, like with Catherine Kim's, things, it was like—I was just so relieved that it didn't end up in the trash, in the big landfills! You know? Because I think it, it has—all her stuff has a story behind it. [Nods.] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Kahleia Corpuz: [01:14:08] Very, very last question that I have for you. What is a message that you would like to, impress upon the next generation, whether it's in terms of community, history, cultures, or even politics?

Meiko Inaba: [01:14:24] Methodology? I'm a big person of talk story. And—I think, if anything, we've got to keep talking story. Tell stories. If they don't get written down, you've got to just keep—well, one of the things I remember as a child, was sitting around a kitchen table, with my family, with my cousins, and stuff. And they would tell me stories. And that's how I kind of remember some of my—relatives—things that happened to my relatives. I wasn't there when it happened, but I know—I was told it happened. And maybe they might say it's hearsay, I don't know. But to me, it's family story. And so, I think we just need to keep—that's why oral histories are so important, you know—to me, oral histories are a, a formal talk story. [Laughs.] I'm very simplistic. I don't get into—

Cathy Gudis: [01:15:34] —Oh, no, that's fantastic. I mean, I couldn't have, like, wished for a better response because, when you mentioned that some would say that might be hearsay—there was a time when people in history departments across the country believed that. And it's been a slow road to change it. And I feel like we just have to keep—that, that's been very successful. That it's become valued—that local history is becoming, valued again. And even in just the time I've been at UCR—I've been at UCR a long time, but you know—the last 15 years have been—I've seen a huge change, and it opens, opens it up. And so, I, I, I think you're—that it's, that it's not hearsay. It's what—if it's what people, remember, then, it's, it's that, right? And we don't know other elements of history, as it was lived or experienced from people's experiences, right—

Meiko Inaba: [01:16:44] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Cathy Gudis: [01:16:45] —without that. It's incredibly like one-sided and elitist otherwise, and so, I think—I think it's really—I agree with you. I think that's really important. And I, I tend to think that the new—that the next generation—needs to recognize it too, as they—I think a lot of people do, but I think they also think that, everything is available, because you can Google it.

Meiko Inaba: [01:17:10] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Cathy Gudis: [01:17:11] That all knowledge is available because you Google it, and that's, you know, obviously not true. And I'm not referring to you, Kahleia, in terms of generational difference. You know, it's the, it's the folks who didn't choose to go into history, but also who

are [nods] younger.

Meiko Inaba: [01:17:27] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Cathy Gudis: [01:17:27] Yeah, so thank you so much for, for sharing this. And, you know, I, I admit that we, we were—oh, and—yeah, so I'm gonna first thank you, and then I'll add that, that addendum. I hope that you don't mind if we come back to you again.

Meiko Inaba: [01:17:45] Oh, no [shakes head].

Cathy Gudis: [01:17:46] Okay.

Meiko Inaba: [01:17:47] This makes it very easy. You know, Zooming [laughs]!

Cathy Gudis [01:17:51] I know. I admit I—I'm going to stop recording. Hold on.