

Race and Oral History Project, UC San Diego

Narrator: Francesca Christine Camacho
Interviewer: Ha'ani Lucia Falo San Nicolas
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Transcriber: Ha'ani Lucia Falo San Nicolas

Abstract:

Francesca Christine Camacho was born in Tamuning, Guam in 1997 and is currently attending the University of California, Irvine. She graduated high-school from the Academy of Our Lady of Guam and then moved to California in 2015 to pursue higher-education in the field of law. Her parents, Frank Gerard Camacho and Edeine Laguana Camacho, are both of Chamorro descent, which is the Indigenous people of the island of Guam. In this interview, Francesca discusses some social and cultural issues and discrepancies that she has experienced from both living on Guam and in the continental United States. Some of the topics Francesca discusses is the lumping of Pacific Islanders and Asians into one general ethnic category (i.e. Asian/Pacific Islander), the negative connotation surrounding a Micronesian identity, the impact of militarization and colonization on Guam, and more. As a millennial Chamorro raised on Guam and now living in California, Francesca provides a holistic and contemporary perspective on issues encompassing Guam and Chamorro people. Although limited, many of the scholarly pieces or oral accounts that involve the Chamorro community usually only focuses on the standpoint of the *manam'ko*, or elders. Francesca's voice is one of the few that broadens the scope of Chamorro presence in Academia from just *manam'ko* to the younger generations as well.

FCC: Okay.

HLFSN: Say something.

FCC: Hello?

HLFSN: Wait, again.

FCC: Hello? Can you hear me?

HFLSN: I couldn't tell if I was listening to you-

FCC: Yeah.

HLFSN: - or if I was listening to me.

FCC: Well I don't want to face you! This is just as weird for you as it is for me, okay? I've never done this before. [laughs]

HLFSN: Oh my gosh, and we're recording most of this so. Alright.

FCC: I need this (cover???)

HFLSN: Oh my gosh.

FCC: Oh, god.

HLFSN: I feel like they can take this out because we're recording it right now or maybe I can cut it out? [laughs] We're laughing, but I don't know if we can be informal like this I feel like it's not supposed to.

FCC: Yeah, I feel like it's supposed to be very formal but at the same time I'm trying to be natural about it so.

HLFSN: Yeah.

FCC: Semi-formal.

HLFSN: Semi-formal yeah. Okay. I'm dying! We should have done a mukbang [online audiovisual podcast where a host informally eats food while interacting with audience and can be done with guests]. Okay let's start? Ready? Do you want me to go in order?

FCC: Yeah.

HLFSN: Okay, so today's date is May 26, 2018. It is Saturday, 1:19 PM. My name is Ha'ani San Nicolas. I am the interviewer, and I'm with Francesca Camacho, the interviewee. Say hello.

FCC: Hello!

HLFSN: [00:01:05] So Francesca, tell us where you are from on Guam.

FCC: I'm from the village of Tamuning. Did you need more information?

HLFSN: Like what is Tamuning, can you explain to the people if they haven't been to Guam and also the villages in general? And then, maybe like describe how home is.

FCC: Mhm, okay well like in terms where I'm from, which is Tamuning, that is more central to Guam and it's kind of more like the or near like the tourist-y part where there's like the malls, and the outlets, and it's like very different compared to the north and the south, which is more in tune with nature. Not as many buildings, it's more just like a prominent residential area not like the nice beaches and everything.

HLFSN: So, how many people are in your family?

FCC: Well, in my household there's five of us. My two brothers and my parents and me. However, um when people say family of course then I kind of have to think about my mom's side of the family and my dad's side of the family and that just is just a big number over twenty people I would say on one side.

HLFSN: [00:03:06] And then, in your family are there like a lot of people like are both your mom and your dad's side do they both live on Guam or are they spread out throughout the world?

FCC: Um, yeah. There's, in terms of numbers, there's a lot on both my mom and dad's side. My mom has four sisters and two brothers and then my dad has five brothers and one sister. And they all have their kids and then now there's grandkids. However, like from my mom's side there's like some here in California and some of my dad's side they're out in Virginia.

HLFSN: [00:03:04] Do you think that um cause back home we talk about family right? It's not only by blood it's by like who you associate with or who you grow up with? So can you kind of explain how we kind of call people auntie or uncle but they aren't our blood auntie or uncle? And then do you still consider them close family even if they're not blood related to you?

FCC: Yeah, I agree. Um, I believe that the whole auntie and uncle thing even though you're not related, it's like the equivalent out here to like a family friend. But we don't we won't call them by their first name because that's kind of like disrespectful because you're older than them. And these like auntie and uncles specifically are people that we like grow up with. For example, like my mom and her best friend were not related but she's my auntie. But it's because we grew up together and just like it just seems like we're already so close. Like you might as well, even if it's not blood but it's still official that you're family.

HLFSN: [00:04:44] How do you think that differs from most of the people here in the mainland United States? Like do you think that the relationship is the same with other people or do you think that's just something that's kind of we grew up on Guam? Or do you notice any difference?

FCC: Um, I feel like there may be somewhat of a difference I'm pretty sure that some people have like there family friends and everything like. Like, "Oh yes, she's like a second mom to me!", but I think that just because on Guam like our culture is just so like centered around the family like despite blood and like it's just as long as there's like a you built a foundation and a connection with somebody that's family. And I think it's just with that emphasis it's more like renowned on Guam. I guess, if you can say it like that.

HLFSN: [00:05:39] And, um we were talking about this earlier but if you can explain what manam'ko is and mañaina-ta is and how that is important in the Chamorro culture?

FCC: So manam'ko and mañaina-ta is like the elders in your culture. Like the people above you of course. And, um when I was thinking about it I really think that it's somewhat lost its emphasis on the importance and emphasis on that. Especially with the younger generations, but in terms of like I believe with my generation and the ones before me like we still know that they're like the center of our culture and they have such a really big role in it. So like it's important to like maintain that respect for them because that's what they deserve because that's their title in like our culture.

HLFSN: [00:06:31] Do you think it's enough for us to just show respect to our elders? Like even like when we have big gatherings even if it's enough to just say hi to them or do you think that we should be kind of talking more with them or do you think that's something that we don't

value as much because we do value our elders. But I think as time goes on we kind of don't sit down and talk with them or learn from them.

FCC: Yeah, no I think yeah of course it's a respect thing. Like, you have to like you know like amen and *fangingge*. But, I think talking to our elder's especially in this time it's very important to get to know your elders because you know it's sad but it's part of life and they are going to pass on and everything. And it's important to like they've gone through a different life compared to us that we'll never know. Maybe we could have like a glimpse of it is hearing their stories and their experiences. And that's like some way like to keep you know the culture alive. Um so I don't think that it's just enough to just see them like at a random like fiesta and amen. I think it's important to just establish your place in like if you're place with them, for example, like offering to get them food at the table or like a drink or just sitting down if they're not like talking to anybody and just have a conversation I think and it also proves to them like oh they're very like in line with all those values that like we were taught as a kid to respect your family and like um in ways like not just like play an active role with the family.

HLFSN: [00:08:07] So like going off of that, do you think that it's enough for us when we were growing up, because me and you both we went to school on Guam our whole lives, do you think it's enough for us to just learn about these histories in textbooks? Or whenever people tell us is enough? Or do you think that we should actively go to our elders and learn these oral histories? And also, do you think an oral history as a type of education is devalued on Guam because I know most of us are kind of we learn more in textbooks and we kind of learn in that linear way

we just learn in school, textbooks, and that's it. But I feel like with what you're saying, do you think it's important to learning through oral histories and learning through talking is also important?

FCC: Yeah, that's important. And with the textbook thing and school, I mean it's like you know it's like kind of like an Americanized like education like we're we only have like if we're lucky like one or two sentences in a textbook about us. So, that's all that we like really know about Guam it's more like learning more about American history and everything. And I think that there's just something very special about hearing about it from like like your family like how they grew up and like what they did for food and like how they made the food and um just their way of life because um what's the word for it? Oh, I lost my train of thought. I don't know. It's just it's it's really not enough and I think that when you build that like foundation by actively like asking like your grandparents for example to like, "Oh, like what was it like when you were my age?" and we can talk about it. I think there's like a sort of familial connection to that that would make you want to feel like "I wanna do what my grandma did" or "I want to be able to pass down her traditions to my kids and then their kids". And then keep like this family tradition alive and that I think that's really important and that's just not something that you can learn in school.

HLFSN: [00:10:12] Um so, I think my next question would be why did you decide to move from Guam to the mainland United States?

FCC: I decided to do that because I wanted to get um to receive higher education by going to college out here.

HLFSN: [00:10:26] Mhm, and I feel like it's a big thing back home, and you can kind of touch on this more, of kind of I guess why do people find value in moving so far and spending so much money and investing in education that's like outside of home and why they think it's more important to gain that education outside of Guam than instead of staying back home? And then what are kind of the perceptions of people who do stay on Guam and just continue to have an education there compared to those who move to the U.S.?

FCC: I think it's just with me it's like to have the opportunity to move out and invest in like yourself and what you wanna do in life and the opportunities only available in the U.S. I honestly think that it's it's for you in the end. It's a very great like chance like there's so many things that I've been to exposed to out here in terms of like education, like other cultures and just like life out here that's just it's somewhat of a culture shock and it's so much more different than Guam because um they just have a more like chances to like branch out and see like you know maybe you can't like follow through with this like major I guess? So maybe you can do something else. There's just a wide variety of things that you can do and like which is good because it gives you like a chance to explore like is this really what I want to do with my life and if not it's okay I have a back up because they still have their resources for that. And like it's not like to discredit like Guam's education it's very good and there are opportunities for certain fields. However,

there's just more um there's like there's specific um fields of like career fields that like are only available out here, which is fine because um you get it's like gonna benefit you in the end to get that experience and get that chance to do something with your life that you're happy with instead of just being stuck like and yeah. Do something that you're really content with and really want to stick to. And in terms of the um I guess you would say like the stigma about people that stay home and pursue an education, I feel that it's like um all like yeah they're just staying home because they're not really they don't feel like going out here they don't want the real college experience and like they're just so tied to their family like they don't think they can do it. And um also it's it could be like a money thing but um I just think that when people say like, "Oh, yeah no they're just from Guam they didn't want to move out here". They kind of devalue like their like decision to stay on Guam and pursue higher education there because it's home it's not going it's not taking like the next step, which comes with like going to college and like I guess increasing like your independence because when you're out here you're not with your parents and you're like maybe you have some family but basically you're on your own trying to figure out how to become a real adult and like get a job and everything but on Guam you still have that like support system and to fall back on if things don't work out. So I feel like that they feel like it's just like they like the easy way to like do like or to attain higher education.

HLFSN: [00:13:47] Do you think that moving to the States and whether it just be to move out here for opportunity-wise or to um get a higher education, degree, a Master's and stuff. Do you think that that makes when the people come back to Guam, if they do, makes them more well-rounded and holistic and kind of more engaged in the culture or do you find that people are

still just the same or complacent and nothing new has really changed their mind about things. Or how do you feel about your experience coming to the States. Do you feel like you appreciate Guam more and your culture and your family more? Or is it just the same?

FCC: I really do have a new-found appreciation for Guam. I think when I was back home before I came out for college I kind of took advantage of the whole family and beautiful paradise setting of Guam. And then when I came out here it was just it was like I was just like I did not feel like I was that I was home at all. But um I but I appreciate like the chance to come out here because the way I see it is I'm getting like my higher education and like pursuing my like desire to be a lawyer. Um and I want to do it right the first time so when I'm ready I can go back home and and make Guam a better place by receiving this education out here but bringing it to Guam. If that makes sense.

HLFSN: [00:15:12] Um, I was going to ask you something but I forgot what I was going to say. Um, do you at um coming out here do you find other Chamorro people um easily? Or cause you also go to school in California, do you find that it's easy to find any Chamorro people let alone Pacific Islanders at your school or in California in general. And, if so, where do you and where do you not?

FCC: I feel like it's very rare to find Chamorro people out here even Pacific Islanders. And I think it's funny because you can tell like when you like when you're in the presene of an islander just cause the way they up they bring themselves and sometimes even like from the clothes they

where and how they dress. And just how they talk sometimes you can really see it. Um, I'm not sure like where I normally find them it's probably like at the restaurants sometimes or when you see like you're just in a parking lot and you see like for example like a Guam sticker and you just I don't know. You start to build like this connection with like a stranger but it's just this fact that you both are like from Guam. You already feel like family. So like um but it's still it is really rare to find people like that out here because California is such a big place and there's just so many cultures. And sometimes you could be mistaken, too. But um, we're such a small population even though there's a lot of us out here in California and like other parts of the U.S. it's still we're still a minority so it's very difficult to find those people and which is why like once you find them it's like you have the you build that instant connection and you it just makes you feel like more like you're at home.

HLFSN: [00:16:49] And then when you tell people that you're Chamorro, or that you're from Guam, what do you usually hear them respond with or do they have any kind of implications about um Chamorro people in general when you meet them?

FCC: Yeah, once I say I'm from Guam I always get this like skeptical facial expression from them because um odds are like they don't know where we are so I have to explain to them where we are in like the world. And then mostly starts off with like um stereotypical questions like, "How did you get to Guam" and like um "Your English is really well" and "What's your language" um "Do you have a Visa out here?". Because people don't know that we are a U.S. territory and our predominant language is English and we're basically very Americanized on the

island except we're just small. So there's a lot of like misconceptions about Guam because they think we are still stuck in this primitive state and they don't know how to take it so they're just shocked and I understand because they don't really teach much about Guam here. So, all I can do is just entertain their questions and educate them about it.

HLFSN: [00:17:54] How do you feel about cause both of us went to the same high school, we kind of every year there was a history that was based on Europe or the United States and that was it. And we learned amount about the U.S. and we took a lot of AP classes. I think we know a little bit more about some people here who grew up and lived in the United States but moving and knowing that when you came here, did you feel how did you feel when you would meet people who didn't know anything about Guam or had wrong ideas about Guam or didn't know any history about them when you know so much more about their history?

FCC: Especially when I came out here I was just I was just offended by it because it's like it just kind of like seems like the U.S. isn't giving us the credit that we deserve especially for like how much we do for the U.S. and I would yeah I would easily get offended by it especially with the stereotypical comments and questions because it's just like I feel like you should know like your history about like everything that has to do with the U.S. and we are part of the U.S., but they just make it seem like we're not we're like this whole we're in this whole other world separate from like the colonized America. But like um but over time like I had to not be so sensitive about it because there really are just some people that just don't know much about it. And I don't think it's my place to just get angry every single time I come up come by somebody like that. So yeah

like I use I see it less in a negative sense and use it more as more as of like an opportunity to educate people about where I'm from that way we can leave the conversation knowing a little bit more about the U.S., too. And more about Guam that you know if it does get to like a joking like prejudice negative prejudicial conversation that's where you know I feel like all of us Chamorro people draw the line like it's like it's a disrespect thing.

HLFSN: [00:19:42] Mhm, and then in California in general there is a big Chamorro people I think one of the biggest with Texas and other places outside of Guam and Chamorro people not only from Guam but Saipan, Rota, and the other Northern Mariana Islands. So knowing that and at the UC schools we see less than five at each. But when you do are there Chamorro people who came from Guam or Chamorro people who were born and raised in the U.S.? So how do you feel about that do you feel that we're very underrepresented knowing that the U.S. or not the U.S. sorry that California holds a good amount of Chamorro people and why do you think it is that you don't really see a lot of Chamorro faces or people don't grow up knowing other Chamorro people if they were born and raised in California?

FCC: Um.

HLFSN: Like did you feel that you were very underrepresented going to UCI or was it a good like a good transition for you? You're always here in San Diego anyway.

FCC: No, I did definitely feel underrepresented especially like during my first like first week that all I saw were Americans and Chinese people and Middle Eastern. And I just wanted to look around like where are the Pacific Islanders around here because you know I came from an island which was predominantly um Pacific Islanders and then just to come here and it's like it's very shocking cause to like not really pass by somebody that you can relate to and I think that's what like like what's the word like it it increases like the amount of like home-sickness I feel because I just it just makes me feel like I'm a little bit more alone cause I don't really have anybody to related to about that.

HLFSN: And did you ever feel like from your personal experience discouraged to the point where you didn't feel like you belonged in this um institution of higher education? Or did you ever feel that you wanted to move back home?

FCC: Yes. Yeah, um there was a point my freshman year where I just felt like I just came out here just to come out here and to get away from Guam and I just didn't feel like I found my place especially with the people and the cultures around so there was a point where I just thought you know maybe I did try it and this is it for me like I want to go home but you know I decided to stick it out and I mean lucky thing I did because I found out what I truly want to do and now because of that because I stuck it out I plan on staying here for even a long time after like my undergrad.

HLFSN: [00:22:27] Do you think you could have stayed despite the um all of the negativity if it weren't for the help of your family and friends? Or did you always find that you could lean back on your Chamorro friends, Chamorro family, etc. Did that help you a lot?

FCC: Yeah, especially when there were times when I just I wanted to go home and it was especially bad my freshman year. I I just felt like I'm so disconnected from like my family and I just don't know what to do because I've been so used to just leaning on them and seeing them whenever and it just kind of freaked me out. So every time when that happened you know I would I would ask like my friends hey can we hang out like I've I've just missed you guys. I don't really want to be around like people here I just want to be around like I want to have vibes from home and that's even like with my immediate family out here too. Like they'll know when I'm feeling homesick when I just like urge them to please come get me because um it's just there's times out here where I don't like I'm not I don't feel like I'm at home like I don't feel comfortable being around here. And the things that I'm comfortable around or stuff that I grew up with which was Chamorro people.

HLFSN: [00:23:36] Um what um events I know went to PIFA if you do you think those type of events helped you and then I guess San Diego too the has a really big Chamorro community other than your uh friends you you knew in high school. Do you think that those big large-scale events helped you too? And how important do you think that is overall in um like if other people like if um other people were to hear about these events do you think that it kind of educates them

too about it while also helping you not be as homesick or what are your feelings about that what's your experience with those type of events?

FCC: Yeah, I think especially with PIFA [Pacific Islander Festival Association] I think that was just some type of way like it's our Chamorro Village away from home. Like there'd be there'd be I know our friends when they like would like come out to PIFA. It's just the chance for all of us to come together because we're not home. So we can experience this home feel together that's away from Guam and um yeah. I like it when people like people who aren't Chamorro get to like hear about this stuff because then they get immersed somewhat in the culture like when they put on like the cultural dances or like the long lines for the food but they found it was delicious. It's just like a chance to make them see like what we grew up with to some extent. Um without actually being there and like I think it's I think it's really great for people to like experience that because you know we are a part of the U.S. and this is just something that's like I feel like it's just something very unique to the U.S. like Guam's lifestyle because it's not how people act out here so.

HLFSN: [00:25:17] If you ever if you have ever met or if you haven't some Chamorro people who were born and raised in the United States do you find that there's a big lifestyle difference that um maybe your upbringing that's kind of different from you growing up on Guam compared to theirs growing up and living in the United States?

FCC: Absolutely. Um I can even see it with my cousins um who moved out here when they were little kids. Um I mean we we as like kids who grew up on Guam we were used to like our fun days would be like going to the beach and like staying there for hours getting sunburnt and whatnot. And then going home for like a barbecue but I think you know like out here kids there are so many things to do for like little kids with all like Disneyland, and Six Flags, and like all the malls, and everything. I just think we were just more in-tune with like maybe it kind of sounds kind of cheesy but we were more in with nature because that's all we kind of had to like fall back on in a sense for fun. And I like don't regret that at all like even though you know everyone wants to do the Disneyland and stuff. It was just very different especially with um how they act around like like people and like with family and stuff because I don't know it's just they just didn't they just seem had like more like of an independent view of like life compared to us where we're just like we're very collective. Like we're all about the family but then like when I came out here and saw like how my cousins acted it's just like it just I could tell like there was a sense like that they just did like you could tell like they weren't like really immersed in the Chamorro culture.

HLFSN: [00:26:58] And hearing what you're saying with growing up on Guam even everyone when I hear their experience it really is like centered around nature and land and everything. And I don't think we value that as much as when we were children but um like now like you're twenty years old. Do you find that you have a bigger appreciation and understanding that growing on Guam is important for um kind of fostering that Chamorro culture even though um you can be in the United States like most of these Chamorro people who live out here they um

saw fiestas maybe some of them could hear Chamorro but do you think that it's important to have the land ties as well? Cause like I think in most of indigenous cultures that land is really important. In your culture, do you think that still holds today even though there's some of them who live out here in the United States or?

FCC: Personally, I really believe that it holds true to me. Um I just feel like our like our culture and it's connection to the land it keeps us grounded. It makes it kind of puts us in our place to say like you know like your part of this like world and like nature has so much to offer to you. So it's important you take care of it. And that's like like in the future like that's one thing I want my kids to get used to and I want my kids to grow up in that um in that like land Chamorro traditional like culture compared to out here where it's mostly like skyscrapers and like attractions and everything. I want them to be in tune to like I want them to like grow up how I did like on the beach and just see how that is because I feel like you get a whole new like a different perspective on life compared to the people out here because you're you're just so immersed in it and you just didn't really care about all like the trivial things and materialistic items that you just you really want to like take advantage of it and that's why I feel like it's just super important to like maintain the land and make sure like that the beauty like we preserve the beauty of Guam that like it is already. For like the future generations to enjoy it too.

HLFSN: [00:28:59] What is, if people don't know who are listening, Guam is one of the most strategic um locations for Navy and um Army bases in the Pacific Ocean if not we are the largest

one. Um what is your experience growing up with or even now with um the military on Guam how has that affected your family or you and your opinions on just the military in general?

FCC: Mhm. Um I think my like my view of the military on Guam uh. See it's like building like with the bases and everything I just I think I just don't really agree with um like them like intruding on our land in a sense. And I mean I appreciate all like the service and like everything that the U.S. military does for us but I feel like there's like a fine line in where you need to understand that you're this is not your this is not really like your home and like you need to respect it especially with when it comes to like tearing down areas which are very like like ancestral and like very you need to respect the land to build a base. And also like I don't know other experiences with the military on Guam is just seeing them everywhere always hearing like the fighter jets um in the sky. And it's just very I don't know it's just like we really grew up around the military like they were always everywhere so it's kind of hard to avoid that. And you know of course with the military build-up it's just only increased. Like by a lot.

HLFSN: [00:30:29] Do you think um Chamorros in the States um I'm I know in San Diego we have um Pendleton and there's other military things but if they were let's say there was a Chamorro who grew up in Minnesota or whatever and they're not used to seeing a lot of military presence. And if they were to come to Guam do you think they'd be shocked because for me at least I've seen tanks driven on the street during-

FCC: Me too.

HLFSN: -um parades. And you're just so used to hearing fighter jets flying by so how do you think that's impacted your childhood and do you think that this is cause I never realized this growing up but do you think that's something we've just become kind of um not oblivious to but we just kind of-

FCC: We got used to it.

HLFSN: -don't see it anymore. I don't know. What's your experience with that?

FCC: I feel like we've kind of really did get a little desensitized to it because they were around like you said even for like the Guam like the Guam Liberation Day Parade. There has to be like a boatload of like military people walking down and then the tanks and the and then the planes and it's just their presence on Guam has I feel like it's really affected us in a way where we just it's like common knowledge to like to hear those sounds and to see those people. And which is kind of like sad because we kind of just I wish we would just kind of not have had that extent like that big of a presence of the military on our island because that's just not really what our culture's about. So I feel like it tends to like like like go against each other like our culture and then the U.S. military because it's just it's just doesn't really mesh well together so. But for us it's just kind of become like common to see that stuff so it's something that we kind of just are forced to live with.

HLFSN: [00:32:18] And I think it's um do you think that the militarization has become kind of like seeping into our culture because there are a lot of Chamorro people who do enlist in the army and we do have the largest per capita um enlistments. So do you think have you experienced that with your family or friends and why do you think that um a lot of Chamorro people choose to go this route is it because of history or there's no other route for them? Just because of all the you know there's no other way because of all these pressures from the U.S. So what do you think about that?

FCC: I think like military the military has really like had like like you said it seeped into our culture. I have so many friends who right out of high school they enlisted and I mean that's good for them and I feel like sometimes a lot of Chamorros want to go into the military for the benefits. But the benefits it's for their like for their future to secure their future for their kids and their wives and husbands and to build that foundation for them. And I guess maybe to some extent it's to protect our freedom? But I don't really I don't see that I don't know when I ask when some I ask some people like, "Oh, why did you decide to enlist?" And the common answer is for the benefits because I want my kids be able to do what they please and um yeah.

HLFSN: [00:33:43] Do you think this um cause there are a lot of people who enlist in the military do you think this kind of influence the family dynamic on Guam? Because I know a lot of families their parents or siblings or significant others are constantly deployed so have you found that that kind of maybe that's why some people are kind of shifting away from you know being close knit with their families? Or something like that?

FCC: Actually, yeah. I feel like because it kind of interrupts the whole family um family dynamic cause you know we're centered around it's important to like build that relationship but there's some you know there's some families who had kids that um like they haven't really been around their dad because their dad was deployed for how many months at in out of the year. So they don't really have that relationship with them like to fall back on. So it really does affect um like the values that we hold true for our culture because they clash. Yeah.

HLFSN: [00:34:45] And for you growing so if you just remember when you were back home and um just doing your daily routines have you ever despite like maybe hearing a fighter jet fly by or seeing I don't know some type of military vessel have you ever interacted with anyone from the military? Or have you found that you ever did when you were growing up and if so what was that like and how you think that's impacted your opinions of military presence coming into the States for school?

FCC: Um, the I think the only amount of interactions that I've had with military people would be my uncle when he um was working on Guam for the military. But um I mean if I'm being honest when I would see like the amount of like military people on Guam and the tanks and the jets it it just kind of in a sense bothers me because I that I that's not my paradise. My paradise is a beach but there's tanks to the left of you in the parking lot. Like I guess like something like that. It's just it kind of takes away from like the serenity that Guam has and just by like asserting

they really assert their presence in our island. And it's just for me it just kind of makes me feel like I'm at home it kind of just makes me feel a little uncomfortable.

HLFSN: [00:36:06] And for most of the like cause we're a younger generation of Chamorros we do go out. Um same as other young kids in the United States we go to clubs-

FCC: Mhm.

HLFSN: -we have parties and things. Like um Francesca was saying in the northern part of the island it's more modernized um modern and contemporary so there are more clubs there so um for me at least um there there's a big amount of military people who come from the bases to come and also party. And it's you see more um people of color and mostly Black and then some White people. And I guess for me that was my only exposure to-

FCC: Yeah.

HLFSN: - Black and White people growing up on Guam. Uh what do you remember growing up with any military people or Black and White people in general like what was the ethnicity break down for people your age growing up or your peers?

FCC: I didn't I rarely saw like um a White person in school. It either was like one or two but um so yeah like you said um most of the people like the people that you can tell are like from the

military or from the United States. They were like around the Tumon area which has like all the clubs and all like the shopping areas because it's the it's like basically like a mall for them so they just you know go around and yeah. I would my experiences with them while going to clubs is just it's not really pleasant um because every time like I would go out um there's a bunch of them getting really intoxicated to the point where it's just it's very uncomfortable to be around because they're just being belligerent.

HLFSN: [00:37:43] Has this implicated any of your perceptions of these type of people? Not "these type of people" but military people coming to the States or um when you were encountering more Black and White people in the States going to school?

FCC: Um yeah in a sense. Um I guess you would say in my honest opinion that I kind of stereotyped them in a way because that's that's the extent to how I like I saw them. Like I saw like my people my Chamorro people as being like very centered on the family and like staying controlled, calm, collected themselves. But when I see like when I'm out and I see all these people it's just I guess yes they're trying to have a good time but sometimes it gets out of hand and it's just not something I want to associate with. So, it really did affect me when I came to the U.S. because I just decide not really to associate myself with them. If I did, then I did which is fine. But I would never really actively go out to like want to get to know them because I just kind of felt like that's not my crowd.

HLFSN: [00:38:47] Do you think, as a culture, the Chamorro people kind uphold the same kind of biases or do you think it's more of a younger generation thing or have you noticed that you, excuse me, that your elders have biases and stereotypes because of maybe the war or military or just the impact of the U.S. of occupying Guam?

FCC: Yeah, there are definitely similar biases. Um especially with like my grandparents who grew up in the war and they had just um they had you know they had their experiences with it which were like you know detrimental to them and um of course they did develop their own like their own perceptions of how they saw them, which I guess is it's it's fair because that's how they saw them. Yeah.

HLFSN: [00:39:36] Do you um there's thing I don't know if you know it's basically called intergenerational trauma where you experience so let's say your grandparents or most of our grandparents were alive during the war during Japanese occupation. And then basically this idea is that kind of never ends so you feel it go down like through your family line so your mom experienced it in some way and you may have experienced some way whether it be um going to school and you know it's basically kind of of going to private school me and you it's kind of militarized in a sense we all have to wear uniforms, there's strict rules we have to abide by. In terms of education we have to do stuff. Have you felt any kind of implications from that time from your grandparents whether it be direct or indirect? Cause for me at least that's what I felt I also do my grandparents were biased they didn't really want to talk about their experiences that

much and because of that we're all very technology-centered, very contemporary-based, we don't really think about our culture that much. Do you think is same for you or?

FCC: I think, yeah. Um I you know I experience you know how you said that the private schools and everything but I also got like um I forgot what you said. Um, when like my great grandma she would tell me like stories about the war and like what she went through which is just very traumatic. And it just made me think like why did these people like do this to my family? Like, it just makes me think like like well what well what was it all worth it for them? Like what was the things that came out for them in the end? And it just um it just made me think about every like the U.S. in such a different light in a way that I gravitate toward my people more far more than anybody else because that's that's just the people that I have good, positive vibes from and not just this this um population that kind of ruined my family when they were in the war.

HLFSN: [00:41:40] And then um I think a lot of kids growing up misunderstand the term colonization in context to Guam kind of they think of it as if it took place in the past and the Spanish-

FCC: Mhm.

HLFSN: - and it kind of happened and it doesn't it still hasn't continued today. So um I know there's traces of that still present on Guam and one example I can think of is how heavy

Catholicism is on our island so. Have you ever thought about, cause you're a practicing Catholic too.

FCC: Mhm.

HLFSN: Have you ever thought about that and how that's influenced on Guam and that you practice it and how it's such a big thing on Guam? And what do you think about how Catholicism is like such a huge part of Chamorro culture?

FCC: I actually really thought about this because when you think about it Catholicism is not part of the um the Chamorro culture. And I um actually did a little research a while back saying how like the Chamorro culture has become such a mixture of different things and like people believe like you know Catholicism but then they also have strong ties to their culture. And those views like those clash because you know we have the whole concept of like the *taotaomo-na's* and then there's God. And then it's like who do you believe you can't believe in all of this but I choose to and and I never really thought because you knew we grew up being Catholic and everything how much like the Catholic like the Spanish when they brought Catholicism like it really had like a negative impact because they forced it it's something that they forced onto the people that they didn't want but they had to do so for the sake of survival but in a way. It made me it made me kind of think about Catholicism differently but it didn't make me want to stop because it's what I grew up with. I've I went twelve years of Catholic education and I still I firmly believe in it and

it's become a part of who I am so I just I just choose to think that I am like that's like a part of my culture.

HLFSN: [00:43:42] What are your feelings about when people like when you were just saying Chamorro culture is so heavily influenced by other cultures and when at least when I try to talk to people and explain whether it be our cuisines, or our language, there's so many um influences from other cultures that they kind of question the authenticity of our culture and that it's there's not really anything that's set Chamorro. What are your opinions on that?

FCC: Yeah, um. I feel like a lot of people have their misconceptions because they kind of start to lump us together with like Hawaiians. That's something that I've noticed especially with some of the stuff that we do on Guam like. There's I I heard through this movie that there's not a set like we don't know how the Chamorros originally danced. So because that tradition was lost through colonization so they had to borrow from all their cultures like Polynesia and then there was also and then like Tahesian dancing and they all like combined it and they they made it into this type of thing that they say, "Oh no, you guys like you're I see how you're dancing like you guys are um you guys are Hawaiian". But it's like no we're not. It's just we've become like we kind of lost our way and we had to try and pick up the pieces of what's left of it and by grabbing other cultures. So, yeah I think that's all I want to say about this.

HLFSN: [00:45:06] Do you I kind of want you to explain this and what you're experience is with this um just the idea of being Micronesian on Guam and how that's kind of a negative

connotation. Um, I think that's an important issue that a lot of people don't talk about. I kind of want to see your opinion on it because a lot of people on Guam are just Micronesian or just Chuukese people Yapese, Pohnpeian, Northern Micronesian islands but they tend to separate themselves from being Micronesian although we are. We're not Polynesian or Melanesian so do you identify as Micronesian and if so why? What do you think about all of these negative stories that are being told on Guam in the newspapers or what people think of that?

FCC: I mean, you know growing up my parents and my family never told me you know you're Micronesian it's just you're Chamorro. Like they didn't really like register in our minds that like we are because I didn't really learn this until like a while back like in high school I'm like oh, we are a part of Micronesia when they would have like the Chamorro festivals and everything. And Guam would be like under the Micronesian Festival so it's obvious. Um, but I feel like you know people just see Micronesian as in Chuukese and Yapese and um the others like in a negative light because of all the crime that goes on. You know, you always see in the newspapers, in PDN, how um there was a like uh sexual assault or there was like a robbery happening and there was a Chuukese guy involved. And you just I guess we just don't want to associate ourselves with like that like ruining the island in that way with all the crime rates and everything so they just in a sense consider them outsiders and we just like haven't been able to like make like a connection with all the other Micronesians in a way where we can all be like one collective like unit. So we just in a sense like want to separate from that and not want to get involved because of the things that they see around that all the Micronesians do on our island it's just like they think they're ruining like who we are and what they're doing to our land because they're all there

HLFSN: [00:47:23] Do you think it's important that we start recognizing that we are Micronesian although there's already a struggle in trying to I want to know your opinion about this trying to separate Asians from Pacific Islanders that's a big thing. Um growing up did you identify as Asian or was it strictly Pacific Islander and then what is your experience with that? Coming to the States but also more at school?

FCC: I I really think um we do have to start um having to associate ourselves with Micronesia because there's always a question of like oh our culture's dying we don't know who we are anymore and like once we find out we don't want we don't want to accept it. I so I think it's you know if you're if we're really trying to like get back on this path to like reviving like and reliving like the culture that was like lost. It starts with figuring out yes we are Micronesian and like let's go from there and continue to see like what are some other things that we could do to like bring back like who we were in the past. And um in terms of the whole Asian and Pacific Island thing I never associated myself with Asia. Yeah we live close there but I've never practiced anything that has to do with Asia as in Japan or China. Or um Vietnam but um and people and I think it's just weird because when people out here say like oh so you're like part of Asia right and it's like no we're not we're our own separate area we're in the Pacific we're Pacific Islanders. So, I just thought even like sometimes in the SATs like the um the system like the government that's in charge of that like when you circle or bubble in what your race or ethnicity is. Asian is lumped with Pacific Islander like sometimes and it's just like it would always make me think like I'm

Pacific Islander but I'm not Asian so do I does this apply to me still so like of course I would have to do it. So it's just I never really understood why people associated us with the Asia.

HLFSN: [00:49:25] Do you think it's because we have a different grasp of we think of Asia as kind of something like in geographic terms but or do you think it's because they think we're the same culture or do you think it's because maybe skin color or something along those lines? Why do you think people kind of lump us in one big category when like if you actually even if you just kind of informally hang out with them or even if you study it in textbooks there's not really a set connection between these or do you think it's convenience? What do you think is the reason why?

FCC: I actually do think that it's culture cause we're both collectivist cultures and um where our like our opinions in and our like our decision are affected by the ones that we that are around us as in our family. Whereas like America it's very um individualist culture where their their where their decisions are their decisions and they're very independent and like us I think that's just how like it's similar like cultures and upbringing. I think that's why they they seem to like think that like we have so much in common and we do but like at the same time we're all different like China isn't the same as Japan and Japan isn't the same thing as Guam. It's just I think there just needs to be a time where you need to separate you need to see that every like culture like even though we are all collectivist we all have our own unique things about each other. That must like separate us from the rest.

HLFSN: [00:50:50] Do you think that cause like again growing up on Guam you already know that growing up you are Pacific Islander and you are um a brown person of color. Do you think that is different from people who are growing up in the States who are Chamorro and they grow up learning that they're Asian slash Pacific Islander? Do you think that has some kind of affect on their identity as well or has that kind of influenced or kind of challenged you to think that way too? When you went to school, when you're in school?

FCC: Like out here?

HLFSN: Yeah.

FCC: Yeah, I kind of saw myself differently. I've never I just never thought that I could be like like I never really saw myself as like a like a person of color in the Pacific Islander community but I mean you can really tell the difference once you're out here. And I don't think it I don't think it affects um the Chamorro state-siders out here because they grew up into the culture so they kind of get assimilated with it. Um because they've been here since they were kids so they kind of become you know they become an Americanized Chamorro yes it's in their blood but they were raised a different way whereas us it's in our blood and we were raised as Chamorros.

HLFSN: [00:52:01] Can you kind of explain what um your opinion is along with maybe the popular opinion on Guam between attending a public school, whether it middle school,

elementary, high-school, compared to private school and what that kind of um, what's the word, it kind of reflects if you attend these certain institutions? And which one you went to?

FCC: So I went to an all-girl private school. And there was definitely tension in like throughout middle school and high-school as to like how we view public-schoolers and private-schoolers. So like private schoolers were always like the negative like stigma with us is that we're all pretentious and we're all rich. And uh we all are like mean to everybody and just don't really care about anybody if you're not if you didn't go to a private school. And whereas some private schoolers view public schooler as being rebellious. They're very low income and they um uh they're just into all like they have like a bad reputation like getting into like alcohol and like what not. Especially at a young so it's just there's this like a divide of like it's like a divide between like an upper-class status and a lower class status where you just you don't really associate it with them so you stick to like what you are a part of. And that and then you hear what they think about the lower class and it just kind of influences your decision. I mean, if I'm being honest that's how I grew up I used to see the, "Oh, you went to public school so you guys must be all that." Which is of course wrong because like now I have a bunch of public school friends but they're not like all how I thought they would be.

HLFSN: [00:53:47] It's very different compared to the States right? That a lot of public schools out here are so well like they have good reputations-

FCC: Mhm.

HLFSN: -that a lot of people strive to go to public schools out here in the States but then compared on Guam public schools are the complete opposite and also I just thought of this right now. Do you think it's interesting how the I know like public school versus private school is like social and economic divide between Chamorro people but also there's again that Catholic element in private schools because you can't do that in public schools and even that kind of creates another elitist thing because you're also dividing kid's education, too. Based on the money they can afford and what not because a lot of people do believe public schools are don't have the same education as private schools do and most of us in private schools, which is just the statistics, do end up going to school outside of Guam-

FCC: Mhm.

HLFSN: Like go to the States, like what are your thoughts?

FCC: Um.

HLFSN: It's like a big-

FCC: Yeah!

HLFSN: -epiphany I had.

FCC: Yeah, could you repeat that?

HLFSN: Just, don't you think it's interesting like you too when we were going to school we didn't think that much about it. But then it like right now, us going to college looking down on like high-school institutions or just in general you can see that the public school like it's just there's no care in it. Whereas-

FCC: Yeah.

HLFSN: -like private school they're already set just because you have money so it's already dividing Chamorro people based on wealth. But then you're also dividing you're depriving these kids on education based on their money and then you're also saying that if you go to this private school that fosters Catholicism and fosters this kind of non-Chamorro idea then you're going to go some places in life.

FCC: Mhm. Yeah.

HLFSN: I'm just mind blown right now.

FCC: No, it's just that I think about like our you know how you see like Academy looked it's just it was really nice. You can tell like they had like funding for it but then like you look at the

public schools and it's like oh this place is like kind of dirty like kind of run-down. And it's just like so you kind of have this thing. And I agree with how you say like if you if you went to this high school knowing that they like had like a pretty good education and you're it's like Catholic education then that's what you already have a leg up compared to like the people that went to public school. Which is not necessary it should not be like that people should not think like that because you know education. I mean like they didn't like have like theology classes like we did so. I just think they think of like you said it's kind of like they look down on them because they didn't get that Catholic education, which is I mean not necessarily true because there's also like CCD classes and Confirmation classes so we were basically both still learning in the faith. But with us it was just required and it was a grade.

HLFSN: [00:56:44] Mhm. Do you think also, too, I'm now thinking about like basically economy, social status, or whatever. Do you think that in choosing to go to public school or private school, I notice some people it's kind of this ongoing cycle of families. Not necessarily that it's a bad thing but if your parents went to public school, then you went to public school, and so on and so forth and it kind of for me for most people and families it kind of seems like they're limiting their social mobility in moving up in places and it's just kind of this plateau of families. Like they there's not better thing for them and kids kind of feel like there's no where else to go. Like this just like this ongoing cycle of things.

FCC: Yeah, I mean it's not it wasn't really our decision. For me, like you know I would've gone to Academy anyways. The one reason why I actually went was because my parents forced me to

because that was my mom's alma mater, that was my grandma's alma mater, my cousins went there, my auntie's went there, and the same thing with Father Duenas where that was my dad's alma mater and now my brother's there. And now my younger brother's going to go there. I guess there's like this whole idea of like they want us to have the education that they had because they saw that it's being like the best thing that you can receive on Guam because it was like in a sense like it was higher it was like high like had higher standards and um. Compared to like public school, which may not be the case when I think about it.

HLFSN: [00:58:16] Mhm. It's just interesting to like think about when we're talking through like it. And I think like the last question cause we're almost already at the hour mark. I want to ask you is a lot of people in any culture or any ethnicity. There there's some kind of defining factor as to what makes them that certain ethnicity. Like a lot of people think you have to know the language and have to grow up there you have to do all these things to be Chinese, um Ethiopian, whatever the um ethnicity or may be. So what do you think, in your opinion, it doesn't have to be right or wrong because there is no right or wrong answer what do you think defines being a Chamorro person if there was a military person or grew up on Guam and they were raised there their whole life? Do you think that makes them Chamorro if they were living on Guam for five years and moved to the States. Does that make them Chamorro? Just knowing the language, how does that situate you in the culture as well?

FCC: Okay, if I had to describe Chamorro culture in like one view it would be the value of family orientation. You don't, I, yes having learned the traditions and having like learning the

language and knowing it. Those are big factors into determining which culture you are, but for me it's if you have those values instilled into you from the get-go and you grew up around it and around like the people especially. That's I feel like that's what makes us Chamorro. Because you can you can learn it all but then have this mindset like I'm still American but I know these things. That doesn't make you a part of it just because you learned the language. Like an American person can learn Chamorro and then they can't say that they are Chamorro because they're not. And you just have it's just the upbringing, too. Because what was I gonna say? I don't know like that's how I see it. Because you we have like all these connections to family and there's like I have so many like people that I consider family that I'm not related to. Because we have well it's important about building this relationships and connections with people. Like you know, hey could you help out help me out with like um with my project because you know I think you can be the right person. Like yeah, and in exchange I'll make you banana bread. So like, I think it's just about this whole idea of like love and um family which is very important for our culture because it's like you know our culture's constantly like being like torn apart and dying and being switched up every way. But the I feel like the constant throughout the whole thing that has like stayed with it is family.

HLFSN: [1:00:55] Mhm. Okay, and um one more question. For just to situate whoever's listening to this whatever year it may be or wherever they're from, just where Chamorro culture is today. It doesn't have to be in Chamorro people anywhere, it doesn't have to be on Guam, it can be in the States but what do you think is the um the reputation of Chamorro language today and like what is the is it thriving are people learning it? What do you think about it? Or even like

Chamorro traditions in general do you think there's a movement toward learning the language and um why do you think a lot of people don't speak Chamorro basically cause I think language is a big part of culture but a lot of Chamorro people don't know the culture at all or just know maybe um just sayings or some words and stuff.

FCC: Mhm. I think um, wait. Hold up. I no I think there was like some type of movement like Huráo like the Huráo Culture Academy phase like we um I feel like that was like um a good attempt to try and get like to instill those like cultural traditions into the kids and I think that's very important at least to start at a young age because see now we didn't really start out young and I don't know how to speak. I could you know of course speak like certain phrases and everything but I I can I can one-hundred percent say that I do not I do not speak it fluently I do not understand it. And that honestly has had an effect with like how I view myself as a Chamorro cause I personally don't feel Chamorro enough because all of us grew up with English as our first language. Like ever since the Americans came to Guam they they instilled this idea that they want what's like something that's like better than what we already have when we were already thriving on our own and so they forced English onto us now after being like Catholicism thrust onto us. And it's just like we with all these like these phases of colonization it really did like make us lose our way and the culture if in my opinion it's dying. And especially with the language and I thought about this early saying like you know you have to know the language to in a sense to be able to call yourself Chamorro because you need to be able to speak it and be able to pass it onto the generations so that's why I say it's dying because we're not speaking it, we're not practicing like actively practicing it in our communities. Everybody speaks English

they don't really have Chamorro language classes in like the high schools and the middle schools and the elementary schools. And I just think that's very like in a sense like dangerous and I feel like that should just be a warning to all of us that we say we want to like bring back our traditions but we need to start um we need to actively start doing it. And I'm sure there are movements and everything but I just I have not seen any, which is why in my opinion I don't think like not much is happening with us. But I like I said before like I really believe that it starts by like teaching it to the kids.

HLFSN: And hopefully people start learning the Chamorro language and culture even the ones here in the States-

FCC: Mhm.

HLFSN: [1:04:12] -So um before we end I just need like can you define there are some words that some people who are listening won't understand. You said fangingge' earlier.

FCC: Oh fangingge' refers to when you when you greet an elder and you you raise the elder's hand to your forehead. And, would you say that you like sniff it in a sense?

HLFSN: Like sniffing to your nose or head.

FCC: It's a sign of respect. That's how that's basically how we greet people greet the elders like there everybody like has their cultural practices, whether it's like in Japan you bow this is like how we respect and we fangingge'. And um, you know there's certain things you say with it- ñot, ñora. And then, what's the other one?

HLFSN: [1:05:01] Um, and then you said Academy. If you could just tell us about that.

FCC: Oh Academy is Academy of Our Lady of Guam. That's the all-girl high school that all-girl private high-school that I attended.

HLFSN: [1:05:15] And um Hurão?

FCC: Hurão?

HLFSN: What the purpose of Hurão was? When it was founded? It was founded 2005 but what your experience was like how old you were?

FCC: Um, I want to say I was fourth grade. Uh Hurão it was Hurão Cultural Academy it was this it was basically like this summer camp where parents can bring their kids to learn more about the culture. They had like different like activities planned throughout the day. They um they were able to like practice the language, learn how to cook stuff, and cultural dancing, and weaving. And like on Fridays like we would go like like on a field-trip to like a beach and like or

to like an ancestral ground and just we it's we just was a chance for the kids to get immersed in the culture that was like that's been forgotten.

HLFSN: Alright, thank you Chess.

FCC: Thank you!

HLFSN: It's 2:24 PM and the interview on the, what's this called, on the thing says it's been an hour, six minutes, and twenty-seconds.