

Teuila Moa ([00:01](#)):

Hi everyone. My name is Teuila Moa and I will be conducting my Race and Oral History Project for UC San Diego's Ethnic Studies Department. I'm here with my dad. He will be the person I'm interviewing. So before we start the interview, can you please introduce yourself? I'm asking for name, age, city of origin and ethnic background.

Calvin Moa ([00:24](#)):

All right. My name is Calvin Moa. I'm 62 years old. I'm a native San Diegan, born and raised and I'm Samoan.

Teuila Moa ([00:35](#)):

Okay, cool. Can you give us a breakdown on how you came to San Diego? Were you born here? Are you first generation Samoan American? Just tell us a little bit about yourself.

Calvin Moa ([00:47](#)):

Okay. Yes, I was born here, but my parents came here before I was born. My dad came by way of the Navy. His dad, my grandfather, was actively serving in the Navy. And so he brought his whole family, this big migration of Samoans, on a Naval ship. And so that's how my dad came. My mom came also on the ship, but she was married, had a prior marriage. She was married to a white man. When my parents met, my mom already had a daughter through her first marriage. So my sister is biracial. She's half Samoan, half white.

Teuila Moa ([01:57](#)):

Okay, so I was gonna ask, how did your parents come to San Diego, but you kind of mentioned that already. You mentioned they came on a boat. Would you say this was a common way for Samoans to immigrate to the states back then?

Calvin Moa ([02:14](#)):

Yes, I would definitely. It was definitely through the military. I would say the majority of them came that way.

Teuila Moa ([02:24](#)):

And I know you mentioned your grandfather didn't come to San Diego right away. What other cities was he stationed in prior?

Calvin Moa ([02:35](#)):

Oxnard, California was one. And then I believe from there they moved to National City and that's where he resided until he retired.

Teuila Moa ([02:51](#)):

Okay. And so your parents met in San Diego and then they had you and your younger sister, correct?

Calvin Moa ([03:00](#)):

Yes. That is correct.

Teuila Moa ([03:02](#)):

So what neighborhoods in San Diego were you three raised in, you and your two sisters?

Calvin Moa ([03:09](#)):

The first one was National City. We lived in the Navy housing, at that point in time, there was one in National City. And then as we got a little older, we had moved to Southeast San Diego, on F street we lived, which is right off of Market, near Gompers and Lincoln high school, in that general area.

Teuila Moa ([03:36](#)):

Okay, cool. In that neighborhood, was this the part of San Diego that you would say you had your development years?

Calvin Moa ([03:47](#)):

Definitely. During the sixties, that's where I was in elementary.

Teuila Moa ([03:55](#)):

Okay. And growing up in Southeast San Diego, what are notable things you want to address from your experience?

Calvin Moa ([04:04](#)):

Well, during that time, I definitely recall when Martin Luther King was assassinated. That was a big thing during that time, of course 'cause the area was definitely predominantly black people that lived there. And so, there was a lot of anger during that time. There was a riot that broke out. I recall that we were all in the home, and we had to turn off our lights. So it'd be completely dark because there was people running through the neighborhood. I recall a police vehicle being burnt down and so we were just trying to lay low and hopefully not be involved in any kind of problems or violence. And I recall specifically my grandfather came to our house when he got word of what was going on and he literally had this large wrench in his hand for protection in case it was needed. But that experience definitely stood out for me because it affected us all.

Teuila Moa ([05:33](#)):

That certainly is a big part of history with Martin Luther King Jr. He did speak in San Diego. I'm assuming close to the time of his assassination. He did speak at Point Loma Nazarene University. So yeah, San Diego does have a strong connection to Martin Luther King Jr. As there are murals visible on the 94 freeway as well. Thanks for mentioning that. What are other notable things that you want to address with your experience there? I know you mentioned the influence. Can you expand on that a bit more? You and your siblings, how were you guys affected?

Calvin Moa ([06:19](#)):

Well what is known as RnB music, but back then it was noted as soul music, was definitely an influence. As far as our, preference and taste in music, the dancing was definitely something that we gravitated towards. The language, the slang we definitely, picked up on that.

Teuila Moa ([06:59](#)):

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Yeah. And as you mentioned before, Southeast San Diego, especially the part where you were in, it was predominantly a black neighborhood. As you and your family are Samoan, how was it being Samoan in that community? And did your parents like living here?

Calvin Moa ([07:18](#)):

Well, personally it was fine. I didn't feel like I was treated differently, but again we were still the minority amongst minorities <laugh> but my parents? It was a middle class neighborhood when we lived there in the sixties. In comparison to today, it's definitely has changed, over the years. It has gone down as far as when I drove by there. I think it was the early part of this year and it really looked, uh, pretty bad, in comparison to when I lived there, back in the sixties. It was basically like your average middle class neighborhood.

Teuila Moa ([08:13](#)):

Yeah. Would you say you and your family ever felt like outsiders being in that neighborhood or did you find actually a sense of comfort being surrounded by other minorities?

Calvin Moa ([08:30](#)):

I would say no, we didn't feel like outsiders. We felt just like everyone else, because again, everyone around us were basically minorities.

Teuila Moa ([08:53](#)):

I know you have a lot of other Samoan family that also are from San Diego. You mentioned you were one of the few that lived in your area. So I was gonna ask where in San Diego did your other family reside? If not in Southeast San Diego,

Calvin Moa ([09:10](#)):

There was some like in National City, Paradise Hills area. Clairemont, I would say would be another part. So basically throughout, oh and Chula Vista. So basically throughout the Southern part of San Diego and some in the Northern part.

Teuila Moa ([09:35](#)):

Yeah. And it's very similar to the other neighborhoods you lived in. Right? Because you've not only lived in Chollas View and closer, like on the other side, near downtown area. But what are the of the other neighborhoods you lived in outside of the city of San Diego? You lived in Chula Vista...

Calvin Moa ([09:54](#)):

Chula Vista, south San Diego, which is close to the border. We lived there and, that's where I went to junior high and high school specifically Montgomery mm-hmm <affirmative>. And that was back in the seventies.

Teuila Moa ([10:14](#)):

Okay, cool. And what were resources you and your family found in the city that best served you all as Samoans?

Calvin Moa ([10:27](#)):

Well, definitely the church, the church was the main core of community with my Samoan people. Two of the biggest things of events are weddings and funerals. They're something really big in my culture. So that was not only a place that we came together to worship and praise God, but it was a place of community as far as even events like luaus and just gatherings, social gatherings.

Teuila Moa ([11:24](#)):

I know I had another project with this course. It was called People's Guide to San Diego where I interviewed the faifeau (reverend) from the church off of 43rd street exit. Can you tell us your experience growing up in that church? You were there when it first opened and your name is even on the plaque. Can you give us more of history regarding that building and what you know of it?

Calvin Moa ([11:55](#)):

Well, my grandfather literally had filmed the breaking of ground when the church was built. And so that was something that we would see often when we watch home movies. And so as the church was finally completed and built, we started, of course, attending the church and it was just something to be, not only attending church, but you were with your own people. The language, we also have the Bible that's translated in our own language. The word was spoken at the pulpit in Samoan, the worship music was Samoan. And so it was definitely a close knit sense of community being raised in that church.

Teuila Moa ([13:07](#)):

Okay. And I mentioned this before as well, but the church has strong connections to the military as the military is a big reason for the huge migration of Samoans to the states. And you yourself are a veteran in the army. Would you say your experience with enlisting in the military is similar to a lot of Samoans in the United States, or would you say yours is kind of a more exclusive experience? If that makes sense. If you have any more questions about that question, just let me know.

Calvin Moa ([13:45](#)):

I think it was very similar. I hadn't really planned on joining, but after the jobs that I did work at growing up, I needed something that was more stable and something that would enable me to... like a stepping stone for my future. And so the military was definitely something that was good for me

Teuila Moa ([14:29](#)):

Was the main reason for joining was to get out of San Diego? Because I can imagine there were other jobs that were hiring around you.

Calvin Moa ([14:38](#)):

Yes, it definitely was part of the reason. I needed to feel that independency. I wanted to be out on my own. Away from home and just taking on that responsibility of a young adult growing into manhood.

Teuila Moa ([15:06](#)):

I know you never went to college or even school for that matter after you graduated. You being from under resourced areas, would you say you could have seen more support from your school and your environment? Maybe you could have went to school if you saw more programs that benefited you and your community? Or do you think not going to school was solely a choice from you?

Calvin Moa ([15:40](#)):

It was definitely a choice. At some point in time while I was in high school, I was so ready to leave. I was done with school. I think the opportunities were there, but I didn't want to go to college. I wanted to take another route. I knew I was gonna jump into the workforce, which I did have some little jobs even while I was in high school. I worked at Burger King, um, and just little things like that. But I knew college wasn't for my future.

Teuila Moa ([16:25](#)):

Right. And then going back to your childhood days, growing up in San Diego. Southeast San Diego has been a hotspot for San Diego politics. Many projects have been pushed into this area of SD, specifically problems concerning gang violence, gang injunction, redlining, police brutality. These are just to name a few major ones. Are there any resources that you wish you saw growing up that cater to the exclusive issues experienced in your area?

Calvin Moa ([17:01](#)):

Well, when I lived in Southeast San Diego, gang issues, again, like I said, during the sixties, gang issues weren't really a problem then. They didn't come into the picture until I would say in the seventies, but by then we had moved to Chula Vista. But even in that I was never personally affected even though there was gangs that lived in the area. And so I was still able to live a pretty normal life.

Teuila Moa ([17:43](#)):

And you mentioned before as a little kid, you don't really notice these issues. You're kind of oblivious to them when you're at that young age.

Calvin Moa ([17:54](#)):

That's right. Absolutely.

Teuila Moa ([17:56](#)):

And then going back to your parents, both of 'em did come from American Samoa. I wanted to ask what are some of the big sacrifices that they did that you witnessed growing up?

Calvin Moa ([18:12](#)):

Well, they both worked hard. My dad was a civil service worker. And so he worked in what they called the "tool room". He was a Tool Room Attendant where the employees who worked on the Aircrafts would come to him for the tools that they needed. And eventually he retired from there after almost 30 years of service. My mom, she worked in convalescent homes for the elderly. She did that for many years, which was definitely not an easy job. It was laborous and many times she had to lift patients or help assist them with their needs as far as bathing feeding them. So it was strenuous work and she even worked on military bases in the laundromats, taking care of the military uniforms. Mm-hmm  
<affirmative>

Teuila Moa ([19:34](#)):

Is there anything else you wanted to add of your experience with your parents? Do you know if moving here to the states was foreign to them? Did they feel out of place? I know you were raised here in the

states, but I wanted to know what you think their experience was coming from an island to here (California) and if maybe they faced prejudice even racism.

Calvin Moa ([20:00](#)):

I would say yes. I know there was one incident because the first state my mom lived in when she arrived was in Texas and that's when she was married again to the white man and this is back in the early fifties. And she got into the public bus. The bus took off and then made a stop. And at that point my mom was already seated and a white woman came on to the bus and the bus driver approached my mom and said if she would move to the back of the bus

Calvin Moa ([21:01](#)):

And a lady came to my mom's defense telling the bus driver, "She's not black. She's from the Pacific Islands." And so that definitely was a situation of prejudice. And that was something that was a big impact on my mom because she shared that story to us and that experience. My dad? I can't really think of anything that stands out as far as anything negative for him. I'm sure something might occurred, but nothing that significant for him personally, that I'm aware of.

Teuila Moa ([21:57](#)):

Right. Well with your family in San Diego, I know a lot of 'em come from mixed background. Do you know of any other stories of your cousins who are biracial as well or your aunts that did marry outside of the race, if they experienced any prejudice from their own experience that you witnessed or heard secondhand from them?

Calvin Moa ([22:26](#)):

Um,

Teuila Moa ([22:28](#)):

If not it's okay.

Calvin Moa ([22:31](#)):

Yeah. Nothing that I can really think of.

Teuila Moa ([22:34](#)):

Okay. And then this is gonna be the last question. Today, what are major changes you see in San Diego? Both bad and good. This can be related to culture, demographics, anything you want. But are there any major changes in San Diego that you see today as a 62 year old that was completely different growing up in the fifties, sixties, et cetera?

Calvin Moa ([23:06](#)):

I think I stated this a little earlier. The neighborhood I grew up in has definitely went from middle class to, um, run down and it almost looks like a third world neighborhood. When I last drove by there, that's one thing that stands out.

Teuila Moa ([23:43](#)):

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Yeah, yeah. I know even today, when we do our field work, Lincoln High School has a lot of Newcomer communities too coming from Southeast Asia. East county has a huge Assyrian population coming in. And you would say these demographics we see today, those weren't existed back then?

New Speaker ([24:06](#)):

That's correct. Definitely didn't have those communities in our neighborhood. The majority was Black, Spanish, Filipino. That was the majority of the people in the neighborhood.

Teuila Moa ([24:30](#)):

That was basically my last question. I wanted to thank you for your time. And just also sharing your experience here in the city. I wanted to ask if there's anything else you wanted to add to the oral history before we conclude tonight?

New Speaker ([24:50](#)):

I think what comes to mind right now is that I'm proud to be a native San Diegan. Knowing that this is known as one of the finest cities in the country. And we definitely have everything in our neighborhood as far as the mountains, the deserts, the beaches. It's the biggest tourist attraction also.

Teuila Moa ([25:27](#)):

I'm glad I also got to interview you because you also come from neighborhoods that people from outside of San Diego don't know about either. When people first hear San Diego, they think of it as a tourist hotspot, surfing, and more. And while that is true, there are parts of San Diego that are under-resourced. And as you mentioned, you got to tell your part of the story and history of it as well. Thank you again, Dad.

New Speaker ([25:58](#)):

Thank YOU.

Teuila Moa ([25:58](#)):

That concludes our oral history for tonight. Thank you.