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UC SAN DIEGO

## K. Wayne Yang Oral History

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[53:04]

Interviewee: K. Wayne Yang

Interviewer: Amy Wang

Transcribed and translated by: Amy Wang, Dephny Duan

[Generating and Reclaiming our Wisdoms: A Collection of AAPI Stories at UCSD](https://knit.ucsd.edu/grow/2021/11/08/yang-wayne/)

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Time	Transcription
0:03	<p>Amy Wang: Okay awesome. So for the record I'm Amy Wang and today is November 8 2021 and I am interviewing Provost Yang or Professor Yang through Zoom. I am zooming in from San Diego. This is for the AAPI studies Community archival project and yeah. Awesome, thank you for joining me today.</p>
0:33	<p>K. Wayne Yang: Yes. Of course.</p>
0:34	<p>Amy Wang: So, I guess to get us started, could you share a little bit about yourself and maybe how you arrived at UCSD?</p>
0:40	<p>K. Wayne Yang: My name is K. Wayne Yang and I am currently provost for Muir College, and also professor in Ethnic Studies. I had another life before academia, and that is probably the most important thing to me to share. I was a high school teacher and community organizer, and helped co-found a high school and a couple of nonprofits in Oakland, California. That total work of teaching and community work in Oakland was about 15-16 years long or so. Oakland is the closest thing to home community for me, although I'm not from there. I moved there as a very young adult. But I grew up in five different states in the Midwest and Northeast of the country. No real place to call home. Oakland is the closest thing.</p> <p>How did I get to UCSD? Well, I had some friends who were high school teachers with me. They were all men of color. I don't necessarily hang out with only men of color, and it was kind of an unusual group for me. Even at the time, I would think to myself, "I have friends who are men." But they became some of my closest people. A couple of them had gone to graduate school while being high school teachers, and they talked me into doing it too. Now, those two are actually very prominent professors in education, so I guess I'll just name them. Ernest Morrell who is at Notre Dame, and Jeff Duncan-Andrade who is at San Francisco State. Odd to be professors now. Back then, we were just "kids teaching kids" as Ernest would say. They talked me into going to graduate school. I didn't actually know what graduate school was for. It was always a little opaque. They started and finished before me, obviously. When I finished my PhD, I didn't have plans to become an academic. I just thought I had done what I was supposed to do, which was to get the PhD thing done.</p> <p>However, one of my mentors... I actually think of her as my Mentor, if I had only one. None of us only have one mentor, but if I had only one, it would be her... She is a professor at Berkeley: Patricia Baquedano-López. She made me come to UC San Diego, I'll say. She also filled that decision with a kind of purpose, a kind of</p>

	<p>responsibility to her, and to all that came before her and to all that will come after her. I had a postdoc and I had to give a talk. We had to do presentations as part of our postdoc training. Some ethnic studies professors here saw my presentation. They invited me to give the same one at UC San Diego, which I did. And then they asked me if I wanted to apply for a job, which I knew nothing about. I think I had privilege and luck to be essentially invited to apply for a job. They basically created one for me, I think. But I still wasn't going to take it, until my mentor told me that I needed to come here. So that is how I ended up here. It was a lot of luck and privilege, and sort of not. I had a lot of ambivalence towards the job, "If I'm going to be here, what was it was really for?" Everything my mentor must be imagining – that would be reason for me being here. I am always trying to figure out what her imagination was. I have been here for a little while, since 2006, and I am still figuring out why I am here.</p>
5:21	<p>Amy Wang: Yeah, I was gonna ask how many years you spent - alright, so you came in as an assistant professor. How many years did you spend before you transitioned to provost?</p>
5:32	<p>K. Wayne Yang: I think I got here 2006. I'm not entirely sure. I had a few funny transition years because I was commuting from Oakland for two years and then commuting from Irvine for three. I was still teaching high school in Oakland – to be honest – for two years. So it's a little bit of a fuzzy area that somewhere around 2006 to 2008. I got here and I became provost in... 2018? I think so. Very recently. It's now 2021. It was 10 to 12 years into being here. Then I did one year as provost. And then the pandemic hit. So I still feel new. The pandemic changed the job a lot. It feels very long and very short, at the same time. It's this weird time warp. I'm technically in my fourth year as provost.</p>
6:32	<p>Amy Wang: Wow that is a long time to be at UCSD and I can't believe you commuted from Oakland.</p>
6:39	<p>K. Wayne Yang: I know it was nuts.</p>
6:42	<p>Amy Wang: Side note, did you do the presidential postdoc?</p>
6:45	<p>K. Wayne Yang: I did.</p>
6:48	<p>Amy Wang: It sounds like, well, because I know the program is like departments can accept - like you can work at any UC or something like that I forgot what the incentive was.</p>
6:58	<p>K. Wayne Yang: There was a year – I think it was recently, maybe just before I got it – when they created an incentive where the UC President's office would give campuses money if they hired a postdoc. What some departments did, and ethnic</p>

	<p>studies is one that did from very early on, was they used this incentive to convince the campus to allow them to hire somebody. It is not enough money to actually pay for a faculty line. It just incentivizes it a little. The departments that were more organized and activist around equity issues did that.</p>
7:41	<p>Amy Wang: Oh interesting. Yeah, I know Theresa was also one, so she is always pushing that postdoc towards us.</p>
7:49	<p>K. Wayne Yang: My mentor pushed us the same way. My mentor made me apply for the postdoc. I told her I wasn't going to do it, for two reasons. I wasn't even necessarily going to go into the academy. But the other reason is I felt the postdoc was really for underrepresented minority students. I didn't necessarily always... You know, it's this weird thing about being Asian: Are you underrepresented or not? Arguably Asians, at least at that time and I think still, were underrepresented in social sciences. But my mentor just looked at me and said, "Get over yourself and apply for this postdoc." She found me a postdoc mentor. She did the whole thing; she pushed me into the whole thing. She was just a remarkable person. And she had also been a postdoc herself.</p>
8:41	<p>Amy Wang: That's good. That's cool she laid it out for you. So I'm curious or can you talk a little bit more about not feeling like the label minority or minoritized was for you.</p>
8:56	<p>K. Wayne Yang: Everything is contextual, I guess. I grew up a certain way. It was the Midwest and Northeast and in a certain decade. It was predominantly white. I definitely grew up as a minority, and I think all the people who... not all the people, but there was a noticeable difference between the people who took you under their wing and the people who didn't. Of course, many people were just racist. So the people who tended to take me under their wing or look out for me were other people of color. That wasn't even the term we used then. Minorities was the term. This really shaped my sense of who the collective is. I didn't necessarily know a lot of Asians growing up. There wasn't a big Asian community to do that, and certainly I didn't know any Asian American activists of any sort. It was really Black people who did. Even people who were immigrants, European immigrants. We were always thought of as an immigrant family. When I lived in Pennsylvania, for example, people thought of us as somewhat equivalent to Polish immigrants. We were often hanging out with Poles. It is interesting, that conflation of minorities. However, it was definitely more organized, Black communities that were my first exposure to being – to feeling looked out for – as somebody's real personal and political agenda as a young person.</p> <p>After coming to California, I learned there were these huge Asian communities, Asian American communities. Even then, the way I experienced Asian in Oakland</p>

	<p>is really different. The Asian communities in Oakland are really... I mean it is very place specific. It is time and place specific. You've got Mien people, you've got Thai people, Vietnamese, Cambodians, certainly Chinese, but Chinese people who mostly speak dialects other than Mandarin whose families have been here different degrees. It's a refugee area, so there's Bosnian refugees during the 90s. There's definitely East Africans and all kinds of folks from the continent. It's really like this: I call it a more of an interracial community than a multiracial community. It's a small city too. Under half a million still, I think. So, I think my experience there was really different. But then when I went to Berkeley, that was the first time I'm overwhelmed, "Oh my God, what is this?" And so, this idea of the UCs: What does it mean to be underrepresented in the UCs? That was really something I had to grapple with as a professor. Even as a grad student, I was a commuter. I was teaching high school still. I would just show up for class and leave. I had some sense about it, but it was also not a reality I had to grapple with in a very hard, very difficult way. Because I would just go to Berkeley and then go back to Oakland. I was in a community that understood me a certain way, understood my race a certain way – which was totally different than how it was understood at Berkeley.</p> <p>It was this hang up for me, "Well, this is a higher education postdoc that was meant to diversify the faculty of the UC system. And am I that? Am I really what was intended?" But my mentor just looked at me and said, "You need to get over yourself." Her thing is that "You're on a bigger mission and it's not all about you, okay?" That mission has always been her thing. It still is.</p>
13:25	<p>Amy Wang: Yeah, like your mentor sounds cool. No, I definitely think about this a lot too. Whenever like - when we were doing the Asian American &amp; Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution (AANAPISI) report and stuff like that this concept of like underrepresented/overrepresented, but does that mean these students still need support on campus and so sorry I'm like totally diverging.</p>
13:43	<p>K. Wayne Yang: No, I love having this conversation. On top of that, there was a researcher who was ahead of me in the PhD program, Jean Wing. She's Asian American, a bit older and she actually passed away this year. It's very, very sad. She was part of the Equity Project at UC Berkeley that worked with Berkeley high school, which was both a very diverse high school and also one of the most segregated at the same time. It's Berkeley, so it's liberals. It's really this weird place. She was working at the time Pedro Noguera was directing the... I think it was called the Equity Project [Diversity Project]. I can't remember what it's called any more. But Jean actually did all this interesting quantitative research on Asian Americans at Berkeley High School and the UC system. She said it's true that Asian American students tend to go to the UC system in greater proportion, but</p>

	<p>then they are not going to private schools. They're not going to all these other places. So her question was, what does this really mean? What does it really mean to have a public institution and Asian Americans are there, but not elsewhere? And does that mean they're now overrepresented? What does it mean that this institution is still a predominantly white power structure, and culturally white, and definitely professionally white? You see that play out in terms of: well, you can be Asian American and graduate from Berkeley with a high GPA, but you don't get the same access that GPA ought to guarantee. The superficial analysis is that somehow Asians are being privileged by places like the UC system – but she really blows that up: No, that's not happening at all actually. Rather, there's this weird numerical labor force if you think of students as doing a kind of labor, but they're not rewarded for it like in any equitable way. When she was doing this research, it was really inconvenient for people in education who were starting to care about equity, because they just wanted to lump Asians with white students. And coincidentally, a lot of these researchers were white themselves. I do think it's quite complicated. I'm not an expert in it; it's not my area, but I understood that people were doing that work and that it's important work.</p>
16:29	<p>Amy Wang: Yeah, it kind of also reminds me of – there are people who are now looking at like - well, UCs are really seen as like this elite system right, but then people are also looking at them how they're - because they're public and they're technically like regional comprehensive universities, right, that are also R1s, and looking at that. But, I think that was also part of it, right? Because it's supposed to serve the California region and look at like who's in California right so.</p>
17:00	<p>K. Wayne Yang: It makes me think two things. One is, if there really are – and I think this part, the AANAPISI Task Force report addresses – so what if there's a lot of Asians here? Has the university been culturally at all, pedagogically at all, responsive to that group? And what does this mean for any group that increases in numbers? Similarly, if we become an HSI, what does that even mean? That's something people like Windi Sasaki have always said, which is, “You know, this is not about just Asian students. It's about, can an institution actually be responsive to the students that it has? Clearly it can't and Asian students prove that. And so, wouldn't that be important?” There is this way in which Asian students are brushed over because of this presumption that they're being served. Like somehow they're getting something that other people are not getting – they're getting more than they deserve. The corollary to the model minority concept is: therefore, they don't need anything and therefore it's not worth asking questions about their experiences. Again, this is not my area, but I do think it's important. These are not the frameworks that I work with, but questions that I have picked up from being around people who know this stuff.</p>

18:28	<p>Amy Wang: Yeah, well I think that's important because that's why we're having - because I think you've been at the university for so long, or not so long, but for quite a long amount of time, so I guess that leads me – segways well into some of the UCSD questions, which is how has the university changed since you first started?</p>
18:49	<p>K. Wayne Yang: I can only give you my impressions. Obviously, the university has grown. Physically, the enrollment has grown, the number of buildings has grown. It's picked up a management school. We have a new School of Public Health. We also have the community centers. I was here during the whole Black Winter organizing. It really has transformed the university fundamentally – although we would say not enough, it's still a true change. The centers didn't exist and they now have an incredible impact on students, undergraduate culture, and activism.</p> <p>When I first got here, it was a very, very sleepy university. That was how I felt about it. It was kind of boring. The activism seemed kind of lowkey. It didn't seem like anything was going on. Honestly, I didn't want to be here. I was really trying to leave. I was thinking that I'd just be here for two years. I would use my research money to do participatory action research projects with youth in Oakland. When it ran out, I was just going to quit. I wasn't even going to stay in the academy – but you know, fate had different things happen – because it was so sleepy of a place. But the upshot was that the student activists really saw themselves or spoke about themselves as one single community. And it was weird to me because I understood the Berkeley setting as politically very, very contentious between student of color groups, between BIPOC groups. It's very contentious, even though they do a lot of work together. They've truly formed coalitions and alliances, which then fall apart, right? Whereas here, it was as if they were all members in each other's orgs. It was really strange. They were called the Student Affirmative Action Coalition, the SAAC orgs, which included a lot of the identity-based political groups. But they really met as one giant org and they ran everything. They ran slates for Associated Students, and thus they ran student government. They ran the Cross Cultural Center, which was effectively their home. We did have the Women's Center and LGBTQ Center, but I think effectively the Cross Cultural Center was sort of the Ethnic Studies Center, if you will. And so, they referred to themselves as the Community. It was really deep. It was something that grew on me: how serious they were about being a family, in this very interracial kind of way. It reminded me of Oakland – even though they are very different contexts – in that interracial sense of community.</p> <p>Today, it's a massive university. We have a very charismatic chancellor who is growing this thing like the corporation it is. It's this massive, massive development project, which we can critique. I'm not going to critique it right now, except to say</p>

	<p>certainly it's neoliberal and it's capitalist and it's expansive and it's extractive. It's certainly all those things, right? And I'm certainly part of it because I'm a provost, so I don't want to diminish that. But I will say, it's like being in Manhattan now. It went from this sleepy town to this huge metropolis. Edwina Welch, who just retired from Cross cultural Center, she remembered when all those condos weren't there and it was just fields. The transformation here is immense. And the organizing, the student organizing, is just like Berkeley or any other place. The number of student activists orgs and how organized they are in their agendas, the initiatives they run and how smart they are, and they are no longer a single community. They really are, for better or worse, more independent of each other. That created a bit of sadness during that time when it happened. During Black Winter, it started as one community. And I think, by the time we came out of that, which took a year, two years, three years, they no longer were a single community. There were people who used to be intimately close as friends and are not even friends anymore. I think it's changed so, so much.</p>
23:52	<p>Amy Wang: Yeah. No I mean, I would say the ladder, the more fracture communities is what you usually see at institutions among students in higher ed. I think the pitting against each other or the – and competing against each other for resources.</p>
24:09	<p>K. Wayne Yang: Yeah. Can I just say one thing about that?</p>
24:11	<p>Amy Wang: Go for it, please.</p>
24:12	<p>K. Wayne Yang: I think differences are real. One of the issues I had was when it was sort of one community was defining difference with respect to whiteness. It's almost like everything's defined against whiteness. The comparative work within, the hard comparative work, that Audre Lorde talks about, and Black feminists talk about, and women of color feminists also talk about is: how do we actually understand difference? Instead of thinking we're actually the same and we share common causes. That difference was something that really came out.</p> <p>For example, the Intertribal Resource Center and NASA. Black Winter is based around this whole rhetoric of - I wouldn't say it's solely based around – but one of the organizing strategies was this rhetoric of visibility, "Can you see us? Do you see us?" Being seen and being visible. I remember the BSU had these amazing strategic documents. I think one of them is "Do U C us" –with the letters U-C. And I remember someone asking, "Why doesn't the Native American Student Alliance do this too?" Aries Yumul, who might have been the Chair of NASA at the time, tried to explain, "We don't organize and we can't organize the same way as the BSU." These are real differences. Originally, some student organizers really wanted the BRC and the RC - the Raza Resource Centro and the Black Resource</p>



	<p>Center - to be in one location. And the Intertribal Resource Center organizers said, "No, we're not doing that." It was an interesting outcome: You had the ITRC separate, then you had the other two centers together. The BRC/RC combination quickly did not work. Yet some people really, really wanted it to work, "This is solidarity. We need to be together." It was the Black Student Union who said, "No, we need our own place." Difference is real. It can feel like fractures. And certainly it is sometimes. But I think working across those differences is - always been the work - the work of love.</p>
26:56	<p>Amy Wang: Do you feel - this is just my own thinking now - do you feel like a lot of this is correlated with like the hypercapitalist nature, but I don't actually know when the Chancellor came. Like when?</p>
27:11	<p>K. Wayne Yang: When did our current Chancellor get here? I feel like it's been less than 10 years. Maybe it was 2014. I'm not 100% sure. Capitalism has so much to do with everything, and I think the university was already capitalist. It just was the sleepy version of it, and now it's the not sleepy version of it. But certainly capitalism is part of colonization and colonization is what creates racial structures as we know them. Those racial structures are divisive. And yet, then there is difference that exceeds colonization. Differences to be honored. Difference is not synonymous to racial stratification, but it tends to map onto it. And so, they get conflated and mixed together. It becomes sometimes hard to distinguish between: Are we talking about difference here? Or are we just being victims and succumbing to stratification and the fracture of our relationships?</p>
28:49	<p>Amy Wang: I need to sit with that one. But yes, I agree capitalism, the neoliberal university all pressing problems. Are there any other sources of challenges you face at UCSD aside from capitalism?</p>
29:08	<p>K. Wayne Yang: Just surviving the place. It's funny to be interviewed because I've been around so long - I feel really young still. First, every new year feels new because there's so much change. But I also remember when the Coalition for Critical Asian American Studies (CCAAS) started, I was the new professor. I was a young professor then.</p>
29:37	<p>Amy Wang: Oh really? Yeah, that was like 2000- I don't remember what year they started.</p>
29:42	<p>K. Wayne Yang: That might have been like 2012 or something. Yeah, might have been 2010. But I was an assistant professor, the young assistant professor. Just the challenges of surviving this place, you know it's something that we don't all talk about, I guess. I mean, this job almost killed me in a literal sense. Here I am today; I'm a provost. It's this weird acceleration too. The academy works in quantum</p>

	<p>steps. I think it's leaps you ahead: You weren't a grad student. Suddenly you are and then suddenly you qualify, you advance the candidacy and then suddenly you're a PhD and every time - you haven't changed that fast, but your title has shifted and people treat you differently. And so, I was just an assistant professor and trying to not die, and to be of use to the different communities who we feel accountable to. And then I got tenure, and I took a sabbatical, and I came back and I became appointed provost. I was acting provost - I took sabbatical in 2015 or 2016 - just before or during the Trump election. When I came back, I taught for another two quarters mid-year. Trump just got inaugurated and then 2017 I got appointed as interim provost, but I was basically barely an assistant professor who would, you know, survived it, right? Survived the tenure process. It's one of these things, if you have a title... I mean, I'm sure you have students, and your students treat you like you're some kind of...</p>
31:53	Amy Wang: I'm the adult in the room.
31:54	K. Wayne Yang: Exactly, exactly.
31:56	Amy Wang: which is weird for me
31:57	K. Wayne Yang: That's what it feels like for me. People treat me like I have a title and I'm somehow important and I've published a few things. Yet I'm feel like: Oh my god, I'm barely surviving it. But then you have to act the part, right? Because people need you to be that part, so you act the part. I don't want to go too much into the personal, but I do think of the personal. It's been personally, extremely hurtful to be here for so long.
32:30	Amy Wang: I'm sorry to hear. I'm not surprised though. I mean, I hear it from current not tenured faculty, hear it from tenured faculty, right? Yeah.
32:41	K. Wayne Yang: I saw a presentation at the postdoc retreat. It was all the data on all the UC faculty. They disaggregated by race and ethnicity and gender. What you saw is the intersection of gender and race: women of color faculty, they don't live till retirement. In the same system, you have faculty making hundreds of thousands of dollars in salary. They're treated with all this respect. They make it to retirement. They're emeritus and they're winning more prizes. And then you have people who don't live. They literally don't see the day of retirement. That is the violence of this institution: this simultaneity of violence and privilege. In fact, they probably go together.
	Amy Wang: Right.
33:41	K. Wayne Yang: But nobody sees that in aggregate for women of color. I see it in Ethnic Studies because our faculty are mostly women of color. People are literally

	<p>fighting not to die this way. We can say this outside of Ethnic Studies and people think we're being rhetorically dramatic. No. It's literally true.</p>
34:13	<p>Amy Wang: Yeah, it's empirically proven. Like we can show you. You're right, Yeah. Yeah I agree, I agree, as a higher ed scholar. Yeah. But let's talk about CCAAS you mentioned. In your earliest assistant professor days, what was your, like, relationship with them or involvement with them?</p>
34:34	<p>K. Wayne Yang: I guess it's the larger context. I think it's being an Asian American professor. All these Asian/Asian American orgs, they always looked to me to do certain things, even though I'm not an Asian American Studies person. I read in that area. I'm fluent enough. I could probably teach a class, but I don't write in that area at all. I used to be the keynote speaker for KP, but not just at UC San Diego, but at Irvine or all around the system. For example, SEAC, the Southeast Asian Coalition, they would invite me to Berkeley every year. The Cambodian students, the Khmer students would ask me to speak. I always have to tell people that I'm not Filipino. I'm not Khmer. And they were sometimes surprised, maybe because Yang could be a Cambodian name because of the mandatory intermarriages that the Khmer Rouge did. Filipinos often think I'm Filipino. It's a huge compliment; I'll take it. The same thing with Vietnamese folks. It's just this weird thing. For example APSA would ask me to speak. That's how I got involved with the San Diego film festivals. Lee Ann Kim, the founder of the festival, was, "Oh here's a new Asian professor in Ethnic studies. He must be an Asian Americanist." So she asked me to get involved.</p> <p>I think that's how it went down with CCAAS here. "Of course we're going to ask Wayne to be involved." Whereas I'm thinking, "I don't even know if I'm true to these issues the way you are. My activism has not been there in that way." I remember it being me, Yen Espiritu, Jody Blanco and then Kamala Visweswaran when she got here. I'm sure there were others, but I just remember always being in a room with like those two – Yen and Jody – and wondering, why am I here? [Laughs]</p> <p>I don't remember all the names of the CCAAS people off the top my head, but certainly Irving was one of the main people behind creating all the documents and the presentations. I think CCAAS was like an awkward acronym. They came up with this idea of APIMEDA, which is even more awkward. They also wanted a minor and a major, which I think was politically or intellectually –the intellectual politics were challenging for those particular people like Yen, Jody, and I. Because Yen founded ethnic studies. She founded ethnic studies as a comparative, relational model that was not to have all these "food group" minors and majors that every other university has. (That has since changed. That's also a huge difference: we have all those things now here like African American studies, Native American</p>

	<p>Indigenous studies, so on so forth.) And then, you have Jody, who studies empire through literature and the Philippines. If anything, he is not necessarily a strict Asian Americanist. And then you have me. I'm not even in those areas.</p>
38:33	<p>Amy Wang: Yeah. It's really interesting actually. I think faculty of color on campus don't have the privilege to say like I don't want to get involved in stuff because, yeah, I think even if you don't like, don't like identify a certain way or tell them or anything. Like I think students just naturally - I am, I'm guilty of that too. Like we would hunt down like Asian American faculty on campus and be like, please, please be our sponsor or something.</p>
39:04	<p>K. Wayne Yang: I mean, it just made me feel bad because I didn't feel I could live up to what they needed. At least for the students at least, you want to say yes to them. But I get asked to do that stuff by administrators. Why am I doing extra service for you based on my phenotype? [laughs]</p>
39:34	<p>Amy Wang: Especially they're killing you, yeah so. But, okay so from my understanding or from what I am hearing is Ethnic Studies, and the initial, wanted like this more integrated program and now we have these, yeah I don't know, other minor studies. So how were you involved in the AAPI studies minor program if at all?</p>
40:03	<p>K. Wayne Yang: Well, this was one of the demands of CCAAS and it was the last demand to be met, right? Part of it is when they make demands, they think administration's going to enact them. And administrators just turn to the faculty and say, "You do it." So, it was quite ironic to be in these meetings with CCAAS. VC-EDI Becky Petitt, when she came in to UC San Diego, she joined those meetings, and met a bunch of faculty. It's ironic because everyone's looking at each other. CCAAS is looking at the Vice Chancellor thinking, "Hey, this what we're demanding." And the Vice Chancellor is looking at all of us and thinking, "Hey, implement this." And we're just thinking, "We're faculty color already doing a ton of work. This is some BS..."</p>
40:49	<p>Amy Wang: I don't have time for another thing.</p>
40:50	<p>K. Wayne Yang: Right. But I think it's also our particular politics. Yen never got behind the minor, and she's the only Asian American studies person in the room. So, if she's not behind it, how is it going to start? I think even the Southeast/South Asian minor started before the AAPI minor did because Kamala Visweswaran just created it overnight. And that's all it takes. It just takes a faculty member say, "I'm going to create it." And none of us - we're all kind of really quiet when it came to the minor. So to be totally honest, if the minor took a long time, it is because people like myself were not trying to create it. It was Simeon Man when he got</p>

	<p>here. He simply decided, “Okay, I'm going to create this.” And then he met with me, maybe once or twice, and asked, “Hey, who's blocking this thing?” I replied, “Us?” We're the ones. Nobody's blocking. Administration doesn't care. They're not going to tell students, “You can't have a minor.” They're just waiting for faculty to do it. So Simeon did it. Simeon wrote the thing and created it when – I would argue – we weren't willing to do it.</p> <p>However, of the demands that CCAAS made - we liked the idea of a center. We wanted to create a center that was different than every other community center. One that was connected to an intellectual project as well, not just student services. A funding stream: a research and scholarship funding stream that funds students and grad student researchers. It was going to be the Militarization and Migrations Institute and APIMEDA. We were matching them inside the same building. That was really what we wanted. It was an administrative decision, “That's not going to happen.” There were reasons for why not. Those reasons are always technical. But the fundamental reason is always political. I think APIMEDA was created in the slow process that admin creates those things. The Militarization and Migrations Institute technically started. That was really Yen's thing anyways. But the minor didn't start until Simeon picked up the ball and asked, “Why don't we have a minor?” That's my version of the story.</p>
43:12	Amy Wang: Yeah, yeah. It was really interesting, I think cuz yeah. I can share later off the record. But what do you think about the API minor being created now?
43:27	<p>K. Wayne Yang: I'm so glad of who it is, who is doing the API minor. I mean, Simeon being one of them, but also people like yourself being influential. Because what I really liked about CCAAS was that they did not want to do a traditional Asian identity pride minor which is Asian identityness in bubble only with respect to whiteness. Such an approach is legitimate, yet also convenient because you never have to address the complex relationships we have with other BIPOC communities or even within the Asian community. It's always with regard to whiteness and white supremacy. From the initial claim of being a victim and oppressed, and therefore innocent of oppression itself. And innocent of complicity in capitalism. And complicity in settler colonialism.</p> <p>CCAAS always took the position, “We're not going to do that. We're also not going to think East Asian dominant. We're not going to reproduce the East Asian hegemony.” I think Simeon and the folks involved with the minor – (I'm not up to date with everything that's happening) – were very much on that same page. This is going to be comparative relational project, where we think about: What is our relationship? What are the relationships across difference within the weird category of AAPI, but also without the category of AAPI? With other BIPOC</p>

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	communities internationally, transnationally? What are the relationships between groups of people? So, I'm really happy that the minor came about when it did.
45:34	Amy Wang: I don't know – I mean it's funny because I think the higher you get you don't, the less students you're able to interface with, but have you seen like a difference among the students and stuff since the creation?
45:46	K. Wayne Yang: I really don't know. I'm not even teaching classes right now. I really don't know for certain. However, in the random community settings that I've been in, let's say the film festival that just happened on Saturday, the San Diego Asian Film Festival: it has an impact. I remember being at a festival event and there was a LGBTQ organization from the community. They specifically called themselves an APIMEDA community. And they specifically referenced UCSD! And I'm thinking: That's a really awkward acronym for all these reasons. But it's also really cool because it refuses the presumption of an Asian pan-ethnicity. So I feel like I've seen that impact. I don't know in terms of students. Also, it's been the pandemic, right? The last couple years since the founding of the minor, I haven't had the everyday interaction where you just run into people.
	K. Wayne Yang: Yeah.
47:06	Amy Wang: That's why every year feels new, right?
	K. Wayne Yang: Exactly.
47:10	Amy Wang: Uh well that's all the questions I have. Do you have any for me - any questions for me?
47:18	K. Wayne Yang: um how did you get involved with this project?
47:21	Amy Wang: yeah I actually - I am a late person who came to the project. I heard they had off - I can't remember how – actually, I'm not sure. I think like Simeon had the idea because usually he teaches the Race and Oral History class. A group of undergrads I think started, they found all the documents from like the 80s, with the hiring of the sociology professor and all that stuff and how everyone was just like, you know, Anti-Asian essentially, and they were going through it. And then I think in the spring they were like we're going to do, like they did the background in the spring, they're like we're going to do oral histories, and I was thinking about doing my dissertation kind of around this. I'm still doing - it's like semi related, but not so much, but, at the time I was like oh, maybe I'll like do the class with them this quarter and like figure out my topic a little more, and that's kind of how I started.
48:20	K. Wayne Yang: Oh, okay.

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48:21	Amy Wang: Then I learned that quickly that I should stay in my education lane. I know nothing about History or Ethnic Studies so yeah, and here I am.
48:35	K. Wayne Yang: Wow, and how many people have you talked to?
48:48	Amy Wang: Just you. We were assigned to one person each.
48:42	K. Wayne Yang: Oh wow, I'm so lucky.
48:45	Amy Wang: No, I'm lucky, and I think like they were very strategic, and like maybe you should do someone like, for the more of like, the higher ed side and start understanding that part of why it was so difficult to get the minor started because this has been like a 40-year conversation. Yeah that's why.
49:08	K. Wayne Yang: Yeah. I'd be curious of what your impressions are about the history of the minor. What was your sense? Is there a narrative out there about why it took so long to get started?
49:27	Amy Wang: Oh, I have a lot of things because I'm not - I'm from Texas, right? Grew up in Texas surrounded by, I would say there's still a large Asian American Community, but it's not the same way we - even if it like numerically is the same as California, it's not - it's not the same, like it's not seen the same way. Yeah, and I think a lot of it is like, I think that overrepresentation conversation of like why would you need AAPI studies? You have 40% students right, you have this many faculty, why would you need like a special - or why would you need this program? I think a lot of it has to do with like the neoliberal aspect of UCSD in STEM and trying to push forth that. Like why would our students need these like social sciences humanities courses? I think - I think that has a lot to do with it.
	K. Wayne Yang: Mhm, yeah.
	Amy Wang: I think it is a little shameful. I think UCSD was the last one in the UCs.
	K. Wayne Yang: Yeah.
	Amy Wang: so, I thought that was really interesting. I think there's some conversation around like prestige and elitism and thinking that like having the social science will actually like wash us down or like, yeah, water down the rigor of UCSD or UCs.
50:46	K. Wayne Yang: I just feel we're all a little complicit in it. I want to emphasize that any faculty member at any point could have started at the minor. Our Ethnic Studies department was founded on specifically not being what we call the four food groups of Ethnic Studies like Chicano/Latino studies, Native American studies, Asian American studies, and Black studies. It was founded deliberately

	<p>against that, and Yen was part of that founding. And then we lost so many Asian American faculty who were eminent, eminent scholars in Asian American studies. That part is complicated. Why that happened. It might not be a single administrator – we can't blame the Chancellor per se. But certainly, people didn't act to reverse the loss of faculty, so you can blame people for not acting. And then there's the culture of the place. I mean we had like Lisa Lowe, Lisa Park, Lisa Yoneyama: the three Lisas. We had Rosemary George who passed away and nobody replaced her position. We had Adria Imada here. There's a way in which, Asian American faculty – and this is part of the thing that CCAAS documented – they can just vanish and nobody cares. Nobody's going to do anything about it, including other faculty and including other faculty color, honestly. And it has to do with the thing that Asian American studies has not examined enough, or it's not been very vocal about, which is: Besides minoritization, what is the relationship of this category of Asian with other groups? Because that's really the dynamic we're seeing. It's the question of Asian overrepresentation / underrepresentation. But having said that, we could have, I could have started the minor if that was something I wanted to do. It is hard to blame an administrator for that.</p>
53:01	Amy Wang: I can- Let me just stop.