

Olivia Koutsky and Mandy Say Interview

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Olivia Koutsky: My name is Olivia Koutsky, today is May 11 2022, and I'm interviewing Mandy Say over Zoom for the University of California San Diego Race and Oral History Project. Do you agree to grant the university permission to archive and publish this interview for educational purposes?

Mandy Say: Yes.

Olivia Koutsky: And thanks so much. Okay so I'm just going to start off asking you a little bit like about- uh how do you identify yourself? Who's Mandy?

Mandy Say: Yes, my name's Mandy. I'm female and 20 years old, and I went to Grossmont college and I'm studying social work.

Olivia Koutsky: Yeah thanks so much. So we're talking about studying social work, and I know like when you were a little, you wanted to teach Karen growing up. How- what was growing up, and like how did that shape like who you wanted to be?

Mandy Say: yeah. Sorry, yeah, I was in Thailand. I- my favorite subject was Karen because Karen is easy to learn, and I already know how to speak Karen. And so every time we like take a test, I always pass that test, so that's become my favorite subject. One day, I want to teach the kid who, who does not know how to read and write Karen. That's why I want to teach the kids and it's very important for them to know their language.

Olivia Koutsky: Why, why do you think it's so important to know about your language and just know about, like Karen culture? Why's that important to you?

Mandy Say: It's very important to me because, if we- if we are Karen, we call ourselves Karen, but if a Karen doesn't know our culture then we won't represent Karen. So it's very important to know how to speak, and we're still our culture, our identity, yeah.

Olivia Koutsky: What was, what was your experience like growing up in Karen culture and growing up in Thailand?

Mandy Say: Thailand, I have experienced many things, like I don't have any Internet and have technology, and we don't have enough healthcare provider and a higher education. And because

of that list our using our creativity to create toys to play with. We use rock, we use leaves, we use everything. We use leaf like a to make a dress, and we play with them. Banana tree, to make a gun to play with each other. And even though we don't have enough education, and you know, we don't have enough higher education and health care provider, as long as we have friends, who, like, in the same level with us, like, we are happy to be around each other.

Olivia Koutsky: Yeah. Who were some of the, like the friends, you had growing up and, like, the main people in your life?

Mandy Say: The main people are my- when I was a refugee, I was like, I when I was young, when I was a kid, I live with my grandparents and when I grew up I live- I live with my parents, because- my parents take care of me when I was a baby, and I'll go visit my, my parents sometimes because I really love my Karen parents, and they are my main people in my life. And after I grew up, I will live from my parents- I- because my grandparents are getting old.

And then I, after I go to school, I make new friends and I have a friend- her name's Nahnah Pou- and she was my one of my best friends, when I was a kid. And also third grade, we went to school, and kindergarten to third grade, and then she- At the time, school was really hard for us to learn, because, like we don't have any tutor back there. And then we, we only have our parents and teacher, where we need help they help us. One of my best friends, she failed her class. And then she moved to - I feel like she doesn't want to repeat the class again- then she moved to Burma. She moved back to Burma, with her family. And after that, my friend- my best friend moved to Burma, move back to Burma, I do have, I do have friends, but they're not really close friends. Their lifestyle, you know with my cousins, and they are very nice to me. And then they're all like, those people that I never forgot their name, people in my life when I was in refugee camp.

Olivia Koutsky: So, like are you are you able to get in contact with any of those people again? Like have you heard from your friend who moved back to Burma, like have you found her? I mean...

Mandy Say: Yeah when I was third grade, I was too young, like I thought she gonna come back, but I- after year by years, I never heard from her again, and I didn't have any contact with her. I hope, I hope she doing well with her family. Yeah. I stay in contact with my cousin and my grandma, my yeah.

Olivia Koutsky: Yeah and yeah, that's difficult. It's like yeah, I had friends like move away too, but usually it was like 20 minutes away or something [laughs]. And we were like "what are we gonna do?!" But that's, yeah, that's- that's a really difficult thing, especially like in third grade, like best friends. With your- so you became closer with your cousins after she moved away?

Mandy Say: yeah.

Olivia Koutsky: Were your cousins like were they more like friends or like siblings... what was like- what was that relationship like? How close were you with them?

Mandy Say: yeah after to school, we, they come over my house and then we play together. We played because I don't have any like close best friend anymore. Then my cousin is one of my friends that we went to church together and eat together. That's how we will become more closer. Our relationships getting closer as a cousin. Yeah. [pause]

Olivia Koutsky: Yeah yeah I'm- that kind of sounds like- my cousin lives a little further away, but just, like that closeness, like my cousin's very important to me, too. Yeah. It's, it's a special thing. It's like, "Oh my gosh I got to be related to this friend?!" [laughs] You know? [pause] Yeah um. Do you, when you, when you started hanging out with your cousins, were you one of the oldest ones, or like one of the youngest ones?

Mandy Say: I live the middle, I have a younger cousin. I have an older cousin but I usually hang out with the younger cousin. But I have one of the older cousins that older than me by two or three years.

Olivia Koutsky: Oh Okay, so how did your age, like, impact the way you experienced growing up in a refugee camp compared to how your cousins did or, like other family members did?

Mandy Say: Um, I didn't get it- this question can you, like explain for me a little bit about it.

Olivia Koutsky: Yeah I think, I think I said that kind of fast. Um, so like how did your age impact the way you experienced home? Like I'm imagining maybe you had a different experience from like an older cousin or a younger sibling or even like generationally.

Mandy Say: yeah I don't really remember, but I, like the older- when we go somewhere, because I'm not older, I'm not younger, but when I go somewhere, I have to- my older cousins to be with me everywhere I go to like hang out with them, yeah.

Olivia Koutsky: That sounds like an older cousin type thing, yeah. Sounds like an older cousin's role right there.[pause] Um, if you could say anything to yourself, like back then, to your younger self, do you think you would have any advice for her? Any messages you would want to give her?

Mandy Say: My cousins or? Or anyone?

Olivia Koutsky: Oh, yourself! Like your younger self [crosstalk]

Mandy Say: Myself. I wish I could tell myself, to know how to told the person that I love them, how much I care for them, because we never know one day we're gonna be apart. Yeah I- even though we were young, we have been together, but one day when we grow, we went to different places. Yeah, that when I was young, I didn't tell anyone. Even though I'm leaving, I didn't say goodbye to them. Yeah.

Olivia Koutsky: Is it just one of those things like when you're little- like you just feel too scared to say it, or you don't even think about it?

Mandy Say: I don't even think about it. I don't even think about, like, if they will live forever, yeah.

Olivia Koutsky: And is there something like, is there- is there a reason, like that especially, is something you wish you had done now that you're older?

Mandy Say: Yeah, I wish I could like give to my friends or my cousin- because- like give something that to remember when they look at the gift that I give it to them. But like I didn't give anything to anyone. Yeah, but I just want that in my memories, right, yeah.

Olivia Koutsky: Yeah that's that's another thing like I usually I think- I'm similar where it's like I don't think about like objects that much. I'm like, "Oh, I'll have the memory," but it's kind of nice to have something around that can remind you of someone.

Mandy Say: Yeah.

Olivia Koutsky: Are there any like special memories that are important to you? Like, maybe memories you made with those people [pause] from like growing up?

Mandy Say: Yeah, when, uh, when before they came to U.S., like my cousin my friends, we, when the Christmas, we went to peoples' house, and we sing a song together. That's one of the memories that I never forgot, yeah.

Olivia Koutsky: Oh, what was that like? Do you guys go to multiple houses or...

Mandy Say: Yeah, young age we were together and then go to house by house to wish them a Christmas song. And that's one of, um, my favorite day, and my best memory that I got to hang out with my friends at night and sing a song together and have fun with them, yeah.

Olivia Koutsky: That sounds really fun. Yeah. I think like- same thing for me, like anything that involves a singing, it's like- "that's a good memory." [laughs] Is there something you wish, you wish, more people understood about Karen and Karen people?

Mandy Say: I wish, I wish people to know about Karen people, people is that they are very kind, and they are very, like: welcome in stranger to their house. And even though we speaks the same language and we didn't know each other, they all welcome us to the house when we want to drink water. And one more thing is, they are very, like staying together as a community to build a community. So when they need- when one of- when one another need help, they help each other.

And I still remember when I was in town, and they provide the water for the- right to the people. Right, they put the big pot, like to put in water. And when the people walked by, and they want to drink water, they just go to water, yeah.

Olivia Koutsky: Oh that's nice, so, was that something you saw like all the time, or was that, like a one-time thing?

Mandy Say: All the time because they never like move the water. They put it in the sidewalk. There's one of the water pot over there, and anyone who's like walked- because we live in Thailand, we have to walk very far to go buy food or to go to, like celebrate new years to go to our. Like, relatives, they live far away. We have to walk- and then there's sometime we need water to, like: If we don't want to carry that water, we have the water, so we don't have to carry like too much water because they provide water for the people.

Olivia Koutsky: Oh wow that's really nice, just to stop along the way.

Mandy Say: Yeah.

Olivia Koutsky: Wow, yeah, but um, yeah. I'm thinking about something I read about a long walk people do in Spain, and they have like different water fountains just all the way throughout, just to be nice.

That sounds really cool. So did you still have to like, take long walks to the grocery store, or was that something your parents usually did?

Mandy Say: We usually like, we don't have to usually like walk far, but if you want to go to a different camp, like different refugees? Like in Thailand there are like several refugees. I don't exactly remember; I only know, like, my camp and the camp that's close to me. Like you have to walk by one of the- the closer camp is like 30 or 40 or one hour walk. The other one is two or three hours away. They put the water pot right between the camps. Yeah, between the refugee camp.

Olivia Koutsky: Yeah, that's a super long walk. Okay. Yeah, well yeah. Okay, yeah that water would definitely come in handy. Yeah.

So is there something that- like because that that's just a really kind thing to do- is there some, are there some aspects of Karen culture that you wish you saw more in like U.S. culture?

Mandy Say: I wish I see more to like give a hug to each other because our Karen culture we don't really do that. We only do that to like, to our partner, by, for example, [laughs] to our partners and or someone like- always people that they already married but we hug each other, but not the stranger or the friends, which are shake hands, but in here the two things are they hug each other, they say "I love you" before they leave their job, but in a refugee camp, we didn't do that. Yeah, I wish that Karen people had that kind of culture, yeah.

Olivia Koutsky: Do you do that a lot more now? Like do you do a lot more hugging now?

Mandy Say: I only do that to my friends, but not my family. Yeah, I don't feel comfortable doing that, yeah.

Olivia Koutsky: Yeah I think I do it with my family and not my friends. I mean, especially not in the past couple years, like you know- elbow bump all the way- or just zoom [laughs].Yeah.[pause]

Yes, that's kind of a sweet thing to think about though. Just being like you know, "we need more hugs." Um, yeah, um, and. [pause]

What was it like for you, when you first moved to the US like, how was that- that's a big shift. Like how did that go for you?

Mandy Say: When I moved to U.S., I never thought like when I moved to U.S. I never thought,I never thought about I have to like, I don't know how to say but- I would. Can you repeat your-ask your question again?

Olivia Koutsky: Oh, just like tell me about what it was like moving to the US.

Mandy Say: Yes, I was moving to the U.S. When I live at Thailand so excited to come to U.S. I just think about like, I couldn't wait to go to school. We don't have to walk. We have to ride the car to go to school, and then we have a backpack. We have toys to play with, and because of this, I really want to go to like- I want to move to America.

But when I come to America, the expectation that I have is like totally different. The first day that I arrive in the U.S., I was so happy, and it were the things I don't know how to, I do not speak English and also my parents does not know how to speak English and when we were arrived in the apartment our caseworker show us how to use how to use the like, how to use the

bathroom with everything, but I didn't pay attention because my parents are. They wonder if a caseworker teach them how to do it.

After the caseworker leave, after like a few days. The first day, we have food, but a few days later, like we do food, but we don't all. Gas is not working and we didn't got to use rice. And it was hard because I have a lot of sibilings and where we- what we do as a Karen is we usually eat rice. And we cook rice with a pot but, we do not have a pot. We do have a pot but gas not working, and the refrigerator is not working. And we, the propane is work, but we don't have a rice cooker. And we went to our friends hard to like ask them to let us cook, to let us cook for one time. And then we, my dad, he bring lot of things that I feel are our neighbors like they also new to us so they don't want to, Like they don't feel comfortable letting us try to come to the house. They only use one time and and even though we did not speak English we show our body language right to get our neighbors to allow us[o6] .

I- Luckily, we have, I meet one of the neighbors. She came in to, help us to make the gas work and they told us to close the gas because if you close it, it's not going to work.

The day that we arrived we don't have cell phone through to contact anyone, and we don't even know how to yet how to use cell phone, even though we have cell phones. And after a few days later, my caseworker came, and she didn't camem in the inside of the apartment. She just was at the door and then she give us the food. She said if we need anything, like "contact us." She gave us the free phone [o8] and she also give her business card. But we does not know how to use the free phone.

Yeah does are, we really have hard time after, like, summer day after during how do I remember, like summer day after, yeah, I don't exactly remember. And my mom she, she pregnant and she feel like she doesn't, she doesn't want to experience this anymore. She she does not want to like, feel like this anymore. And she, because she-they call, our case worker, to tell us to stay home, to go ask them. She does not know how to, like English. Like they worry about us; they told us that.

Yeah because of that my mom, she go ask them and then with my little brother, he wear Karen shirt. And one of our neighbor- it's not our neighbor but across the other side. She's Karen, and luckily she saw us. We asked the Karen food, and then she was "How long have you been here?" We told her everything about our experience and she asked- like that's how she start helping us and introduce us to the Karen Organization of San Diego.

Olivia Koutsky: Woah, yeah that is- that's a stressful story. So this is around eighth grade for you right?

Mandy Say: I didn't go to school at the time, I came here, right. I have to wait like two months to go to school. Yeah, at the time I really want to go to school because staying home was so boring. And then, I didn't have anyone to talk with, only my sibilings, and I really miss Thailand

a lot because when I went to Thailand refugee camp I have friends to go to school together, talk to them. And when I came here, I feel so lonely. There's no Karen people family that is close to us, yeah.

Olivia Koutsky: Yeah so it's just all the stress and then loneliness on top of it, and you're around- like this is around 2015ish?

Mandy Say: Yeah, 2015 I think. I'm 14 years old? Yeah.

Olivia Koutsky: Yeah at 14- that's like- that's not a good time at 14, like um yeah.

Olivia Koutsky: So this was, how long was this? Was this like a couple months or, um, this whole, this... I want to see like chapter this whole period.

Mandy Say: For, like, that I have to experience this? For years, yeah I think. When we first arrived, first years in. We arrived, for the first years we have to go through like one or two years very difficult. After like my dad know how to drive It's much easier, yeah first two years, we don't have a car, even though we go to school, we have to walk where it's very far away right not far away but like forty minute walk but it's hard when you don't have like a bathroom close to [laughs]. Yeah.

Olivia Koutsky: Yeah, no, 40 minutes is a long walk.

Mandy Say: Yeah. And when it's rain, it's like[o10]

Olivia Koutsky: yeah, that's like 2 miles, right?

Mandy Say: Yeah.[o11]

Mandy Say: yeah yeah I think like that, and when it's rain, we had to walk in the rain. Even though we were umbrella, umbrella is no help at all. The rain is too strong.

Olivia Koutsky: Yeah, yeah. Oh, and that's- it's 40 minutes there and then 40 minutes back again right?

Mandy Say: yeah

Olivia Koutsky: Yeah. That's a lot yeah especially like rainy days, winter, like that's really stressful.

Mandy Say: Yeah.

Olivia Koutsky: Yeah were you and your siblings going to the same school? Like could you walk together, or did your siblings have to take a detour?

Mandy Say: First two years, first years, me and my sister, we have uh, we have to walk together, the other siblings in the elementary school.

Olivia Koutsky: So they were... okay, so you, you and your sister are walking together, and then the other three were like walking together too?

Mandy Say: Yeah.

Olivia Koutsky: Yeah, yeah.

Mandy Say: Yeah my my little brothers or my little siblings are yeah their school is very good, very close. Like five minute walk away.

Olivia Koutsky: And five minutes that's pretty good. So did you have to wake up like way earlier than them?

Mandy Say: Yeah, we had to wake up the same time, yeah. Their school start early yeah.

Olivia Koutsky: Oh okay yeah so they started earlier.

So how did like this experience influence your decisions today? Because, like, you talked about like wanting to become a social worker at the beginning of the interview.

Mandy Say: Yes. When I came to U.S. like to- after experience that and- and because of that. And even I went to school, my first year I didn't know how to speak English, and I would- my eighth grade I didn't know to speak English at all, and then I would transfer to high school and I still doesn't know how to speak English.

I didn't know very, after school- that would be after school or, like, it will be after school programs. After school program. I didn't know how to speak English, so I don't feel confidence to like join the club. And I left time to like, to go to stay after school, to have to come back and take care of my siblings. And even though like, tenth grade, I still like does not speak English very well, but I improve year by years. And my eleventh grade, I got to, one of my- I, I met a friend. She from Congo and she- Congo, uh, I think. Yeah she from Africa and African, and we met, and she already know how to speak English. So they are really nice, and they talk to me. And we started having a conversation.

And also made a friend that speaks Arabic and she introduced me with the Girl Academy program, like, after school program. And I went there with them and I got to know more people and also I joined Peacemaker program. When I was in that, like 10th grade, I really like how people do the fashion show. And so, in the picture, that 10th grade or ninth grade I doesn't know how to read the flyer like very, I didn't understand. Eleventh grade I got to go. I explore like I

stay involved in it after school and then I got to know more. That's how, like, my mind's open. At the after school program.

And my- the leader of the program was really nice. She helped my way. Like she listened to my, my experience there- coming to U.S, and she like, she told me "If you need help, if you need anything, just let me know." She, she, she's like, she worked at IRC[012] . She's one of the person that I never forgot. And I, when I learn from her a lot, Because of her, I, for my- after my eleventh grade, I gained a lot of knowledge from her. My twelfth grade I start like involved in a club, like my school, in the school or after school program for like the group program, like to learn about leadership- leadership skill.

And also, I- during the fashion club, after I know how to speak English [laughs] Yeah I wish knew, I wish I knew English when I came to the U.S, so I will learn a lot of things, but when I came I didn't know any English, so I have a hard time yeah.

These are- because of that, like my, is my- I want to work as social worker. I have a desire to to help people like me or my Community like going through the same struggle, and they will have someone to look up to where they are in the, like, where they have to experience when they are a hard time, they have a hard time.

Olivia Koutsky: Yeah it sounds like, like you were talking about high school, and like you're making these friends, you're joining clubs, you're taking care of your siblings, walking like 80 minutes a day and, um, like at the same time, learning English. Like was high school very busy time for you?

Mandy Say: High School- when high school- my middle school is, I have to walk very far, but for high school I have to walk 20 minutes, like not that far. That's much easier, and I want to stay after school, but I don't- I didn't know how to speak English at that time, and I feel I have to, have to come home and, like, have a talk to my sibling sometime. My sibling doesn't know how to speak English too, so I have to to like communicate or help them with their homework sometimes yeah.

Olivia Koutsky: Okay yeah, so you were trying the clubs in 11th grade after you were yeah [crosstalk]

Mandy Say: Yeah.

Olivia Koutsky: Okay yeah. Did- did your siblings start learning English around that time too, or were you still helping them with their homework? [pause] And like translation.

Mandy Say: I'm sorry I talk. Can you repeat that question?

Olivia Koutsky: Yeah. For sure yeah so around 11th grade when you were starting to get more involved in school and you were getting more comfortable with English, were your siblings also like more comfortable with English? Or were you still helping them out at the same time?

Mandy Say: They have been helping me [laughs] after like two or three years, yeah.

Olivia Koutsky: Oh.

Mandy Say: They were young, and, like, they learn quick.

Olivia Koutsky: Okay yeah, never mind then. I forget how fast kids learn.

Mandy Say: Yeah.

Olivia Koutsky: Um, so, today, like how, how do you like keep your culture and your relationships from Thailand like close to you?

Mandy Say: The food, like the food is the main thing that really keeps my relationships with Thailand close to me. It's like the food, the food that we eat is mostly, we usually, it is Asian food. And, when we celebrate our like Karen New Years and will every Sunday go to church with all the Community Member who, like believe in Christian. Like they are Karen, like Karen people gather together and worship and listen to news sometimes.

That's how, like- And right now we have technologies very powerful like, to like, can talk faraway to like to our grand mom- to my grandma, and that's how I keep my condition with the like Thailand refugee.

Olivia Koutsky: You mentioned something. Oh yeah you mentioned New Year's because I remember you mentioned that again earlier when you were talking about like walking far to celebrate New Years. Is New- is your New Year's celebration like really important to you? Or like what's that like?

Mandy Say: Our New Year's very like, for our Karen culture that's very important to, like celebrate Karen New year because, the Karen New Year is like everything that you're do- like not great, you have to reveal and then start the new learning, like be overcoming yourself to be like good person. And also like we celebrate the Karen New Years because all the Karen people from far away, they come and celebrate the Karen New Year, and we got to see each other. We, we got to see our culture and dance, so we never forgot our Karen peop- our Karen culture.

And also we during the Karen New Year, we talk about what happened in Burma, how our people have to go through the struggle, like, they have to run away from their homeland because of the Burmese military. And we talk about that and we also share um, of our culture where

Karen came from. Yeah we talk, or we renew our like history, right to the new generation. Yeah that's one of the most important.

Olivia Koutsky: Wow, so have you been doing the celebrations um like since you were little? Or have you been- how quickly, did you start doing them after you moved to San Diego?

Mandy Say: We, since I was little, yeah. When it was Karen New Year, everyone is excited. and even though I'm in kindergarten, I am excited to learn how to practice, know that's like Karen culture and dance yeah. I- we still do it in the San Diego every year like every three- every years, once a years yeah.

Olivia Koutsky: Yeah oh that's um, I'm glad you found that. Like that just sounds very special, and like I'm glad you found a place to keep celebrating. I know you also get involved in the Karen organization of San Diego as a youth leader. What- what was that like, for you like getting involved in it? And how- yeah- just like what has been your experience... in the helping the youth in Karen?

Mandy Say: I have been the youth? Um...

Olivia Koutsky: Yeah, I'm gonna- I'm gonna phrase that again. Cause I kind of went over-stumbled over my words right there. Yes, so you're a youth leader at the Karen organization, and I'm wondering like how you got involved with that and what that's been like for you.

Mandy Say: The reason why i'm involved in the Karen organization is because Karen organization is like serve the refugee from Burma, from Burma, and my parents also refugee, and I'm also a refugee. I was born refugee, but my parents born in Burma. They have to run away from their homeland because of Burmese military burn their home, and they have to left their relatives to like move to Thailand and when we came to America- there- we- it's hard to find help for the- It's hard to find out- hard to find help.

Well, luckily, we have an organization called Karen organization of San Diego. They help us to, uh they help us, and they also like provide us with our resources for my family, and I- because of that I'm so happy. And I wish that one day I can be one of the KOSD staff. That I didn't tell anyone that I want to be, because I, I see myself as a like person- like, like- I don't really know how to say that word: a person who doesn't know how to speak English. I think I have to work on it to, to become to like improve my education like English first and then like I can be able to help people. But I never felt like I- we when I first arrived to look at it, when I went to the Karen Organization of San Diego, I never thought I would be a person, like, to, to help the community one day. And I never like thought that I would know how to speak English.

But years uh, year by years I involved in the different, I start involved in the Karen Organization of San Diego like as a federation [o14] club and they provide us with our college workshop, but it's really hard for me because I didn't understand; I didn't know English. But we have a, like, person who translated for us like youth coordinator who translated for us, and then there's how like- I feel I want to be that person to help the people, help the younger generation, who like does not know how to speak English and need more resources for themselves to have a high education.

And I involve, involve, and then I, I, I have a chance after last year. I have a chance to, and when they want to hire the- they have apply to position for KOSD to hire like staff, and then I choose KOSD youth coordinator because I want to be a part of the youth. I want- that's one of this kind of a passion that I want to do it when I was around, when I see uh Karen people helping one another. Yeah, and then I applied, and they like accepted me as a staff and, even though I don't have any experience, they, like, they accepted me and the- they teach me how to grow, how to grow with them like to grow in that position. Yeah and even I'm their youth coordinator, I'm still learning. And yeah and yeah.

Olivia Koutsky: Yeah, I'm just- yeah, I'm just taking a little bit there because it's- there's so much gratitude. It's like, you're talking about like, because you're helping people, and you're talking about it through gratitude, and I just think that's so sweet [laughs] um that's really, really nice um.

Mandy Say: Yeah.

Olivia Koutsky: Yeah yeah Is there something you're really happy about, like work you've done with Karen so far?

Mandy Say: Yeah when it's come to like family, sometimes. Yeah. I- when we have a workshop when, talk to the youth, one by one, to get to know them, and they tell us about their experience, and when we went to that- when we like go to the conference together. Uh, when we went to the conference last year, we make a lot of memories. And I feel like working with our organization. I'm very proud of myself to be able to like make the person to know more about what happen in the America, where to explore themselves to learn more than that is one of my things.

Olivia Koutsky: Okay yeah that sounds like, that sounds like important stuff. We're getting like, this is like my last question. So I'm just wondering, it's like after all this is there, something you wish more people knew about you.

Mandy Say: For me, I wish people knew, knew about me is that I'm willing to like to help them one day, like I don't want to- since something that is not going to happen- I wish I people knew about me was I, I'm like shy person, but I also advocate for my Karen people will want to

advocate for the refugee or in the refugee that treated very, very fairly when they came to U.S. I want to be a person, to be a better person, to be a person for them, like to help them and like to not experience that kind of struggle I had.

So. Can I say that again?

Olivia Koutsky: Yes, for sure, for sure, for sure.

Mandy Say: yeah I wish, I wish people knew about me was uh, I'm a kind of person who have a desire to help the refugee and every refugee from Burma or like, from different places. And I want to, when they arrive in America, I want to be there for them, provide them with their resources that they need to know and I [pause] Yes.

Olivia Koutsky: I mean, thanks so much. Um, yeah I really like that ending, the way you wrapped it up and just, yeah. I really appreciate the way you talk about other people in your life, um, and the way you just- you just seem like you really appreciate the other people in your life. You appreciate, like the Karen organization. I'm just getting a lot of, a lot of appreciation throughout this whole interview. Um. I appreciate that. [laughs] I really I really like that, and that's great to hear.

Mandy Say: And yeah and I wish people knew about me was that, out of the education that I got, I want to help back to my community. Yeah and that any youth who need help.=

Olivia Koutsky: I like that too, yeah, that's important. Especially like when you're talking about your whole story with education, how it, like brought you to friends and stuff like that, like yeah I- I just think this is great stuff. Thanks, thanks so much for interviewing with me today.

Mandy Say: Yeah, thanks

Olivia Koutsky: Oh yeah, I'm really, I'm really glad I got to have this conversation with you, I got to listen to- this was very special for me and yeah. Thank you so much.

Mandy Say: Yeah, thank you so much for interviewing me.