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UC SAN DIEGO

Michael Tea Oral History

May 7, 2021

Length of interview: 54:24

Interviewee: Michael Tea

Interviewer: Amira Noeuv

Transcribed by: Fuwei Yang

[Generating and Reclaiming our Wisdoms: A Collection of AAPI Stories at UCSD](https://knit.ucsd.edu/grow/2021/05/07/michael-tea-oral-history/)

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0:04	Amira Noeuv: Okay, so my name is Amira Noeuv and today is May 7th 2021. And I'm interviewing Michael Tea through Zoom from --or for UCSD, Asian American and Pacific Islander studies community archival project. Michael, do you agree to grant the university permission to archive and publish this interview for educational purposes?
0:29	Michael Tea: Yes!
0:30	Amira Noeuv: Awesome. Thank you! So I'm going to start with like some basic questions kinda get to know you a little bit and like your involvement with UCSD and then going into what your student life was like back then. And then kind of looking ahead towards the future and like your thoughts on the current Cambodian Student Association and the current project. So my first question is, where are you from originally? And like, where do you reside right now?
1:03	Michael Tea: Okay. Hi everyone ជំរាបសួរ! [laughs] Say hi, formally Cambodian style. I am--where am I from? I'm from Long Beach. And I currently--originally I was born and raised in Long Beach. And I currently reside in Buena Park, California, Orange County.
	Amira Noeuv: Okay
	Michael Tea: Mm hmm.
1:25	Amira Noeuv: And I'm also just writing notes. So if there's an awkward silence, that's what I'm doing [laughs]. How did you and your family come to live in Southern California?
1:36	Michael Tea: So my dad came here from Cambodia in 1975. He was--he was in the--he was in the Cambodian military. And then he had training outside of Cambodia. And then eventually, you know, the country fell to the Khmer Rouge. And then he--they asked him, did you want to go back home to Cambodia? Or did you want to go to USA and be a refugee and take refuge there. So he, of course, went to USA in 1975. And then he was sponsored in New York. And then he just eventually--I don't know how he ended up in California, in Southern California. And he just ended up in--in the South Bay Area. And then he met my mom who was--went through the Khmer Rouge and and then she was sponsored to live in San Diego because she was previously married to my older brother's father, whose

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	<p>younger brother also was in the Cambodian military and went to training in USA. And then he got stuck, like my dad too, and--and then was able to sponsor them to live in San Diego. And then my mom came to San Diego, with her with--with her and her in-laws, and then they-- eventually, somehow, my mom met my dad-- through my aunt and she says she was "tricked" by my aunt or something like that [laughs]. And they eventually settled in Long Beach and that's where I was born and raised. Yes.</p>
3:20	<p>Amira Noeuv: Okay. How many...? Like, did you have a big family?</p>
3:25	<p>Michael Tea: I would say medium size. I don't come from like a--like--like a pack of like--you know, siblings and brothers like my--like my--my dad, you know. He was from a family of 12. But medium size as in like, I have one older brother and two younger brothers. So not too--not too small. And not too big. Yeah.</p>
3:53	<p>Amira Noeuv: Okay. So--so what is your current occupation now?</p>
3:58	<p>Michael Tea: My current occupational--occupation. I'm currently a state employee for the Department of Motor Vehicles. So I work for the Department of Motor Vehicles at the Westminister field office. So I'm out on the field. I'm a DMV employee.</p>
4:16	<p>Amira Noeuv: Okay. When did you attend UCSD and when did you graduate?</p>
4:23	<p>Michael Tea: I attended UCSD in the fall of 2000. And then I graduated spring 2005. So about five years to leave UCSD.</p>
4:37	<p>Amira Noeuv: What was your major at UCSD?</p>
4:40	<p>Micheal Tea: My major is ethnic studies. That's my major, bachelor of arts and ethnic studies.</p>
4:48	<p>Amira Noeuv: What made you decide on ethnic studies as a major? Did you kind of know going in, like did you pick it while you were in high school?</p>
4:55	<p>Michael Tea: No, it's a long story just like every other Asian family story. You know, your parents always want you to become like a doctor, a lawyer, an engineer, you know, and something very, very successful, moneymaker you</p>

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	<p>know. So I had intentions of becoming a pharmacist because my oldest cousin is a pharmacist. And so she also went to UCSD. And then so I intended to be a pharmacist. So I majored in biochem bio. Then, later, I changed to biochem chem. And later I changed to human development, and then got to do pre-pharm requisites. And then it was just--science was just not my thing. And then to beat me up, you know, it was just like really difficult to pass. So, I mean, that whole dream died. And I just like, oh, mom, I'm gonna change my major to--to like social science, like ethnic studies. And what transpired for me that, because I'm interested in learning about, you know, history about people and you know, different ethnic background, and, you know--you know, the history of like--like--like just diversity and like what ethnic groups have been through and you know, just the movement and the history. Yeah. And that's basically why I ended up doing ethnic studies. So...</p>
6:38	<p>Amira Noeuv: What college were you in? Do you remember?</p>
	<p>Michael Tea: I am Eleanor Roosevelt.</p>
6:42	<p>Amira Noeuv: Okay. So did you take ethnic study courses and kind of got introduced that way? Or did you--?</p>
6:53	<p>Michael Tea: Sort of and sort of like joining organizations, like some of my--like fellow--like APSA [Asian & Pacific Islander Student Alliance] members were-- like ethnic studies, like majors and minors, and so sort of like that. You know APSA?</p>
	<p>Amira Noeuv: Yeah.</p>
	<p>Michael Tea: I was a member there. Like--is very--it's a--it's a ethnic student organization, but it's very like--like political motivated, like your political like--it provides like political awareness, especially amongst the Asian American and Pacific Islander group. So that kind of inspired me to, like, I want to work for my people or you know, I want to learn about my people. I want to...so that inspired me to like to do that major. And then I thought about like, helping my own people like Cambodians, like I always want to enter like social work with that. So I was intended to do like--after I graduated--like, my Bachelor's--like, go to graduate school and get an MSW[Master of Social Work] and be a licensed clinical social worker and impress my parents like, hey, I didn't become a pharmacist, but I'm a</p>

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	licensed clinical social worker, but that is a different route [laughs]. That is just like something different, you know, so yeah. Like, I didn't go--I didn't go straight. I went left on that. So, with grad school, with MSW and the passion died out about that, too. Because that's just burns out, you know.
8:31	Amira Noeuv: Yeah, yeah, definitely. What led you to decide on UC San Diego as your choice for undergrad?
8:40	Michael Tea: What decided my decision was initially I--first of all, I wanted to go somewhere far away from my parents, you know, because I've always lived with them. And I wanted to experience that real college experience. And you know, the sad thing-- I wanted to go to UCI, but I still want to want to live in the dorms and everything, but I did not get accepted there. It was odd, you know. It's like, oh, I was gonna be a shoo-in and be at UCI. I didn't end up that way. So I got accepted into UC San Diego, and I got into Berkeley, but Berkeley is just wayyy too far. And I don't know that many people except for my cousin who just got married recently and moved there to be with her hus[husband]. So I figured, why not choose UC San Diego because it's far away from my parents. It's--and it's close to everyone on my mom's side. All my mom's side lives in San Diego. So I'm like, okay, I have my cousin. I have my aunts. I have my uncle around me. And my grandma lives there. So I can visit my grandmother because she was living in a convalescent home in La Jolla. So I can visit her you know. So--so that just happened to be the perfect timing for me to choose UC San Diego and it's a good school. Yeah. It was a hard school to get to--into for a lot of--a lot of students at that time. And now it's like extra super, super hard to it's like, the cream of the crop, you know, but--but yeah, I chose UC San Diego because it was around my relatives, and it wasn't too far from Long Beach. I could still, you know, go back home, you know, on the weekends, you know.
10:33	Amira Noeuv: Did you do that a lot. Go back home on the weekends?
10:35	Michael Tea: I did that. Yeah, I did that a lot. I would like catch a ride with my friends, my roommates or my--not roommates, the people-- my suitemates. I lived in--apartments. Oh no, I lived in the Reville housing. And some of my friends would live in around the same area, like around Long Beach. So I would have hitch a ride or take the train or like, my parents would pick me up sometimes, but not all the time. Or my--my older brother would take me back home. So...

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11:10	Amira Noeuv: Yeah. Nice. What would you say was your experience like as an Asian American or Khmer individual navigating higher education?
11:21	Michael Tea: My experiences? I would say-- I wouldn't say that--I think it's like any typical like experience, like college, because I wasn't the first in my family to go to college. I mean, my older brother went to San Diego State, so and then my other cousins went to university as well. So it's just that I wanted to, you know, represent my people like, because, you know, not many Cambodians aspire to go to college, you know, and I wanted to prove those statistics wrong, like, hey, you know, Cambodians do go to college. And how about that? I go to college. So I want to prove those statistics wrong, you know, because we're not always in good light when compared to other Asian ethnic groups. You know, like, always, when people think about like Cambodians people think, oh, you're a gangster? Or [laughs] you know, that kind of stuff. Oh, like, we--we like to have a lot of kids, we don't have highest aspirations, you know, so I felt it was my best interest to, you know, make the most of it and just try to represent Cambodians in a positive light. And that's why I attended university or college, you know, just to best represent us, you know.
	Amira Noeuv: Yeah, definitely. Did you--Was it helpful for you to have somebody like an older brother and cousins who were in college, or who did college and kind of help you navigate, like, just school life?
	Michael Tea: I felt like, you know, because there's an age gap between my cousins that were born in Cambodia, older than me, who went to school, and then--and then I'm, like, the one of the first, like, cousins or grandchildren that was born in the US. So there's an age gap. So I didn't really rely on them too much. Like, you know, I would have them help me, like, applying schools and stuff like that. And, but I wouldn't say during that time, I didn't ask them about like, oh, what did you do? Like what courses you do take? You know, because I wanted to be an individual, you know, like, I wanted to learn on my own. I didn't want it to rely on my cousins, you know, and stuff like that. And, you know, like, oh, what major should I take? Or, you know, like, I just--I'm just an individualist.
	Amira Noeuv: Yeah. How were--how involved were you in, like, community organizing and service outside of school?

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	Michael Tea: During college life or before college life?
	Amira Noeuv: Yeah. Or, and before.
	Michael Tea: Well high school--high school and during college, I was always active in organizations. One for high school was because I wanted to go to a good school and do as much as--as much community active--activities, like volunteering or joining organizations to--to look good on my record now to get into those schools, you know. And then--and then--and then in college, it was basically to network and meet people who think alike, and I just wanted to represent, you know--you know, a young Cambodian kid who (is) attending--attending college, you know, just to prove and motivate himself and, you know, help out the community as much as possible, you know, to show that you know, that Cambodians go to college and have a normal life, you know.
15:14	Amira Noeuv: Yeah. Were your family members involved in the community, and did that influence you in any way?
15:23	Michael Tea: It did, because, you know, my cousins and my older brother were very active during college in CSA [Cambodian Student Association], San Diego State University. So they had, you know, they had all that experience in, you know, cultural shows and leadership. And then also my uncle, he's a big community leader, or MC[Master of ceremonies] in the Cambodian community of San Diego. So it's inspire me to--you know--to represent to do well, to help out people. And also, you know, I never met my grandfathers, but both my grandfathers were political--politicians. So my grandfather on my dad's side was mayor of several towns in southern Cambodia. And then my grandfather, on my mom's side, was a congressman, for his province. So they wanted to--like they're very nationalist, like, they want to help better themselves and Khmer nationalism like, they want them to do better and to strive better to they want to help their own people, you know, they want to be-- you know, they don't want you know--they want to see Cambodians to be successful and to achieve things in ways that to be political, active, and, you know, try to help your community.
	Amira Noeuv: Yeah. So that's inspiring.

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	<p>Michael Tea: Yeah, it does inspire me. So it's like--like come from a family that has been involved in helping the community, the city, the province, you know, helping with everything at large, you know, so it kind of motivates me. And, you know, what do I want to give back to my own people, my own community of Cambodia, along with my own peers at college, you know, so...</p>
17:20	<p>Amira Noeuv: Yeah, that makes sense. Um, what motivated you to create a student organization for Khmer folks? Like, what was the what was the objective at the beginning? I know, it wasn't called Cambodian Student Association at the beginning, right?</p>
17:37	<p>Micheal Tea: No, it wasn't. It was called Cambodian Student Connection. And basically, when I first got there to UCSD, I was like, Okay, well, I came from Long Beach. So Long Beach has a high population of Cambodians within the US, the largest one. And I just like, wanted to connect with Cambodian students that attended UCSD. So and then, when I was there, and I was like, oh, wow, there's all these clubs, Asian ethnicities. There's a Thai culture club. There's like Vietnamese, there's Filipino. There's APSA. And like, there's Chinese, you know, I was like, where is-- Cambodian? I'm like, oh, there's none! So I took the opportunity. I was really thinking maybe I should take the initiative and form the first Cambodian club, you know, and try to find people who go to UCSD and to take the lead in forming this Cambodian club because I wanted to connect with--with Cambodian people. And growing up, I always had Cambodian friends because I grew up in Long Beach. So yeah--So I just wanted to have that. It's just kind of like a security blanket, you know, kind of like, I grew up with Cambodians, and I want to be surrounded by Cambodians. And now I'm at UCSD, where there's not that many Cambodians. So I want to find--I want to find and hunt all these Cambodian people and make friends with them [laughs] and do things together with them.</p>
	<p>Amira Noeuv: Um, did you come in knowing other Cambodians already? Or how did you find members to start the org[organization]?</p>
	<p>Michael Tea: No, actually, okay, so at that time, you know, I didn't know anyone that was Khmer, Cambodian at UCSD. One of the founders was a freshman like me, and we happened to be in ERC[Eleanor Roosevelt College]. And then, you know, like, how they have like meet and greets, you</p>

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	<p>know, like, mingling with the people that--you know--we're both freshmen, you know, and so--someone told me like one of my suitemates, there's a Cambodian person here too, and I was like, what? where? And there--and happened to be that we were ERC and living in Revelle college campus because you know, who wants to live in Camp Snoopy? [laughs] So we have to live in Ravelle, take refuge in Argo Hall. I don't know if you are familiar with Argo Hall. So someone was like, oh, there's a Cambodian person. I was like what? really? And then so I met up with them. And it was my friend Vanna who was one of the founders. And we hit it right off, you know, because she's from Santa Ana. And she grew up with some Cambodians, you know, in ministry, you know, the community there. And Cam Fam [The Cambodian Family], she was involved with Cam Fam, the organization that was involved in their community in Santa Ana. So we had like this connection with our Cambodian community because we--we lived around Cambodian people. We just wanted to find other Cambodian people around us too at UCSD. So we just like, you know, we--we hit it right off because we were from like, Cambodian communities, you know, and we like watching Thai movies, Chinese movies [laughs]. So we had like, very similar like, ideas and then--and then I remember like, I was on Khmer Connection. And so one of the founders [of Khmer Connections] said that he lived in UCSD. So that's when I messaged and contacted Vibol like hey, like, let's meet up like, hey, should we form a Cambodian club? And that's how the whole ball started rolling. Rolling to form CSC, Cambodian Student Connection which later lead to changing the name to CSA [Cambodian Student Association].</p>
	<p>Amira Noeuv: Oh, wow. That's yeah, no, that's very interesting. I was just kind of like luck. And then the website.</p>
	<p>Micheal Tea: It's just like fate, you know.</p>
21:56	<p>Amira Noeuv: Yeah. When you started the organization, what were like some of your objectives like, was it just to kind of, like, have a group of people to hang out with that identify as Khmer?</p>
	<p>Micheal Tea: Yes, that was one of the objectives is to identify, you know, to create some kind of like group or organization--organizations to help Cambodian students especially, or to do like socialization or, you know, awareness to the UCSD community, you know--you know, we're Khmer and</p>

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	<p>we're here, so, we're not hiding under rocks or anything like that [laughs]. We want you guys to be aware that there are Cambodians, you know, and, you know--very--you know, like, I think it was like, very, like, amateurish, I would like to say that when we set it up, because I think like, when you--when we first start a club at UCSD, they have some requirements. So, you know, we're just like, looking, like they ask you, you know, they have like, what is this? The student organization like--your group's like bylaws, and yeah, contracts, whatever, you know, you. So we kind of just like, oh, we could just like googling and copy and paste, like, oh, okay, this is going to be our temporary, like, organization bylaws and you know, guidelines, you know, so because we had to submit it to, to show that we were, we want to form an official organization, so yeah.</p>
23:36	<p>Amira Noeuv: Yeah. What were some of the challenges you face like creating CSA [Cambodian Student Association] or Cambodian Student Connection at the time?</p>
23:45	<p>Michael Tea: Lack of membership. Yeah. Like--like--I like--I've told you before, like, literally, I know that sounds crazy. But I would look through the student directory and look for like, common Cambodian names, last names and you know, look them up and and with me and Vanna and we will call like, cold call, like, hey, we're forming a Cambodian organization, would you like to meet up with us and hang out or, you know, meet up and do something? And so that was one of the frustrations was lack of--lack of membership and lack of interest of some students like...suprisingly there's a lot of Cambodian people that attend UCSD but--but they just are focused on school, they don't care about extracurricular activities. They're not--they don't want to be involved with you know, like, an organization you know, they--so it's just kind of sad that they're not motivated to--you know, to touch base or connect with other Cambodian students so--but I don't take them-- I don't hold them accountable. You know, it's their decisions, their personal decisions. You know, you just got to start with what you have, you know.</p>
	<p>Amira Noeuv: Yeah. How many members did you end up getting?</p>
	<p>Micheal Tea: I would think I would say maybe I would say like six or seven. Six or seven at the time. Yeah.</p>

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25:26	Amira Noeuv: And then what sort of activities did you do in CSA [Cambodian Student Association]?
	Michael Tea: Well, we're kind of have, like an alliance with CSA at SDSU. So we would help them with their cultural show at the time. Back in the days SDSU used to throw a lot of culture shows that a lot of the Cambodian community at San Diego used to attend. So...
	Amira Noeuv: Oh, like more than once a year?
	Michael Tea: Oh, just once a year.
	Amira Noeuv: Oh. Okay.
	Michael Tea: That, you know, a lot of people would come. Yeah. So we would help out with that. And then also, like, I think it was--what is that Center Hall, like walkway with the piano cue? All the way to the library. So we would like have like, I think we had like a sign up sheet or something like that. When you got to introduce your...
	Amira Noeuv: Like on Library Walk?
	Michael Tea: Yeah, Library Walk. [laughs] It's been a while. Yeah. Yeah. Library Walk. Okay. We were like how like, sign up sheet and introduce, and I think we would like, I don't know, if we had food or beverage or I don't know. I don't remember if we had any food selling or I don't know, it's been a while. We try to entice people, you know, like, hey, join the Khmer club, you know, Cambodian club, you know. Yeah. So that's what I remember. And just meeting up, that's all.
27:04	Amira Noeuv: Did you get interest from students who didn't identify as Cambodians? Like going to those culture shows or those activities or--?
	Michael Tea: Well, you know, we would have like, you know, some of the members' roommates join. So yeah, we would have some non--like, non Cambodian people like, help out and join, you know.
27:28	Amira Noeuv: Yeah. And like, how big was the SDSU [San Diego State University] CSA?

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	Michael Tea: I would say just maybe--maybe, like 10 or 12 people, you know, but also SDSU, like non--non affiliated SDSU members, like just people who are like, from like, City College or the Cambodian community--Cambodian community would also join and help out with meetings and stuff.
	Amira Noeuv: Was that different for how it was done at UCSD?
	Michael Tea: I will say not much. I think it's very similar.
	Amira Noeuv: So you have like outside community members as well?
	Michael Tea: Not really, but mostly it was UCSD. SDSU, like my close friends would like, oh, yeah, you need us, our help and stuff like that.
	Amira Noeuv: Yeah. That makes sense. I wonder also, if it had to do with like location with where SDSU is, and where UCSD is.
	Michael Tea: I would say that too, because UCSD is more-- closer to the Cambodian community. You know, it's like, by El Cajon [Blvd], by University [Ave]. So...
28:54	Amira Noeuv: Yeah. How has being a part of CSA helpful for you, as a student and sort of navigating UC San Diego?
29:06	Michael Tea: It's--it has gotten me to like, basically, to socialize and connect with people and to--you know--to--to step up and you know to--to--you know, we have a lot of problems too, with, you know, with any organization, but it just makes you try to be prepared to be a better person or like a leader or something like that, because I took initiative. So, it actually makes me strive harder to do better and just overall general things, you know, like, you know, if I could put my mind into creating and helping with this community, Cambodian community, I mean, Cambodian organization at UCSD, then I could also take that and bond with other students and try to, you know, like--you know, try to form relationships with--you know, my classmates and stuff like that. You know, take a step, you know, like, hey, let's go study, you know. I'm not like one of those people who were just like, just go to class and I'm sitting here and not talk to anyone, you know [laughs].

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	Amira Noeuv: Yeah, yeah. Did you do--Was there like study sessions with CSA members, too? Or was it just kind of like an outlet to socialize more?
	Michael Tea: I think it was a more an outlet to socialize, because we were in like--you know, studying together. I mean, me and my--my co-founder, one of the co founder Vanna who was in the same college. Yeah, we started to go there, but we're--but it was just more of like, just community outreach and, you know, doing things and, you know. Because we're all like, in different year level, you know, like people, like, third year, some other people were like, graduating and--you know, we're just freshmen. So it's kind of like, you know, we're not on the same like, academic like, level, you know. We were doing like, you know, our elective and, you know, our GEs [General Education courses], they're doing their upper division for their, you know, their their majors, you know, so, they have a lot more on their plate. And us is just like, oh, did you do that paper for--MMW [Making of Modern World course at UCSD]? [laughs].
31:33	Amira Noeuv: Were you a part of other student organizations or activism on campus, while you were a student?
	Michael Tea: Yeah. Yes, I was. Especially with APSA, Asian-Pacific Islander Student Alliance.
	Amira Noeuv: And you said you served as like the cultural coordinator?
	Michael Tea: Right. Correct. So, I was an officer. I was a cultural coordinator. And because I wanted to bring an awareness to the Cambodian club or organization at UCSD. So it did help a lot--a lot, you know, and then some of the--some of the I--the other people who were after me did also connect with APSA as well too. So some of them were taking the--because APSA is a big umbrella group, you know, and so, they connect with a lot of different other Asian ethnic organizations, you know, because they--you know, they want to help each other out and, you know, bring awareness to the community and each other so...
	Amira Noeuv: Did you join APSA first, or did you try to start to CSA first or was it around the same time it all happened or...?
	Michael Tea: I joined APSA first. We are getting the ball rolling. I mean, one of the other co-founders--we also like joined APSA together to like, hey,

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	<p>let's go to the APSA meeting. In freshmen year, you want to take as much as you can, like, you know, it's our--we're--we're first time like, far away from home that's like, could use this moment to, like, socialize--we--because, you know, we're very studious and academic, you know, in high school, you know, because we're trying to get into, you know, university. Hey, let's take a breath and like--like, let's let's go meet people and get to know and hang out.</p>
	<p>Amira Noeuv: Yeah. I know, you said APSA is and was heavily involved in like, the political, you know, aspects and of like, Asian, Asian American awareness. Was CSA part of like, the conversation in establishing like, an AAPI minor or--?</p>
33:53	<p>Michael Tea: I don't think so. It wasn't at that level yet. I felt like it was more like--more of a social--like connection with each other versus then, you know, political, or anything like that. I mean, we didn't do anything. Like we didn't touch base on certain issues that affected our community, like, you know, deportation, and you know--you know, the low enrollment to college or anything, we didn't do anything that touch base with that, like, kind of subjects and stuff like that, or--yeah, so I mean, I wish we did. But we are more focused on trying to grow our club.</p>
	<p>Amira Noeuv: Yeah, that makes sense. And then you said you were also interested in helping establish like the AAPI minor? Was that a conversation that occurred during APSA?</p>
	<p>Michael Tea: I mean, I-- I did want it to connect with our organization with APSA as in maybe to help them to get involved with a lot of like political stuff, you know, or political activism in APSA or social aware--awareness. You know, so you know, just, you know, baby steps like leading. Yeah, one door leads to another door, you know. So that's what I wanted to do. To connect CSA with--with APSA, you know.</p>
	<p>Amira Noeuv: Yeah. So I kind of mentioned this earlier and in kind of like the one-pager that there's the AAPI program that was established finally at UC San Diego last fall like 2020. If you were a part of the program like that, what would you like to have experience? And what do you hope gets included in that AAPI studies program?</p>
	<p>Michael Tea: So what was it again, that earlier, like what was formed?</p>

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35:58	<p>Amira Noeuv: So last fall--So since like the 80s, essentially UC--like, a lot of students and like faculty and community members have been wanting to establish like a Asian American Pacific Islander Studies program at UCSD. Just given like the amount of student body and, you know, like, the history and all of that, but it wasn't established until last fall in 2020. So kind of like looking back, like, if you were part of a program like that, what would you have liked to experience? And what do you hope that like this new Asian and Pacific Islander studies, you know, program would include?</p>
	<p>Michael Tea: Wow [laughs] first question, how come it's just established last year, fall 2020. But, I mean, I want everyone to be, you know, every Asian American Pacific Islander ethnicity, I want them to be given a platform with this project, you know, so, I mean, because we're so diverse. We're-- we're a big minority group, you know. And we have--we come from different backgrounds, different histories, different social backgrounds, you know, and I want--you know, I want them-- people involved in this experience or a project to give them light to shed light on and to bring awareness to what plagues different Asian or Pacific Islander communities, you know, especially Cambodians because there's, there's so much--you know, a very tiny sliver about us, you know, and people have always been, you know, Asian people--when people think of Asians, they always think about--who? They always think about, like the main populated Asian ethnic groups oh Chinese when they think of Asians they think of, you know, Vietnamese Koreans, but what about us little people like Cambodian or Laotians, Hmong, you know, so I would want them to give a platform or some kind of light to people to display about their history, their culture, their--their political activism, what they've been through, you know, it just--I just want to give them light to-- to the--to all Asian ethnic groups, we're all important as well, not just major ones, you know.</p>
	<p>Amira Noeuv: Yeah, definitely. And then how would you say being a part of CSA impacted your, like, life after graduating, like, professional, personal life?</p>
38:56	<p>Michael Tea: Well, CSA has made me always step up in a lot of things, especially on work and life, like--you know, like--you know, it has gotten me like--when I graduated, I felt like I was burnt out from, you know, forming a club, like, I just like, oh no, I don't want to help out, like, I'll just go to cultural shows and stuff like that. I pass that baton or I pass that torch to the new</p>

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	<p>next generation, you know, I'm pretty sure they'll take care of it and, and I've seen it and I'm very proud of the current CSA going on still, you know, well the meetings and you know, the culture show I'm very proud of that. But it's inspired me to just step up in my personal career, my job like, you know, like, take initiative--things like--I took initiative in forming this--this--this organization, and I now at work I take initiative like when we have like group projects, or like--like, you know, when my colleague asked me to speak for our department within our office, like, I would always be the one to discuss and engage in and train and transpire people, you know, because I like talking to people, I'm okay with it, you know, like, I--I can communicate well, you know, and so it's--it's--It has making me become, I guess, as I just mean be more like, become a leader, you know? Be--you know, just take a step forward then--like, it just makes me more positive to like, go out, right. Like, people always look at work you know--or my friends or anything like that. They're always like, oh well, you take the lead or, you know, you take the initiative, so they always look at me like, me, why always? Why always me, you know? Then I take a break [laughs]. But I always always end up, you know, doing things for work, always step up the plate for my friends and stuff like that. So...</p>
	<p>Amira Noevu: Yeah, it's kind of like a skill that you wouldn't get otherwise. And just like classroom setting?</p>
	<p>Michael Tea: Yeah, yeah. So.</p>
	<p>Amira Noeuv: And I know, you said, like, you kind of like, pass the baton on. So do you keep up with like CSA activities? Or like, are you in the know?</p>
<p>41:25</p>	<p>Michael Tea: No, that's why I'm totally oblivious. You know, like, I do have, like--do keep in contact with, you know, like--through Facebook, Instagram, some former UCSD, like, alumni sort of--you know, that I--you know that I have known. And so I am kind of like oblivious. Like I don't know what's going on, you know. Like, I am kind of under the dark. And, but it's because I'm busy with life, you know, I got a lot of things going on, you know. And then, ever since me and my friends who graduated, like my friends who were in CSA at SDSU, and myself from UCSD, well we were just like--because we were so active in the Cambodian club, especially my friends at SDSU. Like--we just like--we did that, you know, like--we're about planning this big culture show at the end, you know, and so we were just--</p>

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	<p>just so burnt out from that five years of heavily involved student community organization that we just like to sit back and relax, you know. And just, you know, focus on other things, because we didn't--I mean, back then we just focus on--you know, oh we got a culture show 2004, culture show 2005, you know, so that was-- the focus was like, you know, what--what was going on with the Cambodian club. You know.</p>
42:58	<p>Amira Noeuv: Yeah, that makes sense. Like, kind of looking back a little bit. And it's always like, in retrospect, right? What is something that you wish the institution or the school UC San Diego did for you while you were a student? Like, was there anything that you needed support in?</p>
	<p>Michael Tea: I think they did their best job; but I would say like--funding source. Things, like, money to help out especially with small organizations, like--like Cambodian club and stuff like that. You know, like, provide some kind of like, supplemental, like income to do, take on things and bring awareness to UC student campus, you know? I mean, of course, you know, most organizations do their own funding, you know, so, I would just hopefully, like financially, it would help them, you know, to do that. So as--so--so we could, like, you know, concentrate on the bigger things that we wanted to achieve with our organizations. So, instead of like, trying to make like 500 beef sticks to sell out somewhere to [laughs], you know.</p>
	<p>Amira Noeuv: Is that what you did to fundraise for the org?</p>
	<p>Michael Tea : No, I don't, I think. I've seen like other Cambodian student org, I mean SDSU or, you know, did that before. I think maybe the other, like the people--like the people after me probably. I'm pretty sure it's the CSA did their own things to fundraise too. I'm pretty sure on Library Walk or something like. That's good old days Library Walk. People would hack--hack something from their club and you know, try to entice people. Mostly those Thai culture club. Yeah. So, Thai tea and you know. I don't know, what I--or one of my--because we're all connected. So like Thai Club was involved with APSA so we all help each other out, you know? So...</p>
	<p>Amira Noeuv: Yeah. What advice would you give to students who are interested in forming a student-based organization like CSA?</p>
45:27	<p>Michael Tea: Like advice? Like, you know, tips or something like that? Don't give up, don't be discouraged. You know, just because you have like that,</p>

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	<p>not that many members just keep on going, you know--you know, later down the line, you know, there might be other people who take interest, besides your own people of your own ethnic background, or, you know, you just your legacy lives on, and it just flourishes, despite how much members you started with, you know, so don't be discouraged of how many members, you know. Just prove it to yourself that--you know, to yourself that you can attain your group's objective. Goals you know. So that's what I want people to be aware that there's always going to be some kind of, you know, stop or, like wall that you could hit, you know, or something like that. But don't be discouraged and overcome that, you know. Work with what you have. Have a positive outlook, you know. And of course, you know, when something like that-- always make-- you know, just for me, I'm a funny person, you know, always look, look at a different perspective and make yourself laugh, or you know, or see things, you know.</p>
	<p>Amira Noeuv: Yeah. And I mean, it speaks for itself, like CSA sustained all these years since uyou started with the, you know, the four members or--</p>
	<p>Michael Tea: Yeah, after I started looking for people and students directory, looking for Cambodian common last name and cold calling. Yeah, I'm proud of what has CSA become, you know, after I've formed it, you know.</p>
	<p>Amira Noeuv: Yeah. As a co-founder of the organization, what is something you would like to convey to the current members?</p>
47:20	<p>Michael Tea: You know, do the good work and try to be socially active. I mean, try to give a platform to Cambodians. You know, people don't know Cambodians, like about the history of our people. You know, that we exist. That, you know, when people always ask your ethnicity, right? They always ask, what are you? Are you Chinese? Are you Filipino? Are you Vietnamese? So you have to keep guessing until they like, are you Cambodian? Like, I want them to be like--you know, people to be aware, like, oh, you're Cambodian. Oh, my God! I love Cambodian beef sticks! And I love, you know--I think Cambodian noodle soup is better than pho [laughs]. I just want people to, I just want them to provide you that platform to our group or people, you know the environment for them to--it doesn't matter, like social or academic or political or--you know, just provide them a connection or network, you know, and to continue doing that. And I'm glad they're continuing the cultural show, you know. And that's the one thing I'm</p>

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	<p>very proud of, because UCSD helped with--with--with SDSU's CSA cultural show, and then when my friends graduate and the Cambodian club died after them, they continue that legacy of having a cultural show every year, you know, around New Year. So I'm very proud of that--for them to do that. So I just want them to keep going on it. You know, there's always going to be work to be done, you know and--and--and don't let anyone discourage you. That's why I say you know-- you know, it doesn't matter about quantity. It matters about quality, you know.</p>
49:20	<p>Amira Noeuv: Yeah, definitely. That was like my last question. And is there anything else you want to share in your oral history that we haven't covered?</p>
	<p>Michael Tea: No, that's pretty much basically like, I remember it, like, the struggles of forming Cambodian club, you know, trying to get membership. And then it's basically like--like, forming a Cambodian club is like who you know, like, oh-- it's like my friends tell me oh, this person's going to UCSD. Let him know about the Cambodian club, you know, or something like that. So--so and so forth. You know, like one of the members I don't know if you remember like Rath? No, huh?</p>
	<p>Amira Noeuv: The name sounds familiar but I am not sure.</p>
	<p>Michael Tea: He was one of Phann's good friends too during the Cambodian club.</p>
	<p>Amira Noeuv: I want to say the name sounds really familiar.</p>
50:22	<p>Michael Tea: Friend's younger brother. So that's how like, oh, my brother goes to UCSD, oh, maybe you should let him know about the Cambodian club. Oh my god, okay. Okay. Yeah, sure. Why not. You know. That time-- That time there was a lot of Cambodian freshmen. They were all from Long Beach like me--like Long Beach friends going to UCSD so--so then they jumped on board. And so they helped--We helped them, SDSU's Cambodian Cultural Club, with their culture show. And then I guess they could decide to continue on their own with their own UCSD culture show. And I did go to the first Cambodian culture show at UCSD. And I was--I was impressed, you know--</p>
	<p>Amira Noeuv: What year was that? Like around 2007? 2006?</p>

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	<p>Michael Tea: Yeah, I think that was the first one. 2005 was the year I graduate. And that was the last culture show at SDSU. And at the time, our club was helping them, you know culture show and everything doing the skits and stuff like that. I still even have the DVD for the little skit that we have with me and one of the co-founding members is one of the main characters in that--in that little skit for the culture show. She-- it was about--it was called Sakoun's Destiny. And we were just talking about the social issues that was plaguing the Cambodian community—gambling and [laughs]--it was so funny the skit. One day, I will--I would like to show it to you too. It's so funny. Phann, I think Phann helped, like, edit and stuff like that. But it was funny. It's hilarious. Yeah. So.</p>
	<p>Amira Noeuv: Yeah, it would be really cool to see all of those again. Someone has to have, like a VHS or DVD of it.</p>
	<p>Michael Tea: We have, I have the DVD somewhere.</p>
	<p>Amira Noeuv: That'd be really cool to see.</p>
	<p>Michael Tea: Somewhere in the storage [laughs].</p>
52:38	<p>Amira Noeuv: Yeah, no, that was interesting. I feel like I learned a lot about CSA as an organization from like, you being like a co-founder and just thinking about how it was all started. And then what it was like when I joined and now where it's at. This is really helpful.</p>
	<p>Michael Tea: Well I am glad and I want to, I guess you're archiving it so that you can have the legacy of--of Cambodians, CSA, student association, and also for Cambodian students that are attending UCSD. You know, to have something to know about, you know.</p>
	<p>Amira Noeuv: Yeah, definitely. Yeah, well, thanks again. I really appreciate you spending the time to do this oral history. I think it's really important and just really appreciative of this.</p>
	<p>Michael Tea: No, you're welcome! I'm glad--I'm glad to be helping you. And of course, you can always like always--always, always can contact me or anything like that, you know, if you have any questions, if you want to meet up in Long Beach and have great គុំយ៉ាងទាវ or something, you know [laughs].</p>

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	Amira Noeuv: Yes! Thank you!
	Michael Tea : Give me a call or contact me or you know, social media and stuff like that. Yeah. Or maybe I don't know where Vibol lives. Did he say he lives in Long Beach? Or I don't know. He has kids. So I'm pretty sure he's busy, but I don't know. He said he--where he lives?
	Amira Noeuv: LA, LA. He said LA. Yeah. Awesome. Well, I'm gonna pause the recording.