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Matt Vu Oral History

May 10, 2021

Length of interview: 54:49

Interviewee: Matt Vu

Interviewer: Johnny Nguyen

Transcribed and translated by: Johnny Nguyen, Dephny Duan

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

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Time	Transcription
0:03	Johnny Nguyen: All right. My name is Johnny Nguyen, and today is May 10, 2021, and I'm interviewing Matt Vu through Zoom for the UC San Diego Asian American and Pacific Islander Studies Community Archival Project. Do you agree to grant the university permission to archive and publish this interview for educational purposes?
	Matthew Vu: Yes, of course.
	Johnny Nguyen: Alright, awesome. So first question, would you like to quickly introduce yourself and tell me about your upbringing like where you were born and describe your hometown.
	Matthew Vu: Sure, um so my name is Matthew Vu. I am born and raised in San Jose, South Bay area. Umm I went to UCSD from 2007 to 2012. Thurgood Marshall College. And um yeah I- moving to LA was like the first time me living outside, you know, of my small community on my own so that was really - that was interesting. Growing up and well, actually you know I say San Jose, but actually it's Milpitas, let's be legit [laughs] I'm from Milpitas, which is mostly an Asian community you know. I'm Vietnamese American, and you know a lot of my neighbors were Vietnamese, Filipino, Chinese. And you know. Yeah it was pretty, it was - it was fun, you know. Everyone was different, but we all like grew up together and so were in each other's houses. I had very close [unclear] friends, and it was really cool yeah.
	Johnny Nguyen: Right and what do you currently do now, considering that you kind of yeah.
	Matthew Vu: Well, now I'm in housing policy. I'm the Trade Tech Policy Fellow at T.R.U.S.T. South LA, which is a community land trust here in South Central. Right now I'm working with T.R.U.S.T. to support community land trust work, advanced CLT policy here in the county, and you know, build up a new network of organizers who are ready to challenge the way we do, housing, you know if we think housing as a human right. This is a really amazing path that we're on right now that can, you know, change how it is right, you know, so I'm excited to be doing that.
	Johnny Nguyen: And so back here years at UCSD.
	Matthew Vu: Mhm.
	Johnny Nguyen: What did you major in, and what were some of the things that you're involved in.

2:58	Matthew Vu: Okay, so I went to UCSD between the years of 2007 and 2012. Yes 2012. I started with Summer Bridge, which was a transformative experience, transformative like. [pause]. And I studied Gen Bio and Ethnic Studies.
	Johnny Nguyen: So, what was the campus climate like during your years at UCSD, like were there any interesting events going on?
	Matthew Vu: Yeah so I mentioned Summer Bridge I think like one of the things that Summer Bridge really connected me to was the Cross cultural Center, and through them, the SAAC community and [pause] SAAC community, Student Affirmative Action Committee. Um of course, and that was really like, I would say, grounded my entire undergrad experience at UCSan Diego, you know what I mean. And so I was involved with Kalbigang Pilipino, APSA, and um, and SAAC you know. I was really excited to be in that community. I thought it was bubbling, it had so much great energy, and it, I felt like for me, I consider myself a student of history, you know what I mean, and I felt like SAAC was taking the lessons of history and applying them to where we were at in that moment, you know what I mean, and I feel like during my time there one of the biggest things that happened, of course, was the Compton Cookout in 2010. So that year by itself was huge, because I remember in 2009 the Regents had just proposed that I think it was like 32% fee hike in one year, and I remember protesting alongside students at UCLA at the Regent's meeting, and that moment really changed me, you know. There were students from all over the UC system, who had made their way to be here, who had made contingency plans for the safety of all of the people that they were coming with, and had a tactic of pressure that was- and and demands that were clear, you know what I mean. That changed me. So I experienced that. That was also the year of the 99% and so, Occupy Movement was all over the nation. We were planning to have a March 4th International Day of Action in defense of public education, because at that time, um I think one of the things that was coming up was the university in Puerto Rico was in danger of cutting all of these programs because they were bankrupt, and there was- there was no there was no money after the 2008 Recession for money- for for school. And so they were cutting all the liberal arts programs, soft sciences, you know, anything critical of power so that was already the environment that was on campus when the Compton Cookout happened in January of 2010. We were already going through intense like [pause] chan- ah uh systems change like you know shocks, you know what I mean, like crises after crises. And this one just blew everything up. And I remember like on campus like before you know this happened [pause] I don't know they still call UCSD quiet, but it's very quiet, apathetic people keep to themselves, I'm just here with my blinders on to do my major and get out and you know, make the money to repay my loan. Because not everyone at UCSD is, is super rich. It's- I mean it's a- it costs money. UCSD is not cheap, but it's not like Princeton or Harvard [laughs]

	<p>“Haah-ward.” It’s, you know what I mean, like it’s still somewhat accessible to low-income students here, locally, because students made that happen - shout out SPACES - and all of the work that that you know preceded that, you know, like. So on campus I felt like a lot of that was survival, you know what I mean. And SAAC was one of the few entities on campus that I, that again, which drew me into this community has always been authentic from day one, you know what I mean - radical acceptance of the people that they’re that they are supporting and are representing which is every student, you know, like the universality of being able to be on this campus is truly important because that’s what the Master, Master Plan of Education 1960 was supposed to do right? You know that ain’t true, but these were people who lived those values for everybody and and and it was, it is still, is inspiring [unclear]. So when 2010 happened, it really, I felt like the whole campus was like grabbed by the scruff of their neck and just shaken, you know, shaken out of complicity and all of a sudden, all these things that these students have been talking about for so long is like laid bare before us, and that, that entire year transformed me so much because I would say that, Milpitas where I’m from, is very much like UCSD in that sense: people keep to themselves to keep quiet, you know, like yeah there’s hella Asians, but no one’s doing anything hella crazy. Except when it’s the car meet and that got shut down real quick, you know what I mean. So like- you like- And, and in that moment, when we were getting shaken out and like 09-10 [pause] yea I felt like I needed that, and I wanted to see more of that reflected in the areas that I grew up, grew up in, because I look back and I see like how like that sort of like sleepiness or that unwillingness to engage or acknowledge can really, you know, just damage people, and it doesn’t have to be. So like that was really transformative for me.</p>
<p>9:56</p>	<p>Johnny Nguyen: So um you mentioned that you initially got involved with organizations like SAAC or like APSA on campus and also how UCSD can be considered sort of like the quiet complicit type of environment, so what initially made you get into this, this space of activism, and what made us stay in it?</p>
	<p>Matthew Vu: I mean [sighs] [pause] there are [sighs] [pause] I’m trying to figure out how to to put all of these thoughts that I have but um you know [pause] I identify as queer, you know mean, and [pause] I- and also I, and also being the son of refugees, you know I mean [pause] always been told that I have to like, you know [pause] you know, like stay out of trouble, don’t stick out, all of this and I’m just like you are ignoring me, like you need to see and accept me for who I am and not tell me to be less than or anything other than who I am, you know I mean, and I feel like the students in SAAC, the staff that support them, they’re all like allies of SAAC, you know, like carry that spirit, like needing to be seen and to, and to like be acknowledged and an unwillingness to let anyone see them anything else than that, you know I mean, it’s like this radical authenticity that is rooted in the love of</p>

	<p>everyone around them, you know what I mean, and I saw that like like that's like to me in words, that sounds like gobbledygook or like theoretical "this this and that", I saw every day like you know the like, the moments of like kindness and like calling people and and like actually making a connection cross culturally, rather than just like "oh like they my, they my friend in - I don't know - in DOC right," and I see them and we cool. No, these were like we were making connections ,and it was it was beautiful. That's why that's why I was attracted to that, and I feel like for social justice, I've always understood that the world was unfair, you know I mean, but I think the part that really killed me was how cruel it is unnecessarily. And so, like I've been involved in like, I guess, charity work when I was in high school, and a lot of it had to do with income inequality, you know what I mean. So that was my lens. I did like work with youth at an assisted living center [pause] or I don't know if that's the right word but it's like folks who are barely getting out of homelessness-Supportive living there, we go. I think that's what it is. Sorry. But we were doing like a summer camp for youth who lives in that, in that, you know development, which is great don't get me wrong it's kind of like where I'm coming back now in my career, but like I didn't really have the lens that I got until um Summer Bridge, SAAC, the Cross Cultural Center and Ethnic Studies like really helps him to refine it and understand to see like how a feeling of inequality manifests into systems and borders and bureaucracies in this world that govern our life chances, you know I mean. So, I felt like a lot of the things like that, that's one of the reasons why I really enjoyed my time at UCSD and, like in this nexus of amazing thoughtful individuals who are just like incredibly brilliant but also like [unclear] and um yeah that's why I stuck around, you what I mean. [laughs]</p>
14:39	<p>Johnny Nguyen: In your time at UCSD, were there any classes that um like helped shape your worldview, I guess, 'cause you mentioned that you might have been, might have taken some Ethnic Studies classes. Were there any classes in particular that really helped you in any way?</p>
	<p>Matthew Vu: Yeah I mean like, okay [pause] I remember this one class, in particular with Professor Thuy Vo Dang who taught comparative Filipino American and Vietnamese American literature. I don't know if that class is still around, but that class blew my mind, and I still see ,see her on Facebook. [laughs] I can't stop saying like, thinking like "oh my God that class." Literally 'cause I only took that one class with her and ... but what it helped me see was like how do writing [pause] it- but all right, it was Filipino American and Vietnamese American, right? Vietnamese-American-ness is fairly new to, like, to the US, you know what I mean? Filipinos have been in the US, maybe let's say, like all right so from now until like you know the 70s when most of us came over here, that's like 50 years right? Filipinos had been in the US much longer than that, especially because they were colonized in 1898, right, so during this this long ass period- long period of</p>

	<p>time [laughs] in which Asians were barred from coming to the US, Filipinos could, and so like I didn't realize that when we compared the literature, how similar it was you know, despite how different our histories are, and in that moment through- and this is you know, this is a lot of this is like, you know, Carlos Bulosan and like some other books. I can't remember the entire book on my list, but I do have the syllabus, and I will I can dig it out my computer, if need be, but I remember this class just like really opened up what Asian American-ness kind of was, which was like all of us were colonized, all of us were like affected by US foreign policy, and we're here, you know, like whether like [pause] as to be incorporated wholly and like uplifted for that or to be like I don't know, it's weird. It's a weird relationship right because like I felt like thinking about what the US to to Vietnam, you know what, I mean kids still being born to this day with birth defects to Agent Orange like I have really like deep-hearted like deep-seated anger for that you know I mean. but we're here and what am I doing i'm trying to make this place better. That's kind of a weird cycle, but you know I felt like that that work is kind of necessary to heal yourself from that you know I mean.</p>
<p>18:14</p>	<p>Johnny Nguyen: So one of the organizations that you founded and helped lead was CCAAS. Can you tell me a little bit about CCAAS?</p>
	<p>Matthew Vu: yeah, so I think CCAAS is uh the Coalition for Critical Asian American Studies, and I founded that in- co-founded that with a bunch of brilliant students - let me not take the credit for it - I just, I was just the vocal person trying to bring people together, so I feel like people kind of looked at me towards that, but literally, it was a cohort of amazing students who like saw the need after like the Compton Cookout and everything that we needed to do something, you know what I mean, and it wasn't necessarily to like you know say like "Oh we're the good Asians." It was to really change the way that we understand Asian American-ness you know I mean, and I felt like you know because of classes like Professor Dang's comparative Fil-Am and Viet-Am lit class. I saw how Asian American Studies helped me understand or relate to other groups in a better way you know I mean. I feel like a lot of times when we look, when we think "Asian Americans," even like that Latinx or like Black you know, these are big homogenous groups, and people have the tendency to just like take broad strokes about what it means to be like that.</p>
	<p>Johnny Ngueyn: Mmm.</p>
<p>19:54</p>	<p>Matthew Vu: Okay, like maybe we've gotten better at it today because we know the different groups by name, like Filipinos, Vietnamese, like you know Hmong, some people may, the country is, the jury is out on the rest of the country, but like you know what I mean. Even between us it's difficult for us to understand that relationship with each other and then the relationship that all of us have to this</p>

	<p>country right because, like Asian American is such as blah it's not a racial identity, you know I mean, Asian American is a political identity. Asian American is a term that evolved out of the Civil Rights Era, as Asian like as Asian groups in the US were trying to figure out how to support Black power, you know what i mean. Like before all the groups would be separated: Chinese American, Japanese Americans, Filipinos. And now Asian American is a political coalition identity that brings us together in the understanding that we are in solidarity against white supremacy and all of its forms, right? Misogyny homophobia or xenophobia, all of these things. So that was what like the the ideological bedrock from where I was operating at that time because I thought like you know the Compton Cookout happened. I remember the day of action that we came together as students who was, it oh my gosh. So I organize primarily with Kalbigang Pilipino (KP), and I remember that day hella KP students came out like, and I say that because KP is one of the largest, if not the largest SAAC org. I don't know if they still are, but they're big. They got a lot of money. They do a lot of things that are seen social, although they they have like the the high, how do I how do I say this. The reputation was that KP was, you know, like they were political because they needed some bodies, but there was more work to be done, let's say that you know what I mean. And that day people showed out, and I was [whew] I was crying because like for me, like that showed me like you know, those are those those are the folks that I claim [unclear] and the folks who claims me, you know mean, and they were showing out. And I feel like right now again like with protests and everything you got to show show up for your people that you love and show out for the people that you love, you know what I mean. It cannot be silent displays of affection, you have to show up and show out. So I felt like that day like you know folks came through and u, we wanted to know how to carry that momentum, because you know, like of course, after after that day of action, and then the March 4th action, which was like a couple months later and I think one of the, I think one of the reports, said that we that our attendance for that protest matched Berkeley's, and I just wanna you know, I just want to enter that into the record because [laughs] that was a very proud moment for me too because I felt like like we were slowly shaking off this apathy off of the campus you know. That's what it felt like to me, you know, and I felt like now that we're doing this, now that you know the BSU and MeCHa student leaders have been able to wrestle things from the administration in response to that [pause]like the the the atmosphere is much more amenable to student organizing.</p>
	Johnny Nguyen: Mmm.
23:49	Matthew Vu: And I felt like, at that time I had, I [pause] I was really really conflicted you know I mean, because like one of the things people said was "Why is there only a BSU and MeCHa Resource Center? What about Asians?" I was like "Yeah,

what about, what about for API students?" But you can't just say, like you can't just be like "Well, what about us/?" because now you have all these students who claim... How do I? I'm, I'm really trying to say this in a way that's not problematic or like in like pointing fingers and stuff like that, but like again, a lot of API students on campus are not very directly involved in political things, in things that require a little bit of risk or public exposure, you know. Protesting is not, is not for play you know. I organized alongside people who like you know, took over the 10 (freeway) right like you know, who took over the streets who like who like, DREAMers, okay DREAMers like before DREAMers was even a thing, like undocumented students who are still doing this thing. I am alongside like the bravest stu-like people I know in my life, like during that time. And so, like, I feel like, you have to show bravery and show, again, show up and show out, and not just say "What about me," you know I mean, and so, for me, I was like, "I, how do I, how do we continue this moving," because there are people who are activated people who are trying to understand like, again, because of like the apathy right there are there are API students who obviously feel the other way, who feel like their heart can't contain themselves with anger and sadness and frustration and all these things, people who want to do action right and so like [laughs] Sorry. Long story short, bringing this back to the coalition: this was an attempt to say how do we codify this in a way to help nurture students into a consciousness of political action of the political nature, being Asian American right, because again Asian American is not racial it's political, and whether or not like we choose to identify ourselves as Asian American, we're going to be looked at as Asian American. So, if we are able to change that understanding as well where, you know what I mean, we can work with that, we can we can figure out a new homeostasis that is hopefully less about being adjacent to whiteness or to find safety and survival and minimizing ourselves, but to be able to, you know mean, to be free, to really be free, you know what I mean? Like I know that's a big grand, nebulous statement, but like, I felt like if we, at a university don't even have an Asian American Studies minor, how are we going to be capturing those students who feel like in these moments that you know, like they can't take them where they want to do something, if we don't have a pipeline to help guide people into understanding what it is that they're feeling. And I felt like for me, again, Ethnic studies, the Cross, Summer Bridge, all of them gave me a language to to point at something and and understand the feeling behind it, you know what I mean, like i'm like I see homelessness and I'm like just like, you know like, all the feelings I'm feeling, "Why?" Okay now, I have the lens to understand that. It's because that this doesn't have to be and their solution to this and we can implement them and then and all of this thing as possible right. Sso I felt like Asian, like at the time, it was 10 campuses, and we were the last undergraduate school to not have an Asian American Studies minor, even Merced had one, like you know what I mean? And Merced is spanking new, not to say anything about Merced because a lot of my friends got into Merced, and it's a

	<p>beautiful campus [unclear] but like you know what I mean, just like they're new, they have it. UCSD is one of, you know, top three, arguably, institutions in the system and they don't have Asian American Studies? And that kind of took me into a whirl because I started talking to a lot of staff about it, and they were like "Yeah, you know people have been trying to institute an Asian American Studies minor for like 40 years." And [laughs] that blew my mind. You mean there's, there's been 40 years of people like, offering to do this work to put this department like department or like the study together and to like do the classes and students who've been asking for it, and it still hasn't been done? No, we need to capitalize on the, the administration right now being amenable to listening to students and prepare to get us to that point right? I want, I felt like, I felt like that was an organizing moment for me because, like we, we need to be able to help people I felt like, and and-sorry I'm sorry this is kind of jumbled, but a lot of thoughts are coming to me at once...</p>
	<p>Johnny Nguyen: No worries.</p>
<p>29:48</p>	<p>Matthew Vu: ... okay. but, like, for me, the Ethnic Studies department at UCSD was particularly informative in, in why I wanted to do this because UCSD does comparative ethnic studies, you know I mean. A lot of other schools may say, like do you want to do Chicano studies or Black studies or you know, like like as as like the like, you get the general ethnic studies and then you kind of like siphoned off into something right, but but UCSD was comparativ. And so, for me, I felt like that was very informative in my, in why I wanted to do this minor because I had such trust in that department, and that in my training with this department, I was able to come to the cross racial and social justice lens that I have, you know I mean, and I value that so much, I value that the Ethnic Studies department at UCSD so much that I really felt like if they did, were able to have Asian American studies, again with the amazing faculty on campus, that would just give people the ability to see through all these problems that we have and come closer to the identity that understanding that Asian American is not like a racial marker, you're not just Asian American, but what Asian American is, is a choice, a choice of association right, and so like like don't just use that without, you I mean? [laughs] I'm sorry.</p>
<p>31:13</p>	<p>Johnny Nguyen: It's all fine, all good. Um were there any points where you notice the administration, you know starting to budge, like starting to listen to the demands or was it still kind of like a plateau?</p>
	<p>Matthew Vu: So for me, I was only there the first year, which was 2011 to 2012 right. I felt like during that time, I was mostly concerned with setting up infrastructure for the organization, you know what I mean. Um I was, and I felt like I need to do that because I felt like everyone wants [pause] I don't know I just felt like I needed to do that, and I something told me that it would help, and I feel like</p>

	<p>maybe it helps contribute to the longevity of the organization, because now, you know what I mean, like it's, it's like 10 years later, you know what I mean, and it's finally happening, you know I mean, and I didn't- honestly when I started this work alongside like you know the students [pause] It was, I didn't know that it was going to get to this point. I really dreamed of it, and I was hoping that by contributing longevity someone else would be able to carry it through because I knew this was worthwhile. So I just remember spending a lot of time with the students around me who wanted to take on leadership roles and to like, you know, and to help support them the best way I can and keep people together. I felt like that that was my strongest point you know, keeping people together, keeping people on tasks, helping support people in their capacities, and people trusted me with you know holding us together and for the structure, and I hope that my role played well because like you know, like here we are. [laughs]</p>
33:39	<p>Johnny Nguyen: In terms of the other students on campus, particularly AAPI students, were they, were folks aware of the organizing efforts that were happening?</p>
	<p>Matthew Vu: I sure...ly hope so. We were like... I. Alright honestly, this a long ago I can't remember all of it, but I definitely remember like in my notes talking about different out, outreach efforts like town halls that we were doing um I remember um you know firing, doing you know I mean. For me, a lot of it blends together because I was not just doing that on campus. Me and one of my friends, Trung Nguyen from UCSD - UCLA I'm sorry - um were, were after, we're going from campus you know, on the conference tour. You know the UC conference or everybody knows the UC conference tour where it's really the only way I was able to get outside of the city, having no money, was to be involved, but like me and Trung were hosting town halls and caucuses all over the state at these conferences talking with other API student leaders at other campuses about this understanding of Asian American as being a political choice, a political coalition identity, right, and we formed the West Coast AP- WCAPSU, API Student Union rightm West Coast API Student Union, and that existed for some time too, but we're trying to, again, connect Asian American-ness to like where we're living at right now right, and in this moment, right now, if being Asian American is choosing to be in coalition with each other against white supremacy. What does that look like? What are the actions that are concrete? What are the ways that we can show up and show out for each other right? And so that was another, another thing I was doing so, like a lot of the events that I did for that arm, the external arm and for the Coalition for Critical Asian American studies, which was like the internal arm, you what I mean like now that I'm thinking about it, that's what it, that's what that was. [pause] [laughs] Wait did I answer that question or no?</p>

36:13	Johnny Nguyen: Um oh yeah.
	<p>Matthew Vu: Oh, how did the student- Well okay so yeah you know other students were feelin' it, other students were feelin' it too, you know I mean. That, I feel like I'm very... that was one of the things that kept me going actually: being able to talk to other students and for them to understand me and say that is something that vibrates with me, and how can we come together to like sort of build this awareness of what we're doing around us, you know I mean, and I feel like right now, especial- [pause] especially in the wake of the violence against Asian Americans right now, you know what I mean.</p>
	Johnny Nguyen: Mhm.
	<p>Matthew Vu: I - I'm feeling really conflicted right now because... and this kind of mirrors what I was feeling at the time at UCSD too, but I'm going to tell it to an analog. So like right now like in the midst of all this AAPI violence right, I've seen people say, "Well, we know how to deal with that here in LA," and it's pictures of Korean shop owners on rooftops with guns, you know, during the riots in the '92 uprising. And for me that was really triggering [pause] because, yes, a lot of Korean stores were targeted, but no one wants to talk about how the riot started with the murder of Latasha Harland by a Korean store owner and how she was led off with like a fine and probation.</p>
	Johnny Nguyen: Mmm mhm.
	<p>Matthew Vu: So, until we understand how like like in Asian American Studies, like the whole point of it is, until we understand the true history of our existence on this, in this country, we will never be able to be more closely aligned with social justice because we'll still be simping and caping for white supremacy. In Asian American studies and history and understanding that truth is insanely important into being able to decode that because I don't blame the riots on like that particular but like again like you know these are systems, these are systemic, it's not just the one thing, it's not just a one incident that started it, but it's the one incident being representative of a thousand more just like it. You know what I mean, like that's just the one that set it off. You know what I mean like things just don't happen for no reason. So again like you know, in my mind I wanted us to be able to have a similar understanding through Asian American Studies that next time there is a crisis that calls us to be to come forward for like the Latinx people or for Black people on campus, right? It's not just "what about me." It's like "what do you need" because there is the understanding that that in cross racial solidarity against white supremacy, folks will come to you, and people have come to us, you know what I mean, in in in like you know, despite all the violence against Asian Americans, people- the community has shown up generously, but there has been some blind</p>

	spots in how they show up that perpetuate white supremacy anti-Blackness all these other things right, and I feel like, at least at UCSD, if that Asian American studies minor was put into place that would have been able to help people see through that a little bit more clearly, cut through that noise. Um but I still I, I don't know I see, I see like from now to 10 years ago, I still see a lot of same things, which I think is a call that we do need Asian American Studies.
40:21	Johnny Nguyen: On this one, for a broad question but uh
	Matthew Vu: [laughs] okay.
	Johnny Nguyen: can you like, the first time you were like introduced to Asian American Studies like in general, considering the fact that UCSD didn't have it [overlaps with Matthew]
	Matthew Vu: Like in general.
	Johnny Nguyen: Yeah.
	Matthew Vu: Yeah so my cousin who's like nine years older than me, she went to Berkeley, and she already was going to be a doctor, but she ended up doing Asian American Studies 'cause she got involved with you know the VSA and with different orgs then she was taking these classes, like might as well just minor in it, and that was the first time I heard of Asian American Studies, you know I mean, I was like "okay that's cool" but, like my, I remember my aunts and uncles like "why the heck did you do that," you know what I mean like "you're Asian like, why do you need to do that," and I imagine that's the same thing that you know folks would say to like young Asian folks who may want to do Asian American studies, but um yeah that was my first memory.
	Johnny Nguyen: And did that like have any impact on your activism?
	Matthew Vu: Um to be honest, no. I just, it was really funny because you know growing up I wouldn't really hear a lot of good things about other Asians, you know what I mean, or even ourselves, you know I mean, like when we go to like restaurants, you know, my mom would be like "Watch, they give us shitty service that they give those people over there great service," and it was like people who were not Vietnamese right. Excuse my French. Sorry um. But yeah, if you like, Vietnamese give other Vietnamese the worst service, or like you know "there's nothing good about duhduhduh." I don't know, it was really weird to me because I'm like, "Why are we spending so much time doing this," you know, like you- "why don't you take Asian American Studies? You don't know your own culture? Duhduhduhduhduhduhduh." I'm like, "Well, I'm [pause] [shrugs] [laughs] I don't know we grow up in America. What did you expect?" you know what I mean. All

	<p>these normalizing forces that tell us to not like ourselves. There needs to be something affirming, so I understand why people love Asian American Studies. That's why I love it.</p>
42:47	<p>Johnny Nguyen: So um, as we know, UCSD finally has the Asian American Pacific Islander minor, Studies minor [overlaps with Matthew]</p>
	<p>Matthew Vu: Yuhhhh [claps] [finger hearts] [finger waves]</p>
	<p>Johnny Nguyen: What were your like initial thoughts when you first heard that it was finally being established?</p>
	<p>Matthew Vu: Dude no lie I cried. I was so happy to be honest and part, part of it was just that I had just a little like thing to do with it, but for me it was reading about how students have have done so much work, you know, to make this happen, and staff and faculty who came together in this moment to be like "we want this," you know what I mean. And, for me it was, it was like 50 years, it took 50 years we finally got it, you know, and I just had one small portion of holding up that [unclear] and that was just so like amazing to me 'cause I honestly, I never thought that I would have anything, I don't know I just thought that, like I would fade from time, you know what I mean, and like not be a part of anything that meant that much to me, you know what I mean,. Like it was my fifth year, I was burning out, but this was the thing that kept me going, and I was surrounded by so many people who shared that same light, you know I mean. It meant so much to me, still does you know what I mean, and like for me to infer that to actually accomplish what we set out to do, like overwhelm you know what i mean, and humbling, humbling because, like I don't know, when I was at UCSD was like a really big time of change to right, like they they like shut down the first Cultural Center, Cross Cultural Center and like moved, and all of the SAAC offices got moved, and all of this, like art and history and meaning and these walls were just taken down for what? The Outback store? Okay cool, you know what I mean, like, I've seen like you know, like, and so, for me, like to hold- like institutions come and go, you want to mean for like, you know efforts come and go, but do they stay, do they mean, and in this moment, it was just like, dang it does. That was, it was, it was humbling.</p>
45:26	<p>Johnny Nguyen: And in the coming years, what do you want to see come out of the program?</p>
	<p>Matthew Vu: I don't think it's up to me to determine like what I want to see from these programs. O'm not gonna lie, though, like after I finished crying out of like you know joy and like you know, like all of these feelings and like emotions, I was like dang I really want to take those classes,. I want to go over there and see what</p>

	<p>is going on, but part of me is like you know, it's not my time anymore, and maybe that's me on colonial time, so I need to like check myself. But i'm honestly, I just want people to, I just thought the program affirms people you know because I, I remember growing up, and my mom was like "don't go to the VSA", "don't do the cultural show", "why are you doing that" you know, like you know I mean, and I hope that I hope that, like you know, an Asian America- I feel like Asian American-ness is so defined by like being neither here nor there, you know, of but not, you know what I mean. There's like a little outsider to it, even though we're not you know I mean. Asian Americans have been in this country doing things for a long ass time, you know I mean, and I feel, I hope that Asian American, like the Asian American Studies minor, helps ease that for people, you know what I mean, because, like, I always feel like an outsider. I'm like to left for the VSA, I'm like not woke enough for certain people, you know what I mean, but there's a spirit of wanting to be better, you know and to belong that I hope that Asian American Studies kind of smoothes out for people.</p>
47:31	<p>Johnny Nguyen: So, if you like, for example, encountered like a current student who is debating on whether they should take the AAPI minor., what would you say to them, and what would you want them to take away from that experience?</p>
	<p>Matthew Vu: Well, you know in my day I may have convinced, a person or two to choose UCSD over all other schools that they were considered for you know like but, so so so selling things is my forte, but I'm gonna say that honestly [paise] I'm at a loss for words, right now, honestly, because this is so emotional to me, you know what I mean, um to convince me to convince someone to take Asian American Studies minor. [longer pause] I'm speechless. I don't know. Quiet storm in my head of all these like you know hearts flying around and like you know lightning bolts and stuff, but I cannot, I cannot put the words together right now. I'm sorry.</p>
	<p>Johnny Nguyen: No worries. [laughs]</p>
	<p>Matthew Vu: [laughs]</p>
	<p>Johnny Nguyen: [laughs] Alright, so are there any more like memories or stories from your time at UCSD that you'd like to share?</p>
	<p>Matthew Vu: I mean [pause] I don't know how, I don't know if I want to share them in this venue. You can always reach out to me, we can talk private, but like I think like what it was was a lot of the extracurricular activities, I suppose you know what I mean, like things like yeah Ethnic Studies, like a lot of students were hanging out at the Cross were in Ethnic Studies, a lot of them are not either. They're in other things too, but like um. Shoot. Yeah so the extracurriculars that brought us</p>

	together, because we were, people otherwise I would not have otherwise metm who changed my life and like showed me like all the best things I know. So [pause] yeah. [laughs]
50:05	Johnny Nguyen: I think that is the end of my question, but is there anything else you wanted to share?
	Matthew Vu: No, I think like you know [pause] I don't know I', reflecting on our conversation and also like you know going over the questions beforehand, part of me was trying to reconcile, I don't know, this feeling of shame or guilt, and it was so, or, it was so weird, you know I mean, because after I left campus I kind've dipped, you know I mean, and I was kind of nervous to come back because to be honest, I didn't finish my degrees, and I don't know if a lot of people know that, but you know, like I felt like I had people down, that I wasn't living up to what I was supposed to do, and so I kind of dipped, and I didn't really tune back in for a long time, and I felt like I let that shame and guilt sort of like take me away from the UCSD community and especially from a project that meant so much to me, I did like, of course, keep in touch with like you know folks that CCAAS, and we're still friends and all but, like you know I kind of withdrew, and I just kind of let that be on its own because I felt like I needed to like, I don't know, shoo myself or whatever. And so like one of the things that Ethnic Studies and Asian American Studies and like that whole project or process of building this coalition of bringing people together and setting this infrastructure really helped me work through a lot of that, and really helped me sort of [pause] like navigate what my role is, you know, in this world, in the US as Asian American, as someone who chooses this this identity right. I always like say I'm Vietnamese first, but like, you know, I choose Asian American as a political marker as an, as a side of my alliance and my commitment to other people who are oppressed or, you know, messed with by white supremacy and all of its systems, you know. So like I don't know like like being in that space of having that shared commitment and solidarity has helped me really work through that and like pull me out and into a space of action and being proactive, you know, and so I'm just really thankful to have been able to be a part of that process of like, you know, of pushing that ball up the hill just a little bit. I'm super humbled that y'all even want to speak to me, but yeah like this, like that I'm so proud of all the students who really took on that work after I dropped out and kind of like, you know, like ran away a little bit. I'm really proud of like how those those people that you know 'cause, 'cause the people who took it over were the people that I was working alongside my year right, and we were, you know what I mean. I, I hope that I, like you know, like what I did was set them up, but honestly after I left that all of these amazing ass students who carry this through, you know I mean. I feel like I did some, but like it's not all me, it's definitely like you know. I mean, I can't

	believe that it's happened still [laughs] you know what I mean. I'm sorry, I'm just rambling now. I'm just like overwhelmed.
54:13	Johnny Nguyen: I think it was really great. Thank you so much for coming here today and like sharing your stories 'cause I think it's really going to help like the future students, faculty see that this was all done through student activism, and I think, yea, that's really great that we're preserving these stories yeah.
	Matthew Vu: Thank you so much for, you know, asking me to share and for you know setting this up. I really appreciate it.
	Johnny Nguyen: Yeah, of course.