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Joseph Allen Raunto-Ramirez Oral History

May 12, 2021

42:06

Interviewee: Joseph Allen Ruanto-Ramirez

Interviewer: Emily Nguyen

Transcribed and translated by: Emily Nguyen, Dephny Duan

[Generating and Reclaiming our Wisdoms: A Collection of AAPI Stories at UCSD](#)

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Time	Transcription
0:02	Emily Nguyen: Hello, my name is Emily Nguyen. Today is May 12, 2021 and I am interviewing Joseph Allen Ruanto-Ramirez through Zoom from Westminster, California for the University of California San Diego Asian American and Pacific Islander Studies Community Archival Project. They are currently located in South San Diego. The proposed subject of this interview is Joseph's contributions towards the Coalition for Critical Asian American Studies, which will be referred to as CCAAS during this interview, and the establishment of the Asian American and Pacific Islander Minor in 2020. Do you agree to grant the university permission to archive and publish this interview for educational purposes?
	J.A. Ruanto-Ramirez: Yeah!
	Emily Nguyen: Okay. And could you please state your full name and place of birth?
	J.A. Ruanto-Ramirez: Yes. Joseph Allen Ruanto-Ramirez. I was born in the Philippines in the village called Dirita d - i - r - i - t - a.
	Emily Nguyen: Okay, thank you! And could you tell me a bit more about yourself and how you identify?
	J.A. Ruanto-Ramirez: Yes! So I identify as an indigenous person from the Philippines. I don't really identify as Filipino because of various constitutional and communal agreements with the Philippine national government. So my father is Igorot from the Ifugao tribe. And I can send you the transcripts for these actual names later.
	Emily Nguyen: Thank you.
	J.A. Ruanto-Ramirez: Yeah, so yeah. Igorot's from the [unclear] tribe and [unclear], which is a ethno-linguistic minority, so they have a different classifications of Filipino ethno-linguistic minority and indigenous people. So my dad is Ifugao Igorot again that's the ethno-linguistic minority and Igorot is from an indigenous community, from particularly the tribe [unclear]. My mom is — oh sorry Igorots are considered the Northern Mountain Tribe. My mom is Sambal - Ita, which is aboriginal. So aboriginal communities as well in the Philippines. Lipi, which is what they considered semi-Christianized, semi-civilized tribes from the Sambal community and Moro from the Iranun tribe, which is the Muslim tribe in the south. I'm queer. I am — I came to the United States in 1991 as a refugee with my mom and my younger sister. I was evacuated by the US military and military cargo flight. Landed in Long Beach and then moved to San Diego where I spent majority of my life. I went to UCSD as an undergraduate, majored in ethnic studies, graduated in 2008. I ended up working at the Cross Cultural Center. I was also — helped write

	<p>the referendum, both referendums, for SPACES [Student Promoted Access Center for Education and Service] and part of the Asian American Coalition for Asian American Studies when I was an undergrad from like 2004 to 2008. Got my masters from Cal State San Marcos in sociological practice and then left UCSD for six months, worked in Long Beach. I was teaching Ethnic Studies and Asian American studies at Cal State Long Beach and the local Long Beach Unified School District while I was going to Claremont Graduate University and I'm pursuing a Ph.D. in Cultural Studies, with an emphasis on American Studies. Then I came back to UCSD and became Access Programs Advisor for SPACES.</p>
3:37	<p>Emily Nguyen: Mhm. Thank you! And do you remember the first time you were introduced to Asian American Studies?</p>
	<p>J.A. Ruanto-Ramirez: Oh um, I mean like formally I guess the formal conversation um — so my high school here in Chula Vista was — we had a program called Foreign Language and Global Studies with the high school with like four different high schools inside. And then the program that I was in for U.S. history actually introduced various forms of like lower class ethnic studies. It wasn't like, it wasn't in depth but there was way more than a quote unquote regular U.S. History class would have given. And so we had an introduction to Asian American Studies. There we learned about the Third World Movement in San Francisco and Berkeley. And then the creation of Asian American studies. But it was very brief. It wasn't like a big thing. That's where I got started to Ethnic Studies as a whole, because of my 10th grade class. Formally my first class that I took was an introduction to Asian American Studies with Yén Lê Espiritu at UCSD. And then I took other courses with Lisa Lowe, Lisa Park, Lisa Yoneyama — [smiles] the three Lisas we used to call them when we were in undergrad. Pal Ahluwalia, Jody Blanco. Yeah like those people were some of the faculty that I grew up with in college learning about Asian American Studies and Asians Diasporic Studies [nods].</p>
	<p>Emily Nguyen: You said those were the formal avenues that you were introduced. Were there any informal ones?</p>
	<p>J.A. Ruanto-Ramirez: I think a lot of the quote unquote informal ones happened more so on social media.</p>
	<p>Emily Nguyen: Mhm. [Nods]</p>
	<p>J.A. Ruanto-Ramirez: So the advent of MySpace [chuckles] I — there was a social media page back then called Asian Avenue. I was part of that Asian Avenue crew back then. And then, you know it was mainly, I want to say undergraduate and graduate students who were posting stuff in social media about Asian American</p>

	<p>studies. Another informal way I guess you can say which came in the, in the form of high school conferences. So I was introduced to KP [Kaibigang Pilipin@], the Filipino high school conference, in seventh grade. My middle school went to UCSD for that as a, as a field trip on a Saturday. And then, my first APSA [Asian and Pacific Islander Student Alliance] High School Conference, because I found out about APSA and KP that year, was when I was in eighth grade. So technically I've been doing high school conferences since 1997 [smiles] as a middle schooler and now I'm the advisor for all high school conferences that the students put together. So it's a really big circle where I benefited from Ethnic Studies majors, Sociology majors of UCSD who were doing the high school conferences and now and bringing that back into the community and helping undergraduate students find the resources to do that. [Nods]</p>
6:49	<p>Emily Nguyen: That's so awesome [smiles]! How would you describe the campus and general political climate around 2013 to like February 2014?</p>
	<p>J.A. Ruanto-Ramirez: Can you say the time frame again?</p>
	<p>Emily Nguyen: 2013 to around like February 2014.</p>
7:11	<p>J.A. Ruanto-Ramirez: Yeah. So I think that was an interesting time period where for — after Compton Cookout and Black Winter of 2010 there was a lot of conversation around where is Asian American studies, Asian American community, do we have a conversation addressing Pacific Islander Studies? What — how do we disaggregate the term Asian American and also that's when we started really thinking about like if the national movement across various fields was to start thinking about West Asians in the conversation, where do they fit in our conversation here at UCSD? We pushed for Critical Asian American Studies Program through UC — through the Cross Cultural Center actually. It was a partnership between me, Yén Espiritu to do various book talks and lectures on campus. And so we had undergraduate students from Ed Nadurata to, was there, Irving Ling, like other folks who really wanted a sort of Critical Asian American Studies. And so we had two major grants come from EDI [Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion] and UCOP [University of California Office of the President] which we did a Militarism and Migration Program, as well as Critical Refugee Studies and Critical Asian American Studies. And so those kinds of three studies sort of overlap within the year to two years that we had them. So we brought speakers from Keith Camacho, Martin Manalansan, Anita Mannur. We did Eating Asia America, the book talk. We brought Militarism and Colonization and Guam from Keith Camacho, to the Filipino American Education, we brought the Vietnamese American Archival Project from Irvine and Orange County, we had a critical refugee art exhibit where we exhibited Laos and - Laos, Mien, and Hmong and Vietnamese pictures of when they were being processed through the various</p>

	<p>refugee centers in Southeast Asia before they came to the United States. And we really wanted to intersect — we can't talk about Asian Diasporic and Asian American Studies without addressing U.S. racial politics, U.S. war politics, militarism and migration as a whole, and colonization. But also sort of the contemporary conversations around the economic neo-colonial structures that happen now. And so we brought speakers talking about like, our military bases in Okinawa in Japan considered forms of neocolonial military, you know, in Asia. We had a speaker come and talk about the globalization of Hello Kitty and how that was connected to post-World War Two Japanese pacification projects in the U.S. To everything from even like a Critical Food Studies program where we thought — we think of like what is considered quote unquote palatable for non-Asian or Western or white folks to [makes air quotes] digest Asian American [unclear]. So we, at that time we we really wanted to push the conversation, not just in the historical context — because we know someone will always teach the history, and we were not — we were not afraid that, one way or another faculty or undergraduate students would be like, “we want to learn about the internment camps, we want to learn about the Agent Orange and the Vietnamese War or we want to learn about you know, Pakistan's, like relationship with the U.S.” So we knew the historical context, that someone will bring it. We wanted to push for a little bit more critical sense of things that we would never have really addressed in conversation. For instance, like we were happy that later on Hoang Nguyen was accepted in Literature, but before that we actually supported his project on Asian American Porn Studies. Like you know, like those things would never come out of these conversations when we think of Asian American studies as a very linear historical construct. What are the nuances that we can sort of pick and say like why can't we address these issues? And that's where actually the term critical Asian American Studies at that time was trying to address. That we wanted a way more complicated story of what it means to be Asian American. Or rather than — and that's not to discredit the historical right, but to make sure that we have a different conversation around the intersections of identity and complex personhood that makes up individual and communal Asian Americans.</p>
12:36	<p>Emily Nguyen: Mhm. So was this program to give students what UCSD didn't really offer or was it also to help — 'cause I've also heard that it was done to help show the university that there are a lot of Asian lecturers that they could hire.</p>
	<p>J.A. Ruanto-Ramirez: So Irving Ling did a comprehensive presentation of all Asian American faculty both tenured, non-tenured, adjunct, contingent, and visiting. And there was actually a lot of conversation and exposure of like why weren't Asian American Studies being — or Asian American faculty being hired. Right, and then, and then they also dug in on how like the university promised an Asian — Asian American Program way back in the 90s. But it didn't manifest. And so, these</p>

	<p>programs came about not just to push the university to say we want an Asian American Studies or Critical Asian American Studies Program, but we also wanted to make — to say that our Asian American studies is not — has to be more intersectional and complex. It's not just a more, to say the least, whitewashed version of history. That there should be internal conversations and how Asian Americans, for instance, are highly — tightly connected to settler colonialism and have a native displacement. What is the relationship with Asian Americans Asian and Black Studies? When we think of undocumented communities, we don't address that there is a growing and a big Asian undocumented community in the UC system. So it's not just the historical and even the critical presentations of it, but sort of remembering — and this is what an alumni said. Jason Perez, who now teaches at Cal State San Marcos, said that before faculty or before, before faculty or people can theorize it, people have to live it right. And that became the model for a lot of us in those times and we need to also bridge the data and, and the lived experiences of the students with that of what we're trying to teach, what we're trying to bring into presentation, what we're trying to fight for at the university.</p>
15:18	<p>Emily Nguyen: Thank you for such an elaborate response. How did the Coalition for Critical Asian American Studies come about?</p>
	<p>J.A. Ruanto-Ramirez: There were actually three coalitions that did not agree with each other. [Laughs] And so, each one — and we met, but there were three — I don't want to say three separate but we had three — we had — we wanted Asian American Studies. We had three different visions of it. There was the Critical Asian American Studies where at that time I was staff but it was interesting for me to support all three [makes air quotes] quote unquote groups. So one was more of the linear Asian American Studies coming from the 60s liberation movement, but very connected to Marshall College as well and the frame of activism there. Then there was the Critical Asian American Studies which I talked about, which I guess you can say I was a little bit more involved in because Irving Ling and the students that I closely worked with at the Cross Cultural Center — because they were also interns there and/or SPACES. And so those were like bringing in gender, sexuality, ability, religion, spirituality etc. Then there was a group that wanted to do Asian Diasporic Studies, which a lot of them worked with, with mainly literature professors to address not that — it's not just an Asian American Studies framework but should be seen as a wider Asian Diaspora. And so that led to various contested arguments, if you want to say the particular hierarchy of Asian American Studies folks wanted to be — was calling out Critical Asian American Studies and Diasporic Studies, that sort of Asian Studies, for being too critical, too high theory, they're like well, we need to start off somewhere first. Those can be like up — way upper division. Diasporic Studies was like no, we have to bring that into the lower division and Critical Asian American Studies was like we have to</p>

	<p>have gender and sexuality immediately at the beginning. And so it became very contested at times between various student leaders who wanted similar, if not the same umbrella of Asian American Studies, but what lens and what path where we should start at right. So, if you think about it, it became more of like the ethnic studies, literature, cultural studies, history majors [makes air quotes] quote unquote versus the engineers and the math and sciences who wanted Asian American Studies. So like, those who already have the foundation and those who want to start a foundation. And they couldn't, at times, agree with each other in those meetings.</p>
18:22	<p>Emily Nguyen: I see. Do feel like — were they able to work through the disagreements or was that like I guess a reoccurring obstacle?</p>
	<p>J.A. Ruanto-Ramirez: I think for a while — I left in 2015 and I guess six to seven months and I came back and the conversation was already different. But during those times they would not, they couldn't agree with a lot of each other, the student leaders.</p>
	<p>Emily Nguyen: I see. And how did staff and faculty support these groups and especially CCAAS?</p>
	<p>J.A. Ruanto-Ramirez: So I was the advisor for CCAAS because they were housed [makes air quotes] quote unquote housed, in the Cross Cultural Center because a lot of the members were interns at the Cross and/or SPACES or the other campus community centers. So majority of the things that I would do as a staff advisor for me would be helping them find the funding to bring in speakers and get food. And for the presentations it was always hosted at the Comunidad at the Cross Cultural Center. When I have a little bit more money for API Heritage Month we wanted to make sure that we fed, [smiles] quote unquote right, fed the university's longing for a performative Asia — performative Asian American, but we also had the critical book talks and lectures and art exhibits that existed. That was very something that the students worked with with me to make sure like contracts were sent out, the art exhibit was up at the Cross, book talks were happening, the lecturers were flown or got a hotel — so it was a minor — I felt like the Cross Cultural Center was the central conversation around not just bringing in the speakers, but really looking at Ella Baker Framework of Kitchen Table Activism and sort of like the small things that are not talked about when movements happen. So when you bring a speaker in, we have to make sure there's water [smiles] for the speaker. Like that small thing actually creates a different construct of our relationship with community right. And then obviously the faculty was very involved in that. Biggest support would always fall I guess — from at least in my perspective, because she was more in conversation during that time would be Yén. Yén Espiritu was very vocal on many things. Jody Blanco was there. Simeon</p>

	<p>[Man] began as well. Who else was there. At that — even at that time before they officially left Lisa Yoneyama, Lisa Park, Lisa Lowe already left, and then obviously the grad students. So we think of students at UCSD in this romanticized undergraduate like framework but there's labor happening all over that's coming in from the graduate students and we want to make sure that we connect the graduate students with the undergraduates when it comes to programming.</p>
21:37	<p>Emily Nguyen: Mhm. And I remember hearing that CCAAS wasn't officially registered as like a student organization with the Center for Student Involvement.</p>
	<p>J.A. Ruanto-Ramirez: Mhm.</p>
	<p>Emily Nguyen: So when CCAAS did work and got help from you as an advisor was that — was that — sorry. [Pauses] I guess you helping them, was that under CCC work or just helping them separately with like the org — with CCAAS?</p>
	<p>J.A. Ruanto-Ramirez: So my job card during that time changed because there was no official Asian American Program. And then there was already the Black Resource Center, Raza Resource Centro, and then like the ITRC was starting up and having their own thing that the Vice Chancellor for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion approved sort of like the grants to be housed at the Cross and funneled through me and also Nancy Magpusao, who is the staff there. But yeah, they were not officially recognized and registered as an org but they, they work through the various organizations. And so and when we did stuff on like Southeast Asian Muslim communities they — MSA [Muslim Student Association] folks were there. APSA, KP, Kamalayan — so they're the ones that asked for the funding and then we sort of figured things out internally within the Cross and how to manage the funds and do the contracts, the food, etc.</p>
23:14	<p>Emily Nguyen: Ah, nice. And I guess in what ways, did you specifically support CCAAS's activism efforts towards getting the minor?</p>
	<p>J.A. Ruanto-Ramirez: I think the one holding the space is always the important thing, and again CCAAS and the coalition — the three branches of the coalition to push Asian American studies didn't have that cohesiveness, if you can say. I wanted to make sure that, even though there was a push for Asian American studies that I had the agency and privileges and protection of being staff. And the faculty also had protection being tenured or in the process of tenureship right. And so, a lot of us even took a step back and made — wanted to make sure that we support the students and this program this study had to come from the students' interest. It should have not come from us alumni, it should not come from us staff, should be in support of what the students activism is and even the fear of the University of like — oh Asian Americans are going to protest and that's what</p>

activism is yes, and if there's more to that right. Like the push for an Asian American Studies Program is a form of activism. So not just holding the space in content of here's the book talk, here's the lecture, here's the art exhibit, but is the lecture connecting with students? If we're going to talk about Asian American Studies and we're complicating it, can we bring in someone to talk about Asian American mental health and self harm? As triggering as that might be, a lot more students will be more engaged in that conversation than you know, like other issues that might not be as involved or new in the framework. For instance, when we did — when he worked with NSU, the Nikkei Student Union at that time, for co-commemoration of internment we were thinking like, well how can we change this up? How can we not just bring a speaker in to talk about internment. Okay, so why don't we talk about queer relationships in the internment camp? Like that kind of that kind of nuance. That kind of change in the narrative. Why don't we talk about like, there was a speaker that talks about. If you think about the internment camps, can you think also about ways of survival and survivors that points of contentions would be like, a lot of Japanese Americans were [makes air quotes] quote unquote stealing for survival and that — is that stealing considered stealing when it you've been interned illegally by a government that — that's supposed to protect you? Those kinds of conversations. If you think about the Fall of Saigon and Black April, we wanted to think — we wanted to talk about what happens when — obviously, what the gender dynamic of quote unquote rescue. We brought in a speaker to talk about what happened after the refugee experience and why are nail salons so prevalent in the Vietnamese American community. That, that is a U.S. military and educational project. We wanted to tie these things in because the Asian American Studies need to reflect the community that we are trying to address the situation to. Yes, we can talk about the 1960s model and the protest that happened there, but we cannot romanticize that and stay there also. How can you make sure that when we address Asian American activism, that storytelling is a form of that activism? Right. How can we address the complex personhood and the complex histories of our community that's not just about the diaspora, forced migration, and war but think about what are the contemporary issues of Asian American Studies? Asian American Studies is not Asian American history only. Can we talk about the donut shops in Long Beach and why it's so prevalent in the Cambodian Khmer community. And what projects that came out of it. Because more Cambodian American or Khmers would actually be more related to that conversation because their parents are living it than U.S. intervention during Pol Pot right. That can be referenced, but we need to make sure that we are expressing and addressing the contemporary needs of American American students and their identities.

28:20	Emily Nguyen: Thank you for that! Were there any major challenges that you or like any of the three organizations ran into while advocating for Asian American Studies at UCSD?
	J.A. Ruanto-Ramirez: Well aside from the fact that they couldn't agree on the entrance to Asian American Studies, I think there's always this — there was an interesting administrative way that people — that a lot of students and even the staff were critiquing, I was critiquing it myself — that you're going to provide — the university is going to provide resources, resources for these book talks, lectures, art exhibits but not provide resources for a program. So we were very conscious that bringing in these events cannot and should not be seen as a band aid and then later on be dismissed as we were already doing Asian American lectures, rather than creating Asian American Program. And also again, the conversation of we were talking about Asian American Studies, Asian American program and we still had a hard conversation about how do we include, do we exclude, do we have create a different program for Pacific Islanders?
	Emily Nguyen: Okay. I guess what are your thoughts about the AAPI [Asian American Pacific Islander] program being established at UCSD this past year?
	J.A. Ruanto-Ramirez: I think it was a long waited program, process. I think it's always going to be an interesting conversation with the university. Because you have divisions that don't talk or divisions that have different policies or relationships with these programs. So Ethnic Studies as a whole is in Social Sciences, but Asian American Studies, African American Studies, and Chicanx/Latinx are all in Humanities. But Native American/Indigenous Studies is in Social Science. And so like, how do we bridge to make sure that we have community specific studies. And not, and not make sure that we become siloed, not just in our group studies, but also in these structures of the institution that says you're Arts and Humanities and you're Social Sciences right. Because that's the divide and conquer strategy that university will always just sit back and let people know — do it amongst themselves. So can we think of ways to have intersectional approaches to Asian American Studies. Like can you do Black and Asian American — a class on Black and Asian Solidarity Movement or what does it mean to be undocumented in California mixing Latinx and Asian diasporic identities. And those are nuanced and new things. You know the program is fairly new, it's really young, and things will move and progress the way it needs to later on. But I also think that we should always put into the forefront of our consciousness another way of thinking about these studies. That we should make things — and we should be okay with making things complex.
	Emily Nguyen: And I forgot to ask you this earlier [chuckles], but could you tell me more about the CCAAS letter and I guess what was going on around that time?

32:06	J.A. Ruanto-Ramirez: Um I think it — was that Irving Ling’s letter?
	Emily Nguyen: Yes.
	<p>J.A. Ruanto-Ramirez: Yeah. And that was the thing I was saying about earlier about like Irving documenting the tenured track, contingent lecturers, Asian American faculty, what they were teaching, and also the issues of like, like I said there was a promise for an Asian American program that didn’t pull through. What does it mean to disaggregate the Asian American category? Where does Pacific Islander fit in this? Like all these conversations happening at that time, when we used to have campus climate meetings with the Vice Chancellor, which was Becky — Carole Padden, sorry, and then before that I can’t remember the Vice Chancellor who was only it for about a year or so. But it was — we had campus meetings with all the campus community centers, various faculty, all student Affirmative Action Committee organization presidents. And they would address campus climate. And they would — each community would have — would address certain issues ranging from CAPS to services to like supporting persons like Muslim student needs with Halal food. Practices around like when do we start school when there's holidays for particular communities. Do we have knowledge of all forms of holidays? And some communities have to leave and have that conversation with their faculty. Like all these things came out in those campus climate meetings, which doesn't exist anymore. [Chuckles] Don't get me started on — that kind of — conversations like — there is no accountability that the university now is having conversations with students, staff, and faculty rather than constant surveys after surveys and — you know you get those too — those campus climate surveys. Back then there were campus climate presentations. We had two hour meetings once a month to address any issues that might be addressed in relation to equity, diversity, and inclusion, which Irving’s letter was part of. And Irving was very also instrumental in making sure that you know, when we think of, of resources for campus, why isn't students with disabilities funded the same way? And why — we know we — if we're talking about population of students with needs, do we address the ability needs of Asian American students? You know, to that minute thing, conversations that the university tends to gloss over when it comes to ways [makes air quotes] to support marginalized communities is very surface level. We need to make sure that like what Irving and Ed Nadurata and other folks were expressing at that time, we have to allow people to have complex personhoods, and we need to meet the communities where they're at rather than what the commu — what we presume the community needs.</p>
	Emily Nguyen: Mhm. When did these campus climate meetings end? Like when did they stop doing them?

35:27	J.A. Ruanto-Ramirez: When I came back in 2016 there was no campus climate meeting anymore [chuckles]. So the six to seven months I was gone, I was like “ah, you don’t have campus climate meetings anymore, got it.”
	Emily Nguyen: And I guess what do you want to see come out of the Asian American Pacific Islander Minor? What do you hope is included in it in the future?
	J.A. Ruanto-Ramirez: I think for me. [Pauses] I want to see more academic nua — like academic programs that are coming out of it. The ability for undergraduate research through — to flourish as well. You know, support for graduate students is always an interesting conversation with the university. But also what ways can the program work with like APIMEDA [Programs and Services], the Cross Cultural Center, to do staff education around Asian American Studies. That it should not, that the university is more than just students and faculty. How do we educate the staff? How do we educate the workers, how do we educate the local community? Like I'm not — I'm hoping, not to stay more than two more years [smiles] in my position once I graduate from my PhD Program. But can Asian American Studies Program have — AAPI program have a conversation around the core curriculum for Ethnic Studies in the local high school that's happening right now. That I'm actually part of! I'm in these conversations with San Diego Sweetwater Unified and Poway Unified School District. That's part of my job in SPACES but also as an advocate for Ethnic Studies. And a lot of these curriculum writings are coming from folks who have never taken an Ethnic Studies class. And so like one, my frustration, but two how can you make sure that we keep true to the Asian American and Ethnic Studies framework that happened in the 60s? One, not live it but keep true to it that the program and the studies are still connected to the local community. That's why I really enjoyed at that time, Yen and Simeon's project on Oral Histories of San Diego Project. Because that was a great way to make sure that Ethnic Studies was still connected to the local community.
	Emily Nguyen: And is there anything you would like to share that I haven't asked you about?
	J.A. Ruanto-Ramirez: That happened in those time frames? [Chuckles]
	Emily Nguyen: Yeah!
	J.A. Ruanto-Ramirez: [Pauses] I think again, one of the biggest discussions that we had was — and it's still going on in various fields — is what is the geography of Asia right and where do we awkwardly start the conversation. So when you think of Asian American and even Pacific Islander communities, what ways have we perpetuated U.S. and Western constructions of geography? Yes, we are in the United States. Yes, we are in a settler colonial framework. Yes, we are in a

	<p>racialized institutional process that creates these geographies. But are we having those conversations and I guess, this is more of an academic thing, the Area Studies Project. Asian Studies and how they navigate continental Asia versus how we navigate as Asian Americans right. Like Asian Studies automatically include, in various circles that I've been in, Saudi, the Arab-Turk diasporic identities. But here, those would be considered white. And then so. Can you push back? And again, those are the conversations that we had in three field — three groups that were navigating these Asian American Studies was how do we push back and create the geographies that's in conversation with those that we say are back [made air quotes] quote unquote at home.</p>
40:05	<p>Emily Nguyen: Thank you so much. Is there anything else he also wanted to share?</p>
	<p>J.A. Ruanto-Ramirez: I feel like for me, I just wish that there was more conversation — like so this year, we had Asian American — Asian Pacific Islander American Heritage Month. Hopefully, in the future — APSA, KP, and MSA was involved, back then, and so was CCAAS. And it's been sort of in and out trying to get student input and frameworks into that, so hopefully next year we really push more on having student voice. Because I'm always pro using university funding, university resources, and university need for diversity to get the resources to complicate things up. If Asian American Heritage Month, AAPIH, which I helped create when I was in undergrad and actually was the founder of the Asian American Heritage Celebration in 2006. As an undergraduate that was my project at the Cross Cultural Center, like the very first one, because the university didn't think that they needed one. To — and the whole point of that month was to have these critical dialogues and critical conversations and I'm hoping that in the future it doesn't get neo-liberalized multi-culti that the original intent was to have these hard critical dialogues in relation to the student and the community needs. So, if we progress forward with celebration month in the future, how can the minor and the program and the students demand the critical space and hard conversations that's needed?</p>
	<p>Emily Nguyen: Thank you so much, I guess that concludes our oral history interview. I'm going to stop the recording.</p>