A TEI Project

Interview of Rose Ochi

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1. Transcript

1.1. Session One (March 3, 2014)

PARKER

Okay. This is Caitlin Parker. I'm here with Rose Ochi, and it is Monday, March 3, 2014. So let's begin with when and where were you born?

OCHI

Yes. I was born in Los Angeles, California, on December 15, 1938.

PARKER

And can you tell me a little bit about your family background?

OCHI

My parents emigrated from Japan. My mother was actually somewhat of an arranged bride. My dad was studying. He studied in Waseda University, and he met his future bride's uncle, and while he was in the U.S., he was asked to come back to Japan to meet Mutsuko—her name was Mutsuko—and it was somewhat of an arranged-bride situation, yes.

PARKER

And so then they both moved out to Los Angeles?

OCHI

Actually, at that point they went on a ship and they landed in San Francisco. And he worked for a mercantile company and they lived in San Francisco. My older sister, she was born there. Her name is Frances.

PARKER

And then were you born in San Francisco as well, or they had already moved to Los Angeles?

OCHI

They moved to Los Angeles, yes, sometime in the late thirties.

PARKER

Okay. And your father was involved in [unclear]?

OCHI

Again, he was working for a mercantile company. They had a nice life. It was in Boyle Heights they had a house. My sister, she went to private school, Maryknoll, and she had everything. She piano lessons, beautiful clothes. It was a good life.

PARKER

And did you have other siblings? Do you have other siblings?

OCHI

Yeah, I had other siblings, but everybody is deceased now, yes. My oldest brother, George, he—my sister passed away, now, two years ago. My brother, maybe four years ago.

PARKER

Okay. So can you talk a little bit about your childhood and growing up in Boyle—were you living in Boyle Heights?

OCHI

Yes, this is in Boyle Heights, but actually I don't really remember much about pre-war, just from what I've been told by my mother, that I was a very gregarious child. I would just wander around the neighborhood and talk to people, and I did not need to be babysat. I just found ways to entertain myself.

PARKER

And so how old were you when World War II began and internment happened?

OCHI

So, World War II, I would probably around—I was born in '38, so I think probably was around four years old. I actually can't say that I remember much other than I know that first we lived in Santa Anita. It's a horse track and racing track, and our family was among the families that lived in the stables. Actually, there's going to be a reunion next month, but when I went to one of the first reunions a few years ago, when we were taking a tour of the stables, I was kind of overcome with a sense of nausea. So anyway, I think there are the subliminal kinds of—

PARKER

Physical memories?

OCHI

—feelings. Yeah. But I do know that when we were on a train to Arkansas, which is a long ways from Los Angeles, you could just sense that there's just a lot of fear. People had no idea of where they're going and what's going to happen. But Japanese, our parents were very stoic, so they never really kind of shared anything, but you could tell that this is very, very, very difficult

time.And talk about subliminal, many, many years later when I was getting some food to share at the Manzanar pilgrimage, I bought a box of gingersnaps, and when I ate a cookie, I became very nauseous. So when I returned home, I said to my mom—I says, "I got really nauseous." And my mother said, "That's what you ate all the way on the train ride. We gave you sandwiches and gingersnaps."

PARKER

And you remembered.

OCHI

Mm-hmm… When we got to Arkansas, I know we all lived in barracks. We lived in Block 12, and at some point I was going to start elementary school, and the teachers were very nice. People in Arkansas, actually, were very nice. They're kind of far away from the West Coast, where all the very hostile anti-Japan kinds of hysteria was occurring. But anyway, one day I was lined up to be given a new name. My name is Takayo, and my parents, they chose that name. It has six special kind of significance. It means "a child with high ideals." But one day I'm lined up, and the name I got was Rose. Years later when I get a chance to talk about this story, I say, "Well, I guess while difficult it was, I'm lucky I didn't get Petunia." [laughter]

PARKER

And so they renamed all the children?

OCHI

They named all the children, yeah. We had Japanese names. My name was "a child with high ideals," Takayo.

PARKER

But when you got to Arkansas, they gave you all American names?

OCHI

Yeah, everybody got names. Yes, yes. Well, I would say, looking back on that experience, I learned—I believe it was very important, because somehow I learned that I'm not a real American. I'm an outsider. And instead of feeling like you're ostracized, I just felt very strong, and I think over the years I was allowed to take on unpopular causes or stand up for people that are being beaten up or whatever because I was an outsider, and it's something that I embrace and I like.

PARKER

So how long were you in Arkansas for?

OCHI

I think we were there at least about four years, and at one point my father became—because he spoke English, he went to college—he became the block manager. And my mother, she came from a very pretty wealthy family in Japan, so she had a lot of help, servants, wash her hair, do this, that, whatever,

cook. But my mother learned to sew, and that became her way to provide help, support the family. She learned to sew, and I know that it was a very difficult time for everyone, especially for my older sister, who had everything. She had private school, piano lessons, fancy clothes, and here she is about to graduate high school and now she's in a camp. So people her age, I think it was very difficult for her, but for myself and my brother, I think we probably thought it was kind of happy times, where we're pretty free to play. And as I said, the Arkansas people were very kind, mostly kind. The one thing I remember, I had is my tonsils taken out, and I don't know whether they needed to be taken out. It's possible that, you know, the young doctors were using us as guinea pigs, practicing new procedures and policy. But anyway, after my surgery, I was put in bed with another young internee, George Takei, and he had his tonsils removed. And if you know George, [demonstrates] his voice is low. [laughs] I don't know. Maybe he got [demonstrates] low because of the tonsillectomy. But his mother knew my mother, and she said, "Oh, your daughter is so alive and energetic, bouncing up and down, and there's my son moaning and groaning after the surgery." And so one year when I was in Arkansas, there was a gathering of all camps, and George was one of the speakers there. I walked over to him and I said, "Hey, George," and I wanted him to know I was there because he'd been at another gathering in L.A., where I got up there and I told the story and I said, "George and I have been in bed together." Anyway, so I says, "Hey, George, I'm here." Anyway, but I don't remember too much about camp other than—there's some stories, but I'm going to move on. Now my parents were able to be released, and people were returning back to where they came from. Many others wanted to move on to other places, but my parents were subject to deportation. My father was here on a business visa. He's not a businessman, he doesn't have a job, so they were going to deport him. So they took the family. His uncle lived in a little town, Elko, Nevada, in the northeast corner of Nevada, and he had a steam laundry. Bing Crosby had a ranch nearby, and it's just a little train stop in the northeast corner of Nevada. He had maybe three, four children, and he took us in. And my parents went to San Francisco to see whether they could fight deportation, and my parents were very fortunate. I don't know the name of the attorney, but it was a civil rights lawyer, and he overturned the order. So they came to get us in Nevada, and my dad drove us to Los Angeles. He bought an old car in Elko in order to drive home. So we were in the middle of the Mojave Desert, and he has a flat. This is when you had inner tubes. When you open it up, there were so many patches on it, you could hardly see any rubber. But anyway, I always remember that the first car that came by, a white man, took the tire into town and had it repaired, and then whoever was coming back dropped it off. And so I never forget that pioneer spirit where you help people in need.

PARKER

So what had happened to your family's home and their possessions?

OCHI

Oh, everything, everything, everything—in our case, they lost everything, the house, everything. The only thing I think that my mother was able to save was this big kind of Imari platter. Imari, it's a very kind of red, blue, and white beautiful kind of platter that we use for special occasions like New Year's and whatever. I believe a neighbor kept it for her. Anyway, otherwise, they lost everything, car, furniture, everything.

PARKER

And they had owned the home?

OCHI

Yes.

PARKER

And they lost that?

OCHI

So then when we came back to L.A., we found a place to rent, and it was a house in East L.A. on Percy Street. My father had a best friend and his wife, and so they lived in the same structure, but it had a separate unit. And then my father's cousin and his wife, they didn't have a place to stay, so they came and lived with us, so we had three families in that house. Basically, it was a good time, except my father had a college degree, and he always wore a hat and a white shirt, and he'd go out every day and stand out there wherever to get day-labor work, whatever he can do. My mother was taking care of us, but she would take in maybe some tailoring to pick up some money. My father finally got a job at Columbia Records.

PARKER

Oh, wow.

OCHI

My father was about my size, about five-six or –seven, and slight, but he was pretty strong. He played baseball and stuff and golf. But anyway, he was hired to be a record presser, and it's very hard work, physical work. He said that some of the workers were very angry that they hired a Jap, but he said that the black people protected him. So he used to tell us, "Always be nice to black people. They protect me." Anyway, so they had some defective records and the employees could take them home. So now we're living in East L.A., middle of East L.A., and in the summer we had the doors open, and Chopin, whatever, this wonderful, wonderful symphony music would waif outdoors. So it was kind of an interesting time there. But when I went to school—well, actually, if I back up a little bit, in Nevada when I went to school, it was hard because one day a Japanese word slipped out, and the teacher made me, in front of the class,

wash my mouth out with soap. It was very hard. And then in the back of the school, there was another school, and they look like me and they're Indians, and I said, "I want to go to that school." Anyway, so we had some problems in school, but for the most part, the people, the townspeople were wonderful, because the Matsui laundry had been there for many years, and they had like maybe three kids that went through the high school. One played basketball until actually he went off to the war. He became a 442 vet. This is my father's cousin. Anyway, so the people, by and large, were really nice, but this particular teacher was not very nice. One of my favorite things I used to do is there was Basque bakery and they would make the best French bread, so my job was to go to the bakery. When the bread comes out, and it would be maybe winter, and you put two loaves of bread and head home while I kind of eating off the ends. But when the war had ended, these GIs from the intermountain area were coming at the train stop, and they loaded up with snowballs, and they'd throw them at me, "You dirty Jap." And I was maybe, whatever, I'm five, six—six or seven years old. So I remember that. When we got to Los Angeles and I went to the grammar school, you'd still get the "Dirty Japs," and, "Go home back to where you came from." The Mexican kids never did that, never did that. One thing I did is I'd say—they called me "Jap." Then I'd say, "I see you in the tunnel," and that means you are willing to fight. So if you're willing to fight, especially with the Mexicans, they really respect you. And I get hurt, but I'm willing to fight. So, growing up in East L.A., especially in the neighborhood where I grew up and all, it's a good characteristic not to be afraid. But it was a wonderful neighborhood. The term they used was "melting pot" in the old days, but it's a wonderful neighborhood.

PARKER

This is Boyle Heights?

OCHI

Yes. This is a little bit further east now. It's in East L.A., yeah, but closer to Indiana on Percy Street.

PARKER

So what would that neighborhood be called?

OCHI

East L.A., I think, yeah. My mother learned how to make tamales with Mrs. Ferris behind the alley, and three doors down is Mrs. Cambruzi. She doesn't speak any English. She taught my mother how to make raviolis from scratch, and I still have the little roller machine, the little thing, yeah. But it was a wonderful neighborhood. My girlfriend, Bryna Slavetsky, Jewish, you go over there, any day you could just slice some salami and put it on rye bread and just eat. And I go down to see my friend Lucille and Danny, and they're Mexicans, and their mother always had beans. So today I love beans and tortillas. I

always—she knows I like beans and tortillas, yeah. I love beans and tortillas. It was a wonderful, wonderful neighborhood. Next door was two old-maid white ladies, very old, and they had been schoolteachers, and they were always kind of helpful, but they were pretty up in age. So we ran errands. I went to the store. I did whatever they needed. And if I needed any help with school or anything, they were there. We had this other Scottish family, maybe about five doors down, a beautiful family. Their son went to World War II, came back with shellshock. He's a handsome, handsome man, looked like a movie star, yet his wife left him, with his daughter, and so now he is living with his folks. At that time, I guess he didn't look like he was going to ever, work, and he stayed in the bedroom. The parents said, "We need to keep the noise down, because if he hears any noise, he goes under the bed." So we all roller-skated, but we would just walk on the grass when we got near his house. At some point, my parents, they prepared for the citizenship, but they needed somebody to stand up for them, and this Scottish family stood up for them. That always makes me cry. [cries]

PARKER

Do you remember that ceremony, the citizenship ceremony?

OCHI

Well, my mother was so proud. I don't have a lot of pictures, but I have a picture of her with her navy blue suit. I remember preparing. She had to do all the history, and we'd have to help her, but she got to a point she knew more than we did, so she was ready. She looked all nice. They both—my father, it was easy for him, but for my mother, it was some—but they were very proud to become citizens. It was very hard time, because my father was an only child and he wanted to take care of his mother, but his first priority is taking care of the children, but he can't give us everything we want because he's saving money to buy a house and he's giving money to his mother. I didn't know until many years later that he was building her a new house.

PARKER

Oh, wow.

OCHI

Because years later, he adopted one of my—no. She adopted—Grandma adopted one of her girlfriend's sons, so that there would be someone to inherit the house and take care of her. I met him one day when I went to Japan. I met him, and he took me to the cemetery in Kumamoto.

PARKER

So he was sending money back to build them a house in Japan?

OCHI

My dad was sending money for his mother's house, new house, so somebody would want to—actually, the one that we adopted was a city man, he worked at

a bank, but the person that was going to take care of her is an older brother that's a farmer, and so that they would have something that they would get. Anyway, so my mother, maybe the last time I really talked to her—I mean, I visited with her before she passed, but the last time we really—she was in a convalescent hospital, and she said she wanted to tell me that she's so sorry that I couldn't go to dancing school. I said, "Mom." I said, "It's okay." She says, "No. No, I told Papa that—." They were living with us. Their cousins were going to take dancing lessons, and so was a neighbor girl, Joanne. And I said, "You should get it too." And my father says no, because he had only so much money, money for here and for there. And my mother says, "I tried so hard." I said, "Mama, it doesn't matter. I was a tomboy. I was playing with the boys instead of dancing. That's what made me able to become a fighter. I like men and not fight with them. I'm not afraid of them, and that's why I become a boss of men." I was criticized by some women. When I was in the White House, there was an Asian group meeting, and they asked me to come speak, and I told them about being a tomboy and my ability to be a manager of men in the Mayor's Office, gang kind of guys, you know, whatever. And then in the White House, my god, I had air force, army. I mean, they're all kind of mid-managers from different services and departments, and I said, "They're comfortable." I remember the two guys I heard. One of them headed up the high-intensity drug-trafficking program. He said, "Oh, my god. An Asian woman from L.A., and a lawyer? Oh, my god." This other guy, he's from law enforcement from New York police. He said, "Oh, my god." Anyway, but actually I just had my fiftieth wedding anniversary. This guy that headed up the drug program, he came.

PARKER

Oh, wow.

OCHI

When I was leaving, he says, "You're the best boss I've ever had." [laughter] Anyway, but where was I?

PARKER

So when your parents, once they got citizenship, were they politically active?

OCHI

No.

PARKER

Were they involved in any, like, Japanese American Associations—

OCHI

No, no, no.

PARKER

—or anything like that?

OCHI

Well, my father, he was working for a trading company, Mutual Trading, so he did know the people in Tokyo and all, but other than I think playing with the baseball folks or going to—they call them prefecture parties or the picnics, yeah, those are wonderful times, where everybody comes and brings all the wonderful dishes that they make for special picnics and things, and we go to Elysian Park and enjoy. There were bento and all kinds of things. That was very nice. But my mother and father, they're a part of the Buddhist church, the Nisei Buddhist Church, and other than that, not much until after my father passed, my mother got involved in a lot of stuff, just to be busy.

PARKER

What kind of things?

OCHI

Oh, everything. Flower arrangement. Actually, together they were doing—it's not Haiku. It's like Haiku. It's like poetry, but maybe longer versions. I don't know what it's called. So they used to do that, and actually they did some ballroom stuff. They never were like a couple now, now that the kids are gone. One time I went over there, and they're doing ballroom dancing. I was shocked to see them. But they was arranged, but you could see, you know, we were very fortunate. My father's a nice man. My mother's a nice person. A lot of the men, you know, they get a lot of frustration, they take it out on their wives, or maybe they saw that in Japan, you know, where they're stern. My father didn't know how to really be stern. He tried, but—can I tell you some stories about my father?

PARKER

Yeah.

OCHI

I think my father's father did Kendo, which is like swords.

PARKER

It's like a martial art, sort of?

OCHI

Yeah. So when we were small, he would take newspapers and roll it up like a sword, and we would all make our swords, and then he would hit us on the head. You know, we'd do everything we can, but he'd hit us on the head. And my brother, he's two years older and he's pretty athletic, and the two of us, we just get "whack, whack, whack." And I keep coming, but my father says, "You're not supposed to be doing this. You're a girl. You're not supposed to do this." And other things I wanted to do, he said, "No, that's not for girls." And my sister—now, what is she, about eight years older, and she very smart, and she graduated high school in the camp. So now when we came to L.A., she wanted to go to college, so I think she went to City College to learn bookkeeping and stuff like that, and then she wanted to go to full—

PARKER

Four-year college?

OCHI

—get a bachelor's, but my father says, "You have to help support the family." So she took a job and she went to go work for Good Samaritan Hospital in the accounting section, and so she was there pretty much all her time before she got married and had children. But as much as she got everything when she was really young, my brother and I didn't get much of anything, but she gets her little bit of money left over after she had her salary, and then my father and mother took so much. Things that I remember that were important to me, like my Union skates—I wanted Union skates—and she would get them for me.

PARKER

That's nice.

OCHI

So, in turn, over the years later, I was a good auntie to my brother's and sister's kids. I was their Santa Claus. But she was very generous, and we lost her a few years ago.

PARKER

I'm sorry.

OCHI

But back to my father, he always, always making a comparison between me and my brother. And my brother is a very smart, very nice person, very gentle person. He's more like my mother, and he'd tease me and all, but he loved me. He protected his little sister and stuff like that. There was never any real antagonism and stuff between us. But my father would always say, "George, you've got to go to college. George, you've got to do this. George—," da, da, da. "George—."I said, "Me. What about me?" I kept saying, "Me, me." He said, "You're a girl." I said, "Me." "Girl." Whatever I said. And at the same time, I'd come home and I'd say, "I got a trophy," or, "I'm elected this," or, "This is my report card," and he'd turn to my mother and he'd say, "What a shame this child didn't come with kintamas," meaning "balls." And I heard that. I heard that all the time. Anyway, my father, he became really American in a way, and even though he had those thoughts and all, when I had told him that I wanted to go to college and to finish—my sister couldn't finish. I said, "I want to be a teacher." He supported it, but that's [unclear].But pretty much—I'm going to back up now. I'm still like twelve years old, and I'd go to a park called Laguna Playground. It's now Ruben Salazar. That's where there was a shooting. I used to hang out there, and there was a director and her name was Frances Langendorf. I think she thought that I'm going to get into trouble, because I guess I must have had a chip on my shoulder, and then I was leader. She thought that I was going to be a gang member, and so she selected me to go

to Unicamp, a camp for underprivileged children at UCLA, a UCLA camp, but it was in the mountains. And I'd sit there and I said, "I'm going to be a Bruin. I know what I'm talking about." I come back to school and I say, "I'm going to college." I don't know whether I said it earlier, but then when I got to Roosevelt High School and I told them I'm going to college, they says, "You people make good secretaries." And I said, "Excuse me? Me?" I said, "Me, take orders? You've got to be kidding." Anyway, they put me in the commercial arts, but I didn't do well, but I kept taking the other classes too.

PARKER

The academic classes?

OCHI

Yeah. Anyway, I ended up not with enough credits to go to UCLA, so I had to go junior college, and then I got accepted at UCLA. And when I was at UCLA, I volunteered to be a camp counselor at Unicamp.

PARKER

Oh, that's good.

OCHI

Yeah, yeah, it was—

PARKER

Could we back up a little bit and talk about the kind of things that you were involved with at Roosevelt? You were talking about being on this Welcoming Committee and things like that.

OCHI

I probably—well, one of the things is at that time, there's all clubs, and if you're Japanese, you belong to a club, and there's all these clubs and clubs all over L.A. and then maybe several at Roosevelt. So my brother, he told me, "I don't want you to go to Roosevelt. I want you to go to Garfield," which is just a little further towards Monterey Park, because you didn't have all the Japanese cliques. I said, "Well, I want to go to Roosevelt with my girlfriends." And he said, "But I don't want you to join any clubs." And it was kind of good advice, because, number one, I'm not really a group person that much. I like to be free and I like to be friends with everybody. So we have Joanne Fowler; there's Sheila Wells; then there's Shirley Chisohm, a black girl; and there's Elmera Schrogen, she's Jewish; and all kinds of friends, Mexicans, whatever, and blacks and some Japanese. So I might have mentioned to you that when I graduated, the Ephebian Award?

PARKER

Mm-hmm.

OCHI

Yeah. They told me I had the most class votes. That's probably because I knew everybody. Most people just kind of, sort of, stayed with your group. And I

think that served me well as I moved about, but the bad part is, I don't want to be involved. I just want to do my work. So when I'm in the Mayor's Office, I'm not in a group, so I'm not necessarily friends with anyone, but I get to know people like Wanda. But Jeff was sort of like a big brother because we have the same name, Matsui, and he's a political, he's a fundraiser and stuff, and I'm not a political at the time. But I think I'm kind of independent. Being Japanese is very hard because you're supposed to be very group-thinking, group—

PARKER

Group oriented?

OCHI

—and I'm not a good Japanese. You know, like Elmera, Elmera, she's a very smart Jewish girl. She was my girlfriend. So maybe for summer before I graduate, I'm a camp counselor at a Jewish Community Center, and I'm teaching them horas and stuff like that, and I just be friends with Mexicans, be friends with everybody. When I was in law school, I remember one day there's a scary, scary professor in constitutional law. He's kind of like traditional thing, and he sort of likes to make you look stupid when you stand up, and he said, "Ms. Ochi? Ms. Ochi?" And I stood up and I said, "Ms. Ochi." And everybody goes, "Ooh." And then I answered my question and everything, and he left me alone. And then I go in the hallway, and this—there's one Japanese guy in the class. He's from Fresno. And he says, "How could you do that?" He says, "I come from Fresno, and you have the rich families, the farmers' families, and then the worker families, and then the business owner family. Everybody knows their place." I said, "I'm from Roosevelt. We don't know any place. There's no place. We're all the same place." But we had everything there. There are Armenians, Molokan Russians, Italians, everything. It really, really was a melting pot, and everybody got along really well, and that was nice. The only conflicts I had was maybe with some teachers that were—I already told you the story about Ephebian and Miss Eagle blocking me. So did I tell you that I got inducted into the Hall of Fame of Roosevelt?

PARKER

Yeah.

OCHI

Yes. Anyway, I did a [demonstrates "bird"] to Miss Eagle. [Parker laughs.] But what I told the students there, I said, "Do not let anyone define who you are. No."

PARKER

This was the teacher who prevented you from getting the award?

OCHI

Yeah. "Or limit your aspirations. Never."

PARKER

What was your brother's experience that you think helped him give you advice, not to stick to any one group? Did he have a similar experience?

OCHI

His friends were not Japanese. Huey is a white guy. They were the bicycle friends. They'd get on a bicycle and pedal all the way to Long Beach from East L.A. All his friends were all different. Maybe when he was in high school, his friend was Vincent Monarrez. He's Mexican. They both wanted to get a letter, but neither were athletes. So the coach says, "If you finish every long-distance race, I will give you a letter at the end of the season." So Vincent is chubby guy. My brother is kind of athletic, and his legs are strong because they bicycled all the time. But he says, "The bus is ready to go back, and they're waiting for us." And he can't come back until Vincent comes back. He has to stand back there with Vincent, and then they come moseying in, and then the bus—and then just everybody just scolds them. But my brother was very protective of me. He was really a good person. He went to UCLA—no, Cal State. He really didn't want to go to college, but my father wanted him to go. So he studied, I think, let's say psychology or something, and then he went into the army, and then because he had the degree, they made him do counseling and stuff, and they sent him to Germany, and he loved it in Germany. He was working somewhere near the mountains, and I guess he had a German girlfriend. He wanted to stay and get married. I can't believe it. He says, "I'm going to a ballet and going to operas," and stuff like this. But anyway, my father says, "You have to come home. You're our only—."

PARKER

Only son.

OCHI

So he made him come back, and the sad thing is he ended up marrying someone. But they had three kids, and one of them died. It was very tragic. The wife, she had a tough life, you know, but I think she maybe after a couple of years' marriage, they found a cancer in her leg and they amputated half of her leg. So I don't know whether she would have been any different, but she kind of—you could put on your thing and walk around and go back to work, do this. She never did anything. She's probably going to outlive all of us because she eats only the pure foods. She was all into all this before, organic before. She's going to live a long time. But I resent her because my niece, Marlene, she's had different boyfriends over the years, and I think she's such baggage and kind of always interfering. Marlene now is forty-five. She's still beautiful, but she's probably not going to get married now. I'm just going to take a minute here.[recorder turned off]

PARKER

Okay.

OCHI

City College was a place where I had to go because I didn't have the credits to go to UCLA, and so I went to City College, and it's the first time I think I could feel like I was experiencing what I felt was called racial discrimination, other than from my first encounter when I came to Nevada. But soldiers, you know, that's understandable. Teachers, something else. That was a little bit of a problem. But City College I could see in different ways. Maybe I might be the only minority in a particular class, but I remember one day I was thinking I'm going to quit, and I was in the locker room because I was not happy about something, and this black woman who was cleaning the locker room, she told me, "Don't you quit," and she scolded me. There was also a friendly face at City College, the nurse. Her name was Mrs. Bishop, and her husband was a coach at Roosevelt, and she said, "Rose," she says, "you need to finish. You're not going to let anything going to stand in your way." I did really well in my science classes. Actually, I was in the science honorary group, and someone said, "Why don't you go become a doctor?" I said, "No, I want to be a gym teacher like Mrs. Donahue," that kind of inspired me. When I was in junior high school, she says, "You're a leader." And she says, "Become a gym teacher." So somehow I had that in my mind, and I loved it when I was in high school, and so now I was studying to become a gym teacher. So I had success in my classes, particularly the science classes. I kind of outdid pretty much my classmates. When I went to UCLA, I saw in a more overt way, I mean, it kind of like hit you in the face that these people don't like you, you know, and you don't want to be liked. You just wanted to take the class and get through. But there's some people that—but they were not kind to a Jewish girl, the one black girl in the class, and one white girl, who was kind of lower class, I guess, she danced in Vegas, and so they didn't particularly care for her. But I didn't feel bad, because the teachers—I remember my dancer teacher, Miss Alma Hopkins, she said, "Rose, you dance better than all of them." Anyway, but there was plenty of positive reinforcement. My mother worked in a sewing factory, and she went to work for Lantz, and Lantz used to be like the dress, you know, for the sorority girls. This was the high end. So my mother worked—and she was a sample-maker, and so they loved her, and so they let her take the patterns home and make me Lantz dresses. So I always worked two, three jobs, and so I had the right purse, Theodora, right Capezio shoes, and my Lantz dresses. Everybody thought I was rich. I was poor. Even the Japanese Americans that were there, even my cousin, June, they either were in the sorority, Japanese sorority, or lived in an apartment. Myself, I was in a carpool—this is before they had freeways—going all the way to UCLA. I don't know how many hours it took. I worked in the library to help earn my tuition.

When I was going to start student-teaching and I needed a car to be able to go to the school, so my dad bought a neighbor's old limousine, and here I was driving this '55 Buick Roadster that looked like a RTD bus. It was huge, but it got me around. So I lived with a family in Bel Air, taking care of the kids so that the parents could go out to eat or do whatever, just out. So I wasn't paid, but I had room and board. Then on Saturdays and Sundays, I would work for this man, who he's a salesman, and I would just keep his books in order, and there was no one there. I was just there by myself catching up on all his paperwork, and that's probably today why I still hate paperwork. But anyway, because when I went—apparently, this opening was on the job board for a long time, and they said, "Don't bother to call. The person's never there. He doesn't hire anybody." And one day when I called he was there, and I went to his office, and it's a little old office that he rents because he's a traveling salesman, and the whole floor was invoices, and there was no files, nothing, nothing. It's all in a pile. I told him, "Hire me. I'll have this straightened out." So anyways, so he hired me. One day I have my Cinderella story, is I didn't have time to go to football games and things, and UCLA was playing Cal Berkeley one night. I think he was a quarterback; there was a Japanese American quarterback from Cal Berkeley. His name was Pete Domoto. Anyway, he's going to stay over after the game, and so the fellows at UCLA, Japanese American Bruins, said, "Well, let's see. Who can we get to be a date for him?" There's these Japanese American sorority girls, and they were not very friendly toward me. I don't blame them, because I wouldn't join them, but I couldn't join them because I was always busy.

PARKER

Because you were working so much.

OCHI

Working. But Cinderella gets to go out with the quarterback after the game. Not that it was important to me, but it was kind of nice. Ha, ha, ha. So UCLA was wonderful in the sense that I could see that I'm as good as anybody, if not better, coming from Roosevelt. It doesn't matter what I didn't know when I left. The people, different people like Mrs. Langendorf says, "You're a leader," and Miss Donahue says, "You're a leader," and Mr. Thomas, he said, "Rose, you're smart." And, you know, then you figure, "Okay, fine." Then when I was in all the science classes at City College, they say, "You should go pre-med," because I was—

PARKER

These were the professors that—

OCHI

Yeah, professors. I had one class. I took a class on physical anthropology, and his name was Bocher, the teacher. I think he was Scottish. He went around the

room, and he had this kind of a caliper, and he measured everybody's cephalic index. Then he pointed to this redhead, a white male, and me, and he says, "You two are going to have the top A's because of your cephalic index." Anyway, so I said, "Oh, my god. This is just an elective, but I have to study hard. I have to know about thirteen-year-old's left-side mandible that was found in the Pleistocene era." I said, "I know I can memorize anything," but I really didn't have time to do all this other stuff, but I said, "I can't let him down." So the two of us ended up with the highest grades. But there was a lot of positive reinforcement by different people at both, at UCLA. Elmera Schrogen was a very important part of my life. She's my high school girlfriend. She says, "I'm going to go to UCLA."I said, "Well, I'm going to UCLA. I'll come. I'll catch up. I'll be there." And she just said, "You're as smart as I am," and she was smart. I didn't get the best grades in school because I was doing a lot of stuff, and I also worked when I was in high school. I needed to raise money for my whatever. But she says, "You're as smart as I am," and I know she was smart, and actually, she graduated UCLA Ephebian. She's an interesting story, but anyway, she inspired me. What else at UCLA? Now, there was a lot of things at UCLA, but it's the first time I encountered unfriendly people, and it was sad. The majority of them were really wonderful, wonderful, but there were a few that—[unclear], and I guess they'd never had experience of being with a black classmate, and there was a Jewish girl, they treated her really miserably, and she was rich. Her family was from somewhere, but she had money, but she was Jewish. This is way back in—what is it? I graduated City, '59 when I graduated, so it was '57, around '57 or '58, they're not very nice.

PARKER

Yeah. I know it was an almost all-white campus at that time.

OCHI

Well, at the same time, you know, I had the best dress and the same shoes and the same purse, and I used to have black hair down my back. I was cute, and I used to—I was naughty. I would go have coffee with some of the athletes, the cutest guys, just to piss them off.

PARKER

The sorority girls?

OCHI

Right.

PARKER

Well, why don't we—shall we stop there, and then we can keep going the next time?

OCHI

Okay. That's fine. Every time when I want to stop, I'll just say "piss me off." [laughter] [End of March 3, 2014 interview]

1.2. Session Two (March 5, 2014)

PARKER

This is Caitlin Parker. I'm here with Rose Ochi. It's Wednesday, March 5, 2014, and we're in downtown Los Angeles. So, last time we left off, we were talking about your experience at UCLA. So I was just wondering if you could talk a little bit about the end of your time at UCLA and how you decided to go into teaching.

OCHI

Well, I had decided to go into teaching before I entered UCLA. I think I mentioned earlier that I really was motivated to become a teacher because of the support and the influence of my gym teachers in junior high school, and I played a key leadership role in the physical education and after-school sports athletic programs, and so I found that that was a nice vehicle to kind of work with young people, better than in a classroom. At UCLA I was there to get both my physical education degree as well as have my student-teaching experience, so I could get a teacher credential. I just thought of a story. When I was in P.E., of course you have the sports, but also you have dance. When I was a senior about to graduate, they were filming the movie Flower Drum Song, and it had been on Broadway in New York for a number of years. So they were going to make a film and they were going to cast, so they were looking for Asian female dancers. And I said, "Well, what the heck? What the heck? I'll go down there." Well, when I got there, these are all professional dancers that came from the Broadway show, and they're going right and I'm going left. And anyway, I thought it was over, and then this man came over to me and he said, "I want you to stay." And he said, "We're going to make you one of the showgirls, not the dancers, but a showgirl." I says, "Well, okay." So the next thing you know, I'm over on Melrose at a costume shop, and there's the famous designer—I think her name was Irene Sharaff. She had just been criticized. I think Khrushchev visited, and she had done all the costumes for Can-Can, and he was talking about nudity and whatever else, so there's a lot of kind of public attention to costumes and Irene Sharaff. And here I am, I show up, and they say, "Take all your clothes off." And then someone puts you in a body stocking, and they start putting little pins so that they could where they're going to attach some sequins. I thought, "Okay." Anyway, I did that, and then I went to the first rehearsal, and all I had to do was strut like I was in a burlesque show, and the song was [sings] "I'm a Vagabond Sailor." And I was going to be the girl from Sweden, and all I have to say is "Oy vey," or something that,

whatever. Anyway, I dance well enough to do the sequence, and then I started getting all kinds of recriminations. I was thinking, oh, my god. I work all this time to become a teacher, and I will not be able to get my credentials, because this is body. In late fifties, this was pretty kind of racy. So I thought it over and thought it over, and I dropped out, but there's proof that I went that far, because for many years I received residual checks just from my rehearsal.

PARKER

Oh, wow.

OCHI

But it's a good thing I dropped out, because they get a bunch of extras for the nightclub scene. It turns out my [future] husband and his friends were all there. They were going to watch the burlesque show, and so I would have met him there. Anyway—

PARKER

Had you told your family that you were doing it or that you were rehearsing for the role?

OCHI

Probably not. Probably not. And I'm glad I changed my mind, because there was this one girl in my class. She, I think, danced in Las Vegas. I don't know whether I mentioned about how some of us were not treated kindly by our classmates, and included in the group was one black woman, a Jewish woman, myself, and then this poor white girl that used to dance in Las Vegas, Ada Hume—[unclear] name. I'm surprised I could remember. Anyway, I chose not to go. First I did some student-teaching at University High School in the Westside, and I had a wonderful time there, and I also taught in a junior high school somewhere in the Westside, and I did very well. So at some point, they decided that they want to place me at—I think it was Webster Junior High School, which is in—I don't know whether it's Pacific Palisades or somewhere off of Sunset.

PARKER

But on the Westside?

OCHI

It was the demonstration school, so it was kind of a coveted position. But I decided to become a teacher so I can go to East L.A. and be a role model to young people, and the best I could do was—actually, I got a job at Baldwin Park, pretty far, pretty far east, and it was a wonderful experience. I was only there for maybe one semester, because I decided that I wanted to get advanced degree and get my master's. So I went over there for a little while, and that's my first working experience or spending any time with people that were, at the time, they're out. They were lesbians, two teachers from Oklahoma, and they were just wonderful teachers, and they did so well with the students, and then

they were very nurturing and helpful for young teachers, so it was really good for me. And somehow, there was an opening in Montebello, which is just east of East Los Angeles, and I thought, well, here's a wonderful opportunity. I can get closer to the type of students that I wanted to work with. It was a great experience there. I had wonderful students, but for the most part, in my mind, a lot of my students were kind of middle class. I mean, their families own homes and the Mexicans and that. But there was a group of Mexicans—the freeways were coming through from downtown through East L.A., and so a lot of people were displaced, and so they ended up in Montebello. So the surfer kids—and they can be Latinos, too, but the surfer kids, they were very cruel and unkind to the Mexicans. They called them "beaners." So one of the things I try to do is find ways to kind of relieve the tension and do things where people can excel and do it together, and so I did a lot of things that were on top of my regular duties. I remember one time we put on a fashion show, but I was able to bring in people that typically didn't participate in school activities, or they're really good dancers, so maybe we'd do something like a dance kind of a program. It's the first time I faced a little problem with my reviewers, because I did very well in school and in my student-teaching, and the vice principal, she was not very nice, but it didn't matter, because the principal knew that I was an outstanding teacher. But I had this woman, and I have to just say that she was probably jealous of me because I was so popular. So I figured, "Well, it's time for me to leave, because I don't need that." There was an opening at Stevenson Junior High School, and that is where I attended, and this is smack in East L.A. It's near Indiana Avenue. When I attended there, my classmates were Armenians, Molokan Russians, Jews, Mexicans, Italians, you name it, everything, and some Japanese, and it was a wonderful student body. Anyway, so I wanted to go to Stevenson, which was probably 90-some-odd percent Mexican Americans.

PARKER

Okay. So it really changed since you had been there?

OCHI

Yeah, Mexican American and Mexican. And I wanted to be there and—

PARKER

Was that—sorry. Was that also the case with the school in Montebello? Was it predominantly Mexican American?

OCHI

No, I think it was mixed. There was some Jews and there were Anglos. I can remember—I'm just thinking of my dancers and stuff like that. They were Anglo. But as I said, there was a little conflict with the new arrivals, and so you try to find a way to deal with that. So now I was going to Stevenson, my old alma mater, and you had to take a test and you had to perform in all these different sports and activities and also maybe some writing, whatever, objective

tests. So I come out number one. Anyway, so the principal, he blasts it over the speaker system, maybe like, "For the first time, Stevenson Junior High School is getting the top-grade person choosing our school." Well, I happened to have been a former student, and so it became kind of really known. So what happens, this is the first time I faced a really kind of unhappy situation. I had maybe one, two, three, four, five, maybe there was five gym teachers. I remember one day, my first month or so, what they do at the beginning of a semester, these teachers took a stack of enrollment cards for period three and go—in front of the students; everybody's sitting there—and going, "A, A, B, B, C, D, D, F, D, F, D, F." The bad class, a lot of students, and in front of them they're doing this, "D, F, D, F," and then they said, "Okay, Nancy, you get the A's. So-and-so, you get the B's. So-and-so—," and the D's and F's.

PARKER

So these were their grades or just—

OCHI

Their teachers knew what kind of students they were and probably the kind of grades that they had in the previous semester.

PARKER

I understand.

OCHI

So they could all see this going on. And then they gave me D's and F's, and then they give me what they call shower duty, where I have to be the last person in the locker room and clear it out before I can go out to my class. Well, this is something that I remember very dearly. I have wonderful students and wonderful—but this is one of my favorite classes, because what happened is they were really offended, what happened to me. So these girls typically never dressed, they didn't like sports or sweating or whatever, dressing, or anything, and they had this thing where if everybody's perfectly dressed, they say "Gold Star." So anyway, somehow—I don't know what they did, but they made these girls that were overweight or the ones that never dressed, you know, made everybody dress, and the leaders would get out there and they would have them lined up and they would lead them in exercise, so when I come walking out, we're ready to go.

PARKER

Wow.

OCHI

And then they would yell at the other classes, "Gold Star!" And it's this every day, every day until someone complained in the—there were some bungalows nearby. They say, "This class is always yelling, 'Gold Star!' and they're really loud." I said, "That's good." But anyway, so at some point, they don't give me anything. They have softball diamonds, they have volleyball, they've got

basketball. They gave me nothing. They gave me nothing. They said, “Well, they don’t need any space because they don’t like sports. They don’t like anything.” So I said, “Well, okay.” Around the edges, I taught them how to march, and so we’d just do some of the basics, and then I’d say to them, “You know what? Let’s just jazz this up a little bit. So let’s go one, two, three, four, kick, da, da, da, da, da, kick, da, da, da da.” And then I gave them a few more little things. And I says, “You know what? Okay. There’s one song I know,” I said, “a sound-off.” I said, [sings] “I left my wife in New Orleans with—,” I don’t how many kids—“with a can of beans. Sound off.” And so now—it’s before rap—they would make up their own song, and then they yell, “Sound off!” and we’d be marching around all over the place. The A students, the B students, the C students, they want to be in my class. They want to join with us. Anyway, I just love this class, and I love Mexicans because I said that when I came, they kind of protected me, but there’s something about them is that, “They’re messing with her. That’s not fair.” They have this concept of what’s fair, and they’re going to take care of it. And so many, many years later, I’m at the Department of Justice and I’m at a meeting with the U.S. Attorney’s Office and the community in San Diego, because there were a lot of conflicts with undocumented and the community, and so we’re meeting. CRS kind of mediates sometimes conflicts or find ways to ameliorate those kinds of problems. So I’m sitting up there speaking, and then I look and I look. It’s how many years from junior high school? I look and I go over at coffee time and I says, “Amelia Meza"? And she says, “Yeah, you’re Miss Ochi.” She became a lawyer, and her parents, they’re both from Mexico, and they both undocumented. And anyway, here she is. So at the time, I was putting a panel together for the IACP, the International Association of Chiefs of Police, to talk about immigration issues and different kinds of techniques in dealing with conflicts in the community. And so I brought her—I forgot where it happened that year, Virginia or somewhere, and so I had Amelia come out, so I got a chance to spend some time with her. But, you know, she was like an example of what I wanted to do. I don’t know. I wanted the students to know why I came here, and you could be whatever you want to be.

PARKER

What years were those? Was it the beginning of the Mexican American Movement, too, in East L.A.?

PARKER

Oh, thank you. Thank you for doing that, because while I was at Stevenson, they had what they called the brown walkouts, the Berets, Brown Berets. They held walkouts in protest of the lack of quality education. And I thought this really kind of ring a bell with me, because in high school, you know, I couldn’t go straight to UCLA because I don’t have the credits, I don’t have the classes.

Plus, earlier, they told me I wasn't smart enough and I had to be a secretary. Actually, you have to be very smart to be a secretary. But anyway, I'm not suited. So that kind of like resonated with me. And so there was another teacher in that school, and her name was Connie Nieto, and we sit there talking. You know, I was very sympathetic with the walkouts. And so Connie said she was going to find ways to get involved, and I think she became a political player in years to come. But I decided, "Well, I don't need to become an administrator. I'm going to go to law school."

PARKER

Oh, so that was helped you to decide to become a lawyer?

OCHI

That's right. They're walking out, and I says, "I'm going to pursue education as my issue."

PARKER

In your field of law.

OCHI

Yeah.

PARKER

Wow. And so can you talk about—were you living in the same neighborhood as Stevenson when you were teaching there?

OCHI

Well, no, not too far. When I got married, we moved to Monterey Park, which is right on the border of—the end of East L.A. is Monterey Park. Well, when we were growing up, we were told we cannot cross Atlantic Boulevard. You're not supposed to go that way. And there was at Atlantic Boulevard—in fact, I saw it the other day—there was a swimming pool, and we couldn't go swimming there. We have to go swimming over here nearby Sears at the Lou Costello place, because minorities couldn't go to the—

PARKER

Because it was a white area?

OCHI

Yeah. In Monterey Park—

PARKER

So you'd face discrimination if you went across.

OCHI

—you could not go swim there.

PARKER

I understand. Okay.

OCHI

But I used to leave East L.A., because one of the things we would do is I love horses because I grew up with National Velvet and all that, and so I would do

anything to—I'd run errands or whatever. I had mentioned the old ladies next door.

PARKER

Mm-hmm.

OCHI

And then I'd go way further beyond Monterey Park to go to horse stables so that we could ride. So those were wonderful memories there. I'll go back a little bit more. My father was this very stern Japanese American, I mean Japanese, and I when I was growing up, I told him, "You're American. You're supposed to take me to play on Sunday." So my brother and sister are kind of afraid of him, but he's not a mean man. So anyway, he took me to Griffith Park for the merry-go-round. So looks like they're going to have lunch soon.

PARKER

Yeah. Let's pause. [recorder turned off]

PARKER

Okay. So we can pick up where we left off. So you were talking about your father.

OCHI

Oh, my father. My father was a stern Japanese-born father, you know, and he had kind of very distinct roles for girls versus boy children. So I used to tell him a lot, "This is America, and fathers are supposed to play with their children. You're supposed to take me places on Sunday." Anyway, so he did take me to the merry-go-round. But I would say that my relationship with my father is a good part of how I was able to be an advocate, because if you're not afraid of your father—you know, I think my brother and sister kind of acted as if he was mean and stern, but I could see he wasn't. I think earlier I might have talked about Ed Davis. Did I?

PARKER

A little bit.

OCHI

I did. But I told you about my reputation. That's how I got selected to the Select Commission, because they heard I wasn't afraid of him. Well, my father used to always—you know, whatever I did, he would say, "You're a girl. No." So there was all kinds of very distinct gender lines about what I can and can't do, but I don't know whether I shared that when I would come home with trophies, class office, good grades, he'd always turn to my mother, and he said, "Oh, what a waste. What a shame that this girl child did not come with kintamas." I think I told you that story.

PARKER

Mm-hmm.

OCHI

Yes. So that was always in the back of my mind, but, you know, when I decided I wanted to go to college and then I wanted to be a teacher, he would warn me and tell me, "You may not be able to get a job," but he never stood in the way. And many, many years later, actually, after I decided I was going to be a lawyer, I remember I said, "Papa, I want to be a lawyer." He said, "You can't be a lawyer." And I thought, "Oh, my god. Here we go again. Before, I can't be a teacher because nobody's going to hire you. Now he said—." I said, "Why?" He said, "Oh, because you're too honest." [laughter] Anyway, I would like to share one story. When I was on the Immigration Commission, I had told Cruz Reynoso, who had been on the Supreme Court of California, but with Deukmejian and whatever, he got voted out with Rose Bird, that now we're both on the Select Commission, and I had said to him, "Let me be the Mexican," so that he could play it cool, and then maybe he can get a federal court appointment. He and I really didn't know each other until we were on the commission, but the commission was in existence for a number of years. We met often in that we would have dinner, like the night before and stuff. So we became very close. I said to him, "Let me be the Mexican." So there were different times where I'd have to jump in there, and there was one day somebody introduced an idea that, well, if you break residence, then you will not be qualified to apply for amnesty. And I says, "Okay. Whose idea is this?" Nobody says anything, none of my commission members. I says, "Okay. Did this come from staff?" I always say, "You know what? I don't want anything unless you give it to me on paper before. I don't want to be surprised." But anyway, I said, "Okay, who wants to say no Mexicans are qualified for amnesty? Because that's what you're saying here." I said, "Breaking residence, proximity of the border, the nature of their work was seasonal, and the importance of family, they're all not qualified." So I'm jumping all over. I'm looking at the staff. I'm looking at them, and I just say, "You know what? We're not going to always agree about everything, but get it out there. Don't sneak any of this [demonstrates]," you know, gobbledygook. Anyway, Ted Kennedy leaned over to a colleague, another senator, and he said, "Where in the hell did they find that woman?" He said, "Boy, does that woman have balls." I don't know exactly where I heard this from, probably one of the staff, but Kennedy's staff's, whose name was Antonia Hernandez, she succeeded Vilma Martinez, who was head of MALDEF. Did I tell you about the first dinner I had with Ted Hesburgh?

PARKER

No.

OCHI

Oh, let me do that. I was very delighted to be appointed. This is like big time. And I remember I went to the opening, and Kennedy says something, Rodino

says something, the chairman says something, and they're ready to adjourn. It was just like a press conference that said they're going to have this commission. And I said, "Mr. Chairman." I'm nervous, too, you know. But I just said, "Well, Mr. Chairman," I said something like, "as we move forward, we need to remember that immigration and refugee policy have been arbitrary and unfair." I'm doing all this. People are looking at me like, "She came to play. This woman came to play." Anyway, so that's what I started off with. So they kind of knew that. So then the first meeting—that was just the kickoff, the press conference—is that Hesburgh, who is supposed to be prominent liberal, he invites me to dinner. I thought, "Well, that's nice."

PARKER

He was a congressman?

OCHI

He was the president of the commission. He was at some maybe university or something. He's Catholic whatever, Father Hesburgh.

PARKER

Oh, right. Father Hesburgh, yes.

OCHI

And he invites me to dinner. So I go to dinner and I thought, "Oh, this is nice." And then he starts telling me that he's on many corporate boards, he's asked for recommendations for appointments of minorities, and then he goes on and starts talking bad about Vilma Martinez. Vilma Martinez was at the time head of MALDEF, a major champion on immigration issues, and he's saying that, "She is so—," this, that, and whatever. I said, "Be careful. She's my girlfriend." Anyway, but I was so offended. Here I get appointed by the president. I know I'm just nobody. These are all important people. I was going to play my role, make my points, but then to be treated like a stupid—and I just jumped down on him. And I figured, "Okay, kid, well, I've come to play." I don't know when they did this number about if you break residence, you're not qualified. I says, "You know what? People, stand up for what you stand—get it out there, explicitly. I don't want to get confused."

PARKER

Yeah. And say what this is actually going to do, what the effect of it is.

OCHI

I might say things like, "I'm from East L.A. Can you do that again in English?" But anyway, so I was really protective of Cruz. I just said, "Let me be the Mexican." Interesting thing about the Mexican government, they would come to every meeting in D.C., and it got to a point where they would meet me at the curb, grab all my briefcases—there's a number of briefcases, you know, I mean tons of briefing material—because I guess I was a Mexican champion. So they

supported. When I did the final report, I wrote my dissent, I understand it was printed in the Mexican City newspaper on the front page for several days.

PARKER

Wow.

OCHI

So I figured I paid my dues to my Mexican friends that protected me. Anyway, back to one fight, big fight. I'm climbing all over somebody, and that's when Kennedy had said, "Boy, does she have balls." I always keep thinking, "Oh, my father would be so happy." Yeah, he would.

PARKER

That's a great story. [laughs]

OCHI

Anyway, so where am I now?

PARKER

So we were talking about you were at Stevenson, the walkouts that happened, and that was something that really helped influenced—you decided that you wanted to go into law and education.

OCHI

Law and education. And I already got my master's. I was thinking of getting a doctorate in some area, but then I said, "No, I'm going to law school." I will say that law school was not necessarily a pleasant experience. Well, you could prepare, and I took the LSAT, and I guess it was high enough that they selected me for this—it's called the Reggie, Reginald Heber Smith Fellow Program, so that I was offered admission to UCLA, but I had to wait, they said, a quarter or something like that, I think, because—and then Loyola, I can start and I can go in the evening. And I was teaching at the time, so I thought, "Okay, I'll do that one." Anyway, it was not a welcoming place. There are a lot of people that look—there are not many minorities, not many women, and then people look at you like, "Oh, you must be poverty program," and whatever. I remember a few of us, we created what they call a Legal Aid program, and then actually poor people, when kids would come to the school, and the fathers, they didn't like that. So they gave us, they called it the green house. Actually, much of L.A. land is owned by the Catholic Church. So anyway, they owned that piece of property, so we moved the Legal Aid there. Fast-forward, the other day—I had decided I'm going to keep my law degree. I wasn't going to. I'm not working, but then I was helping Danny on his appeal, and I figured, "Well, you know what? I'd better keep my credits," and I hadn't done anything, and now it was due in, like, a month. So I went to Loyola, and they had an all-day thing—and this actually only a week before the deadline—spent a day there. And then this security guard said, "There's pictures of you." So at lunch break, he took me—and I knew that they had asked me for my picture one day, and I told them,

"I'm too busy." And so they came to a Police Courage Award program, so there's a picture of me with three cops. Well, there we are, I'm in the hallway, distinguished alum.

PARKER

Oh, wow. That's great.

OCHI

And it's kind of nice, you know, is that they let us in, and then we use the tools, and now they acknowledge us. So I'm happy about that.

PARKER

Who were you working with in the Legal Aid program? What kinds of things were you doing?

OCHI

Well, when I was first as a volunteer—well, that was at school, but after that it's pretty much the same thing. There's landlord-tenant stuff, and sometimes it could be juvenile. There's different kinds of contracts, but a lot of it was landlord-tenant.

PARKER

And were you dealing with—because of, like, the surrounding area, was it—

OCHI

I was in East L.A. No, first I was at Loyola, but after I became a Reggie fellow after I graduated, I selected East L.A. So I was assigned there, but I wasn't there long, which is good, too, because I don't know how long I'd lasted. These people would come in. They'll be in the waiting room and they'll have a little bag and they'll have every paper that they've ever—and they put it on your desk, and they've got a lot of problems, you know, but I don't know how you can even wade through all this and try to figure out what it is that you can help them with. But anyway, I was called up by Terry Hatter. Terry Hatter was my professor in Racism in American Law, whatever. Anyway, he met me there through that and he actually encouraged me to go for the Reggie fellow, because I was working at the U.S. Attorney's Office. Did I mention? Yeah, I was a law clerk twice, and then I think they were interested in hiring me. I would have been the first woman, first minority, whatever, but they were prosecuting draft cases, and I said, "That's not me."

PARKER

This was during Vietnam.

OCHI

Yeah. But Terry told me, "I want you to go for Reggie fellow." So I got it and so then I went to East L.A., and then they're starting Serrano. Western Center is housed under 'SC, USC Western Center on Law and Poverty, and he said, "We need you because you're a teacher. You're going to help. This is trial now. We need to kind of know the nitty-gritties." And so I said, "Okay." They had really

brilliant prominent lawyers from public counsel, and Western Center tried the Supreme Court case. But now at trial there was one guy, and then he left after a month when he went off to Europe. So that left John McDermott, and John is—maybe he had maybe a year or two in a big law firm, but he's a smart kid, graduated from Harvard, and today he's now magistrate in the federal courts. But John was just—he's white, but he's poor. He's poor. I think he probably was not treated very well in Harvard or wherever else. So he sort of kind of cared about people that were on the fringe, I guess.

PARKER

Could you talk a little bit about what the Serrano-Priest case was about?

OCHI

Serrano is a case. Simply, it was a lawsuit challenging the California State System of School Finance, and it was based on property values and assessed valuations and all, and so the formula uses those figures is going to result in more money going to richer neighborhoods. So if you're in East L.A. and the property values for homes and everything are going to be less, you're going to get less. So Beverly Hills had higher property values. They're going to get more. So the rich get richer. Anyway, so the constitutional principle was tried and won by some really brilliant lawyers, and it's a very far-reaching decision because it affected beyond education or other—but anyway, now we're at trial, and everybody's gone because it's not important anymore, and so then there's John and me.

PARKER

Why had it gone back to the lower court?

OCHI

Because now you had to try the facts. They got the principle, got the legal principle. Now you had to prove. So now, this is a big day, a big, big day, and—wait a minute. First, I had taken the bar. I graduated and took the bar in August, and maybe the trial starts in December, so we're preparing and this and that and getting all our—and we—I can't remember all the terms correctly, but our suit's filed, and then a big firm, representing Beverly Hills, filed something. I think it would be something like a demurrer, meaning, like, you don't have a case, legal claim, and they cited some, let's say, South Carolina Supreme Court decision, something to the effect that you can't have one constitutional provision kind of limit another. Anyway, so, okay, I'm a new lawyer. I don't know anything. I'm not law review. Western Center had a brilliant professor named Hal Horowitz at UCLA and his students researching to help defend against the demurrer. And anyway, John said, "Rose, why don't you go look yourself." I don't know what the hell I'm doing. I mean, I took legal research. But anyway, I went in there and I'm going upside down, down, sideways, whatever. Anyway, I come up with this case. It's California Supreme Court

case saying something contrary to what they're alleging. Anyway, it was saying—it maybe was saying that as to the Constitution, it can prevail. It didn't matter whether you're challenging another state provision. Anyway, I can't remember everything. But John get a messenger and sends it to UCLA, and Hal calls me up and says, "Rose, how did you find it?" I says, "I don't know what I'm doing. I just go up way, I go sideways, I go," da, da, da, da. And I said, "I just want you to know you're assuming that the research index is correct and I don't know anything." So I [unclear] going this way, this way, this way, and I found it a case in point. He said, "Well, how did you find it? O'Melveny can't find it. My brilliant law review—." I said, "I'm not that smart, but I don't give up."

PARKER

You were persistent, yeah.

OCHI

Anyway, so that's why we were going to go to trial. We're going to go to trial. And now the big, big day comes, and Sid Wolinsky, he leaves us. He's an experienced lawyer. And there is John, John with his few cases, smart guy, but little experience. So we're ready, and he has his yellow tablet and he has all his questions, and we have on the stand the educational funding expert. So John said, da, da, da, da, da, da da, "Objection, objection, objection, objection," and, "Sustain, sustain, sustain." And here's a battery of lawyers and John. I now had passed the bar and was getting to sit next to John. So the two—

PARKER

Which happened in court, you said, right? The judge told you you passed the bar and called you—

OCHI

Yeah. Did I tell you the story about his funeral? Maybe I did. Anyway, so I bought an evidence book, and it's a big book, a treatises about evidence that he wrote. Anyway, it was sitting right there in front of me. I don't know anything. Anyway, so John kept asking questions, and it was objected, and this goes on all morning. And then I guess sometime near lunchtime, I could see the judge looking at me, the bailiff. Then I turn to the right, I see the battery of defense lawyers. And then I turn to the right, and there's John lying prostrate on the table.

PARKER

Because he wasn't able to get any of his questions in?

OCHI

He had gone through the whole tablet, and he's like this. [demonstrates] And I lean in to him and I whisper to him, "John, ask a hypothetical question." He rises up and he says, "Mr. educational finance expert, suppose—," and he reads a question, and the guy answers. And then he goes to the next page, and he

said, “Suppose—.” And he did it the rest of the day, and we got everything in. You could get in the fact that, yes, if you have these givens and this given, yes, there’ll be differences, and, yeah, different, you know, and so on.

PARKER

I see.

OCHI

Anyway, really fast-forward, the judge dies, and I’m at his funeral and I’m sitting there with some of my friends. And they said, “Rose, they talk about all his accomplishments. They didn’t mention Serrano. It’s one of the major cases in the California Constitution. Go up there and say something.” The room is full of prominent people, judges and lawyers and people. I wasn’t looking to do it, but since my friends knew that I had some stories. So I just went up there and I explained that situation, looking to see that John exhausted our list of questions, and he was—and I said, “To this day, I don’t know how I came to advise him, but,” I said, “it could be I wanted to impress the judge, and I bought his evidence book and I had it sitting on the table. I had my hands on it. It could have come by osmosis.” And so the family’s laughing, the audience is laughing, and I says, “Or, I don’t know, the judge was looking at us so pitiful.”

PARKER

Feeling sorry for you.

OCHI

And I says, “He sent it to me by mental telepathy.” And so his family is cracking up, you know, because this is a sad funeral. I mean, it’s a prominent man. And they’re all laughing and everything. And then I said, “Well, I still don’t know, but,” I said, “maybe it’s what they call universal intelligence, and somehow it’s meant to be for the right reasons.” Anyway, that’s one of my favorite stories.

PARKER

And so after you were able to get the questions in on hypotheticals—

OCHI

We won.

PARKER

Then you won.

OCHI

Yeah. It took a long while. We had to write up a trial brief, this, and that. But what happened is Terry Hatter was asked by Tom Bradley, the new elected mayor, to come join him in his administration. And I was thinking, like, okay, we worked hard, we won this case, and ultimately we still have to go to the legislature to pass enabling legislation.

PARKER

To make sure that the financing would actually be equalized?

OCHI

Yeah. Change the way it's computed. Anyway, so I thought, "I want to learn how to do that." And so Terry Hatter says, "Well, you want to come to the Mayor's Office." So first, I was doing kind of like some legislative work for him and then I did some program stuff, where I got to develop a lot of programs. Recently somebody was asking me about some of my programs that we had developed. And then Terry was appointed to the bench, and there are a number of people. There's a deputy, and then there's some other people. And he said to the mayor, he said, "Rose. I suggest Rose." Because somebody does a fiscal, somebody does a program, but I sort of kind of knew everything. But I'm not somebody that acts like I wanted to be or whatever, and I was surprised that the mayor said yes. Well, one, he trusted Terry, but I guess he knew I'm the one that does the work.

PARKER

And so what was Terry's position in the administration?

OCHI

He was the head of the Criminal Justice Office.

PARKER

And so then you took over that role as—

OCHI

Yes.

PARKER

And that was a new office that Bradley created?

OCHI

New office, yeah. It's under, at the time, LEAA.

PARKER

And so you were talking a little bit about how being—it was kind of through being in law school and then the Serrano v. Priest case that you became kind of more interested in politics and more political.

OCHI

Yes.

PARKER

So I was wondering if you can talk a little bit about that.

OCHI

Well, I was interested in politics, but I did not get involved in politics. I would just say the main thing at law school that affected me and my career choices is that that's the first time I read the Supreme Court decision, Korematsu decision, anyway, the decision that validated the decision to round us up.

PARKER

Do internment.

OCHI

Yes. And my parents never, ever talked about anything after, like most all families. So when I read the case, I spoke to my dad, and he said, "Shiga taku nai," which means "It couldn't be helped," there was nothing that they could do. And so I never forgot that, "Shiga taku nai."

PARKER

But, of course, Korematsu had filed the suit to challenge the—

OCHI

Yeah, but it was not successful, too many years later. But that always stuck in my mind. And at that time, some of the young people would come up to me in law school—maybe I'm seven years older than them—and they'll say, "Oh, we're going to go to a presentation about internment," and this and that. I said, "I was there." Anyway, I really didn't have a lot of time to go to meetings and stuff like that and I don't know necessarily—Terry asked me to apply for a Reggie. I think a lot of other people applied, but I got it, and I think maybe some of the younger kids were wondering, like, "Why her?" Because I was not active in law school or anything other than I did the Legal Aid, but I think it was my application.

PARKER

What did you talk about in your application?

OCHI

Just a little bit about our family history, and then maybe I just—I said something stupid, though. They had one question that will say something, something, and I said something really stupid like something , "I admire Don Quixote," or something like that. [laughs] Anyway, you know, I'm ready to go tilt the windmills.

PARKER

Right.

OCHI

Anyway, but somebody could have said, "What an idiot," and then somebody else will say, "Okay. We want her." Anyway, you never know. So I got selected. So, going to the Mayor's Office, I can spend a lot of time talking about some of things that happened there. I did tell you about my meeting when I went to meet with Ed Davis?

PARKER

Mm-hmm.

OCHI

Yes, yes.

PARKER

Well, I don't know that you've told me for the tape. But I was actually wondering if we could back up a little—

OCHI

Sure.

PARKER

—and talk about LEAA and kind of what that was and how that played into you establishing or you becoming a part of this new administration, this part of the office, of Bradley's staff. Because LEAA was under the Johnson administration, right? And it was federal funding for law enforcement.

OCHI

For law enforcement, yes.

PARKER

So what was kind of the mission, or what was Bradley's idea behind creating the Criminal Justice Planning Office?

OCHI

Well, I think he wanted to be very proactive in terms of whether it's federal, state, or whatever, any kind of resources that we could use to improve L.A. in many ways. And LEAA had big bucks, and they were making it available, but the funding formula was sending all the money to the state, and then the state would develop a formula that would disfavor L.A., the big cities.

PARKER

To send more to the kind of suburban outlying areas, the counties?

OCHI

Well, it was a political process. You would have a regional board made up, let's say, a third of county, third of city, and a third of small cities. But if you put the county and the small cities together, L.A. City's not going to get anything, and so they were not doing well. Anyway, one of the things I did that—of course, I used to organize things and trade votes with the county or make friends with some of the smaller cities, so that we would end up getting—or working with the staff at the regional level, but I felt that we needed to change the formula, so I would go up to the state and argue before the California Criminal Justice Council. The guy who was a director under Jerry Brown, his name is Doug Cunningham, he still had scars all over his body. "Oh, Rose Ochi's coming." And I would want the governor to know that L.A. City's being shortchanged, and I would let the members of the Assembly know that we're being shortchanged. And the formula was something that was in place when he got there, and it probably—you know, it was intended to be that way, and so I fought and I had that changed.

PARKER

So what was the new—

OCHI

We created different kinds of formulas, where we would have more of a split, and I would know how much would go to the city, how much would go to the county. There are a lot of fights. One of my big fights is—this is not at the

regional level, but now they gave the money to the county, and then we had to fight with the county. We'd cut out the other cities they dealt with. They got their formula and they—

PARKER

So it would be you versus the board of supervisors?

OCHI

And the county, yes. I had this wonderful deputy director. I hired him from the police department. His name is Michael Thompson, and Michael and I worked together fifteen years.

PARKER

Wow.

OCHI

And anyway, this is, let's say, twelve years, maybe, where—and he never was political. He was administrative and fiscal, and then he learned a lot about politics with me. Anyway, one day, now the money's in the county, and we have to fight with the county, and I developed this program. I think it was drug abatement or something like that. Anyway, Michael and I were talking—I can remember, because I'm on my fifteenth floor. Mike Gage kicked me out of my office, so now I'm on the fifteenth floor. And Michael comes to see me, and he turned around and he walked away, and I said, "Michael, you're treating me like a wife. You walked away." And he said, "Rose, you know politics. You can count the votes. You have no chance. What do you think you're doing?" Because he figured that the D.A. was lining up with the sheriffs, whatever. Anyway, and I had said to him, "Well, you know, Michael," I says, "our program is solid concept." And I said, "It will benefit everyone. But I'm going to give them a chance to be fair." And he looks at me like I'm nuts, because he knows what it's like. Anyway, it turns out I won. Anyway, I got the money, because one of the county votes was a new judge, because he was a low, new judge, so I guess they made him go to a meeting. Well, he got the judgeship from me. He was a city attorney, he didn't do any political stuff, he didn't do any Asian community stuff. He's a Japanese American city attorney. I got to know him maybe from one of our programs, and he voted. The county voted for me, and we won. Years later, now I leave Washington, D.C., come back to start this Forensic Science Institute, and I will have to work with the forensic scientists from the sheriff and LAPD. One of the leaders, to create this Institute, was a guy named Barry Fisher, and he was the head of the scientific investigation division for the sheriff. His assistant, Harley Sagarra, wrote the proposal that lost to my proposal. So one day, Barry says, "Rose, Harley hates you and he don't want to have nothing to do with you." And that's fine. I had to help because I was on the Police Commission. And Parks, he didn't get along with the sheriff and he's not into collaboration. The sheriff was. And then the

university, they really did not know any of the law enforcement partner, and now we're going to make a tripartite kind of an arrangement.

PARKER

This was CSULA.

OCHI

At Cal State, yeah, to do this. And so they thought since I knew all these players. Anyway, fast-forward. Harley retires. He was deputy under Barry at the crime lab. I go over to him and I say, "Hey, Harley, when you get bored, come work for me." Anyway, that's I don't know how many years ago. Let's say it was eight years ago. And we're very good friends, very good friends, and he's still there.

PARKER

You won him over.

OCHI

Oh, yeah. Won him over, yeah.

PARKER

Going back to the time when you're first coming into the Bradley administration, I was wondering if you could talk about if you had prior—because I know Terry Hatter, your professor, brought you into the administration, but I was wondering if you had met Bradley before, if you'd been following—I mean, obviously following him in city politics, what your impressions of him were.

OCHI

I was not involved in the campaign. I didn't know him until I got onboard. The only bit of politics—you had asked me earlier about was I involved in campaigns. At that point, not. I am kind of busy teaching—

PARKER

Teaching and doing law school at night.

OCHI

——and then I was at school. The one thing very political I did immediately is when I was at Western Center, this is one of my important contributions, is that East L.A. was trying to incorporate into a city, and they had tried before, and now this effort was being led by Esteban Torres from TELACU, which is the East L.A.—

PARKER

Community Union.

OCHI

—Community Union, yeah. Anyway, they asked me to help, and what I did immediately is—again, I don't know anything. And I said, "Well, I'll be their lawyer." So then I go and do the research and I just said, "Well, you know what? This initiation provision requires that it has to begin with property

owners." Therefore, the Catholic Church owns much of the property, so in the efforts before, they could never even gather enough signatures to put it on the ballot. So I look at this and, in fact, I might have called UCLA and I talked to Don Hagamon—see, I remember his name—

PARKER

Good.

OCHI

He was Mr. Boundary Change Expert. I told him, "This doesn't look right." Anyway, I drafted legislation and I had it introduced by Senator Song. He represented the kind of Montebello, Monterey Park area in East L.A. He's Korean. He introduced it, and then when we had the senate committee hearing, Esteban and I were up there to testify, and then when it was time to vote, they lost the quorum, and so the senator said that he would kind of postpone this.

PARKER

This was in the State Senate?

OCHI

State Senate. So I says, "Just timeout." There was a guy that worked for Western Center that did the lobbying stuff. I said, "Let's go find another senator that sits on this committee." So we go down the hall, we grab him, and I says, "I need you." He comes up and he says, "Yes." And then Esteban—this is the streets, you know, that we go meet with Senator Song, and he said, "You make certain so nothing like this ever happens again." And Song looked at me like a political threat, because I live in Monterey Park, his district, and maybe he thought I am political. Anyway, but Esteban let him know that, "You make certain this passes, or you're dead meat." So it passed. And I have to tell you that's a funny time for me, because Malibu and a number of other little jurisdictions that are, like, wealthier, they come to me and they want me to be their lawyer, because after we passed that legislation, I did the representation before the LAFCO [unclear], which is the county Formation Committee, and it was not easy. You have to have all the dollars. I didn't do that part. Some of the people did that, Juana Royal [phonetic], but I did all the advocacy. I have kind of fond memories of, you know, filling up the chamber and everything, but we had it pass. So then I'm getting all these calls. I could have made big money, you know, and firms saying, "You want to do the municipal corporation work?" But it was not why I went to law school.

PARKER

And the Valley, or at least in the later—the kind of mid-seventies, the Valley was going through another one of its secession efforts as well.

OCHI

Yeah, but that was much later. But anyway, so when I was in the Mayor's Office, I get a call. I was on the bar, L.A. County Bar, I started the Japanese

Bar, and I was very active. I did State Bar. John Van de Kamp got me started on that. I get a call from the Governor's Office for judicial appointment for Muni Court, and I call my friend—his name is Al De Blanc. He was HEAVY. He was chairman of HEAVY. He was kind of very involved in the black bar and the minority bar, and he was chair of our program. So I just said, "Al, I got a call from the Governor's Office." And he said, "Oh, let's go eat lunch." We went to someplace, 25-cent tacos over near Main Street. And he said, "Well, that's what we've been doing, trying to help other people get appointments. I think it's good that we have more representation," and blah, blah, blah, blah. "I'm glad we're doing all this." But I says, "Not me." And he would say to me, he said, "Rose, being a judge would—finish the sentence." I said, "Put me in a cage." And I could just envision just have to be in one place, and then here comes—I felt like a grocery store checker and I can't control what's coming, and I'm stuck.

PARKER

You just have to take the next case.

OCHI

So I just said, "That's not me. A robe would be very confining, and I want to be a champion and advocate." And then from there I was able to do Immigration Commission, Redress, Manzanar, and those are more important than—well, now that I'm old and I see my friends, people that I got appointed that are retired and have $100,000 retirement, you know, it's not so bad, because I don't have that because—

PARKER

You wanted to be an activist.

OCHI

Yeah. I left the city before I got a real retirement and then I go to the feds and not there long enough to create a retirement. Well, I ended up at the university. I didn't intend to. I was just going to help build something, which was stupid because the two consulting years I could have tied to my work, but anyway, I didn't do that. But I have enough. I retired from them. But had I been a judge, I would have, like, big-time money, but I would not have these fun stories to share. [laughter]

PARKER

Exactly, yeah. Wait. So I had a question, going back to the—so you took on the case for East L.A. to be incorporated.

OCHI

Yes.

PARKER

But East L.A. wasn't incorporated.

OCHI

It was not.

PARKER

So what was the end of that story? Because you had—

OCHI

Well, what happened is that Ernest Debs, I guess he represented that area. I mean, they did all kinds of stuff that were put out there. Soon after I got the approval of LAFCO, I went to work for Tom Bradley, so I was no longer involved, and it was an election. It was up to the community. But I have to say that Debs and everybody else and other people, you know, the Catholic Church, everybody that owned the property, they didn't want it.

PARKER

Did not want that.

OCHI

Didn't want it.

PARKER

And so the issue was that you—

OCHI

They voted him down.

PARKER

—got the right to have it be on the ballot.

OCHI

That's right.

PARKER

But then it was voted down.

OCHI

There's been another effort since then. This guy, he was from UCLA, Japanese American guy, grew up in East L.A., anyway, he never called me about that but—

PARKER

But the issue was that the major property owners were against it.

OCHI

Yeah. So that's how I ended up—I was free to come join Terry, but part of it also is it was not a good atmosphere at Western Center because there are a lot of brilliant people there, really smart people, but a lot of them, I don't think they were toilet-trained well. They're very smart people that are just arrogant and all.

PARKER

They weren't good at working with each other?

OCHI

And especially there was one black guy and one Mexican guy. I remember one time talking to that Mexican guy, and I had told him, "You're smart as

everyone here," and I said, "Don't you let them beat you down. You fought hard to be here." But anyway, one day I was in the elevator after the—maybe this is after the case was over, and we didn't get no congratulations or anything from any of these people. But anyway, we're in the elevator and this lady's looking at me, one of the brilliant, brilliant woman, and I'm giving her the look. And then I walk in the door and this little Mexican girl from East L.A. is doing the switchboard, and she says, "Hey, Miss! Hey, Miss! You're a *chola*." And I said, "Why you say that?" Because I come walking in and I got the walk. I had the walk. It's like, "You may be smart, but don't mess with me." Hmm?

PARKER

I was just laughing. It's funny.

OCHI

Yeah, the woman was really smart. But these kind of smash everybody down. I will tell you one of the things Terry said to me, "Rose, could you help me find some people?" And after I finished a trial, I found this guy named Richard Paez. He was doing Legal Aid in Central Cal. I recruited him to come, and he's now a federal appeals judge.

PARKER

Oh, wow.

OCHI

He's doing really well, very brilliant guy. But I wanted to make sure that we have some people that can succeed, but smart and tough, because sometimes when you're around people who are do-gooders, they want to do the good-doing thing.

PARKER

There's a self-righteous aspect to it.

OCHI

Yeah. And they don't need the people that need to be helped sitting next to them, especially people like with me, who appreciate them, but I'm not going to be kissing your feet.

PARKER

So I think I had asked about that—so what was your first—how do you first get to know Bradley? So you weren't involved in the campaigns—

OCHI

No.

PARKER

—although doing these other political things. So I was just wondering if you came into the administration with—just kind of what your sense of the administration was and of Bradley.

OCHI

Just that it was an exciting time, you know, just the idea of having an African American. Can I backtrack a little bit?

PARKER

Yeah.

OCHI

I don't know. I don't know. Maybe I was black in another life, I don't know, or something. I think I told the story about my father telling me to be good to black people because they protected him when he was working at Columbia, pressing records. Well, anyway, in my life, Terry Hatter, he's black, he picked me out, brought me to the Reggie, picked me out to take me to Western Center, picked me out and took me to the Mayor's Office. Then I had served on a number of organizations, and one of them was the Minority Advisory Council to the Department of Justice. I did a lot of Washington stuff for both policy and money.

PARKER

When was this?

OCHI

During my Bradley time. And so I was on this Minority Advisory Council to the Department of Justice, and we were together maybe five, six years, and the chair was Lee Brown. At the time, maybe when he started it, he was sheriff in Multnomah County in Oregon, and then maybe he bounced around, but he ended up, at this time, at the end, he was chief in Atlanta, Georgia. Well, there were a lot of murders of children. He could not leave to come to some of our meetings, and so I'd be chairing. So the group's made up of mostly blacks and maybe a couple of Latinos, one Native American, and one Asian. That was me. But anyway, we did a lot of good things. Under me, we did a report on crime in the Asian community, and my writer was this guy named Paul Takagi from UC Berkeley, because there were very, very few articles about the Asian community. Anyway, I thought about it recently, is I met a lot of wonderful people on that commission, and one of them is this guy, he was so smart and so articulate and he—we always say "learned counsel." Anyway, one of the most wonderful days of my Bradley service is the day Mandela visited. Of course, it was very important for my family when the Emperor of Japan, who never visited the U.S., came, and there's my mother and all these women outside, waving little flags and stuff. When my mother was growing up, everybody had to hit the ground when the carriage went by, and there they are. Progress. They're standing up, waving flags. Her daughter is going through the receiving line to shake hands with the emperor, so that was an important day for her. But for me—

PARKER

Was your father still alive?

OCHI

I could figure it out, but I'm not sure.

PARKER

I just was wondering because of how—

OCHI

Yeah. I'm not sure. One of my favorite guests is when Mandela came. And Wanda Moore, she's the mayor. You've met her. I kind of ran an office, so I was not one of the persons that they would ask to do different things when you had guests. They had plenty of Mayor's Office staff. But anyway, all hands onboard with this guest, so Wanda gave me the job of being the kind of babysitter in the conference room outside the Mayor's Office, where the movie stars and the athletes were. She thought that I would not be goofy and I could keep them in line. Somebody will say, "Oh, I have a recording date." I said, "Well, sorry you're going to miss the event." [laughter] But anyway, so I worked for Wanda, and so there I am doing this. And now the plane arrived late. Anyway, the entourage was in the garage. So I get all the people in the conference room out on the front stairs, and then I'm standing in the hallway and here comes Muhammad Ali. He's standing next to me. And then here comes Mandela outside the Mayor's Office, and he sees Mandela, Muhammad, and they started sparring. It was amazing. We didn't have cameras in the—so I hope somebody got it.

PARKER

Yeah, their playfulness.

OCHI

It was so perfect.

PARKER

I've seen a picture of Bradley and Muhammad Ali kind of fake sparring.

OCHI

Is that right? Well—

PARKER

There's one of those—

OCHI

Muhammad Ali—okay.

PARKER

That happened with Mandela.

OCHI

Yeah. So then they left, so I'm just waiting for the Mayor's Office to empty, and here comes Harry Belafonte. And here Wanda would have been disappointed. My knees went [demonstrates], and I just went [sighs]. Anyway, so I was looking like this, and then who follows behind him, Lennox Hinds, the counsel to Mandela, my friend from way back, and he says, "Rose!" He catches

me like that. Anyway, he teased me about that sometime later, but I couldn't help it. Funny how things work is that I shepherd everybody out, and then I was standing in the doorway and I walked out on the platform, and then a security guard calls me and he says, "This man says he's a congressman and he wants to come," and it's John Conyers. He was head of the Black Caucus. I was a member of the Black Caucus. I used to attend the criminal justice brain trust, so he knew me. He told them, "Call her." And I go over there and I says, "Congressman Conyers."

PARKER

From Michigan? That John Conyers?

OCHI

Yeah. I says, "Conyers." And so then security says, "Okay." And then I says, "Come on," and they put him in there. Well, he helped us so much on redress. I mean, I kind of stand out. It's the Black Caucus way back then. So he was very helpful, very nice. All the little pieces all kind of come together. It's very nice. It's been a wonderful—I could have been a judge.

PARKER

Going back to—I'm just curious of what it was like, because you really came in pretty quickly after Bradley had come into office, and so can you talk a little bit about what—and I know you weren't in kind of the same floor as the Mayor's Office, but what the feeling was of City Hall at that time.

OCHI

Well, of course, euphoric in terms of the Mayor's Office. There's several floors, but the main floor was the first floor where the mayor was, and then there was a mezzanine, where he had a lot of his liaison staff, so we're on the same floor with him. But it was just a wonderful, exciting time, but I will say that very soon—when you have a campaign and you bring on a lot of campaign types, they're not necessarily governing types. So people like myself that create some kind of an expertise and whatever, we get a lot of work done, and other people, liaisoning. So I was not very nice to the people that were doing the mayor's whatever, film. I just said, "Well, I hope you're talking to some of the people that did the work." [laughs]

PARKER

Right, who did the legislative. What was your sense of the relationship between Bradley and the Asian American community—

OCHI

Wonderful, wonderful.

PARKER

—right when he got elected?

OCHI

Probably next to the Jewish. Of course black, but because his district—people like George Takei lived in his district, my husband's family.

PARKER

The Tenth District?

OCHI

Yeah, his council district, yeah. So he always had—but the people that raised money big time was, like, in Little Tokyo, and Jeff Matsui, the guy that I want you to speak to, maybe combining him with Jun Mori, who was the harbor commissioner, but he did all the fundraising for the Asian community.

PARKER

Okay. And had they been involved in the '69 campaign as well, or is it more in '73?

OCHI

All of them. All of them.

PARKER

All of them, okay.

OCHI

All of them. He really looked probably to Jeff first to raise money.

PARKER

Okay. Yeah, I'll talk to him.

OCHI

Jeff is—we just gave him a goodbye party maybe a few months ago, and then he left to Hawaii, and then I got an email last week saying Jeff had abdominal pains. He drove himself to the hospital, and they removed his appendix.

PARKER

Oh, no. He had appendicitis.

OCHI

He's so nuts. He's nuts. You know? He could have enjoyed himself. But he's older, probably older than me, but I think he's very lucid, but he'll be worse than me. He'll get an idea. He'll go around the block.

PARKER

I'll ask him more about the fundraising. But you think the relationship was really strong because a lot of people had worked with him as a council member?

OCHI

Yes, that's the beginning, but I think the important thing is he had a very diversified staff, and ultimately I know you had—it wasn't like one Chinese, one Japanese; it was like whether you have skills. But there were some Chinese. Chinese, Christine Ong, Lily Lee, Filipinos, Koreans. So there was always a connection, and continuing connection, two ways.

PARKER

So he made sure to stay on top of what was going on in the community, what they needed.

OCHI

Yeah, he definitely did that beyond—and then there's a huge Jewish contingency, and I think they're wonderful people. I wish you could have met Dodo Meyer. She was just wonderful. But you talked to Valerie. She's probably lucid.

PARKER

Mm-hmm.

OCHI

Yeah.

PARKER

And then Dodo was really the connection, too, to the San Fernando Valley, which was a harder area to get onboard with Bradley.

OCHI

Yes. I don't know. Was Bert Boeckmann in support of Bradley?

PARKER

They had an interesting relationship, because Bradley, I think, appointed him to some commissions, but I—

OCHI

Police Commission.

PARKER

Exactly. But I—

OCHI

Because he became one of the strongest supporter of Bernard Parks.

PARKER

Oh, interesting.

OCHI

Yeah, they were very close, and I was on the commission with Bert, and it was a very painful day that I voted against Parks. Parks and I grew up together, and he was, like, very innovative and he really wanted to be open to new ways of doing things, policy, program-wise, procedure-wise, and I worked with him and he was really terrific. But something happened. I guess when the mayor decided to go with Willie from Philadelphia, when there was an opening, I think he got kind of bitter. And when he finally got the—after Willie left—

PARKER

Sorry. Willie who? What was his position?

OCHI

The police chief that succeeded—

PARKER

Oh, Williams.

OCHI

Williams. Okay. Willie. I call him Willie.

PARKER

Well, it was Willie Williams, right?

OCHI

Willie Williams, yeah. So when he finally got it, he was not the person I knew, the person that was progressive. He became more of a Daryl Gates, and that's what—I can't think of his name right now, the highest-ranking African American before Bernard Parks, who was a confidant of Tom Bradley.

PARKER

Oh. Not Bill Elkins?

OCHI

No, no. He's law enforcement. He's a police guy. You can find out. But he said, "No. No Bernard."

PARKER

Because Bert Boeckmann was also—I mean, he was a major donor to Republicans nationally—

OCHI

I think so.

PARKER

—and also was supportive of Proposition 13, and so his politics weren't necessarily—

OCHI

But he's probably one of the most decent persons I—you know, he's the kind that I would go in a trench with him, if he wanted to have your back. I come to really like him. We were on the commission together and we didn't agree on everything, but I know he came to like me a lot too. He came to my fiftieth wedding anniversary. But if you have a friend in Boeckmann, you have a friend. In politics, you can't say that about a lot of people.

PARKER

And that seemed to be the case with him and Bradley as well, is that they were able to get along, despite having these political differences.

OCHI

You might ask him—just see—it'd be nice. He's a wonderful man and he's still lucid.

PARKER

I'm going to take a break here.

OCHI

I keep expanding your— [End of March 5, 2014 interview]

1.3. Session Three (April 2, 2014)

PARKER

This is Caitlin Parker. I'm here with Rose Ochi, and it is April 2, 2014. So we're going to talk about some of the diversion programs that you set up with Terry Hatter in the Criminal Justice Planning Office.

OCHI

Yes. When Terry Hatter was appointed to be the director of Criminal Justice, a new office under Tom Bradley, the philosophy and the approach was that while you want to work on supporting the law enforcement and reducing crime, but the philosophy was that we need to find ways to intervene and prevent crimes. One strategy where there was a major problem is our young folks getting caught up in the criminal justice system, whether it's gangs or delinquency. So Terry pulled together a team of not typical Mayor's Office staff; they are people that are kind of very knowledgeable and have actually worked in the community. They have to kind of help be a part of the answer. We don't want to have bureaucrats kinds of deciding what works in the streets. So we brought in a lot of very experienced juvenile youth workers and we designed Project HEAVY, which was—I can't remember—Human Efforts Aimed at—

PARKER

Vitalizing Youth.

OCHI

—Vitalizing Youth. [laughter] The idea is to create an approach of community-based organizations that would intake an individual that's caught up within the system, and they would evaluate kind of the whole picture of the family, the school, the community, and the gang, any kind of relations, the negative influences, and they do a screen and then they kind of decide what would be the best approach in trying to turn this young man or young—we were focusing at the time on young males, turn them around. So we created this HEAVY Project that had the screening, and then you had a diversion. You had the ability—we finance a number—rather than creating new entities, we created an umbrella, where we're able to provide different kinds of services, whether it's recreational or family support or whatever for the identified need. It did very well, and I can't quote you numbers, but I think the cooperation from law enforcement was just wonderful. Actually, at the same time, as a result of this network of Project HEAVY, as we work with all the related agencies, whether it's the school district, the District Attorney's Office, the Public Defender's Office, and the sheriff's department as well, we were looking at kind of a united approach of how we deal with the problem of gangs, youth gangs. So, as a result, we see the numbers going down, and at the same time, I have to say that the approach by law enforcement was identify, aggressively identify potential gang members and put them in a file. It was called the Alpha File. This was creating a lot of tension in the community because young people are

just stopped, and some of them are, like, very law-abiding and doing well in school, but they become a part of the file. Actually, I have a little tab in my mind that I'm going to go back and check on what's going on about that. I can talk about that later. But any event, we saw a lot of good results, the numbers going down. I'm going to say some stuff you can cut out later on, but when Mayor Riordan took over, Mahony doesn't have any money for youth programs. Nobody's going to church other than—

PARKER

This is Cardinal Mahony or the Catholic—

OCHI

Yeah, whatever. Is he a Father? Whatever. And they don't have any money for youth program, and the only people that were going to church were old ladies and little kids. So he asked the mayor—they're friends—for money, and they would try to get money everywhere. Anyway, I know you could talk to Raymond Johnson. At the time, he was at the state Office of Criminal Justice, and they had a gun to their head, anyway. But in terms of—they started using all kinds of rhetoric in city council. "These programs aren't working." And anyway, all these different programs that were developed for youth intervention and gang prevention were all dismantled. The mantra was "We're going to be doing things for good kids. We're focusing on the good kids." So they dismantled the program. I don't know what remains of diversion programs today, but much of the money that was coming, either juvenile justice money that was coming or money that was going to the community development, we were taking the different pots of money, so that it made sense of how we could kind of interface and multiply the resources. And then somehow here came Riordan. If I could talk a little bit about Riordan on the other side—

PARKER

Mm-hmm.

OCHI

—is that when mayor's last days in office came to an end, and Riordan had won to be the new mayor, at that time I had already been in Washington working on the Clinton transition, and my thought was possibly—well, I didn't know what I was going to be doing next, and people were saying, "Do something before it's over," but I was just kind of so busy getting a lot of stuff done. And then I thought, well—I went to Washington. So when I came back, I came back mainly because I wanted to make certain that the staff, everybody's going to be protected. So while—I'm jumping around, but when Willie Williams was appointed by the mayor when Daryl Gates left, then Willie was selected by the selection committee primarily because he had instituted what they called community policing in Philadelphia. So I went over to see him and I said to him, "Okay. I want to work with you in developing such a program for

L.A." And he said to me, "Well, I'm working with this university consultant and we're conceptualizing it." I said, "I need conceptualization by Sunday. I'm submitting for this new grant," the new—what did they call it? Community Policing Office under the Department of Justice was created. And I said, "I need to submit a proposal by Monday." Anyway, he's a bureaucrat. So I just said, "Okay." So in my office up there on Sunday, I'm making it up, but it doesn't matter because I had spent many years with police leaders like Lee Brown, serving on the Department of Justice, an advisory body, and Lee Brown was kind of really the father of community policing. I think he did some of that while he was in Multnomah County in Oregon and then maybe next—I can't remember all the right order, but then he was the head of the New York Police Department, and then they developed a lot of this neighborhood approach. Then he ended up in Atlanta, and then I guess the last place was Houston police chief. But we were always in touch. In fact, when Willie was picked, I said, "Would you bring a team and come help him?" Actually, I met—I did really well with the Republicans. I don't know why. But the guys, some of the guys that were hired by the Department of Justice are consultants, people I've known for years. One of them was a young man, he did similar things for San Jose, Santa Clara County, and then he was now working for Department of Justice as a consultant. I met with him at the New Otani Hotel. I said, "Hey, give me some money. I need some money." And he said, "Okay, I'll get you some money." But anyway, that kind of helped me do some things, but here was now a big initiative under the Clinton administration, and now Willie Williams is saying he's got to study it, and I said, "No study it." So there I am. I write up something Sunday, and then I submitted it. And some time later, this guy—I can't think of his name right now, but he was a criminal justice advisor to Riordan. Riordan brought in a lot of people that really didn't help him much, because you're working in the City Hall, you have kind of two kinds of skill sets: one, you should have some kind of substantive knowledge, but then the other is how to work with other agencies and with the elected body, the city council. So a lot of them were lawyers, and they're accustomed to think and talk and don't necessarily collaborate. Anyway, but I wrote this proposal, but this guy, Bill Violante, he used to be the Police Protective League president. So Riordan needed to kind of thank the police, and so they made him head of the kind of the Eze [Ezunial] Burts role, kind of over the relationship with the department, and so he knows me because I was with the Mayor's Office. So he said, "Okay, Rose, I need your help." And so I said, "Fine." I came back from Washington, working on this transition, and I decided I've got to do this instead of going back. You know, they told me, "You could have a job. Come put your name in there." And I says, "No, I've got to go back and work there in the Riordan to make sure that they keep my people and my programs." So then Bill

says, “Okay, Rose,” he said, “do this.” Anyway, he calls me up one day and he says, “Rose,” he says, “we’re going to the Biltmore. The president’s going to be putting on a kind of teleconference, and the mayor’s going to be there and we’re going to be there.” He says, “Come with me.” So I go up there, and there’s President Clinton, and he said, “Well, you submitted the top proposal, and I’m giving you a million dollars to institute community policing.”

PARKER

This is the proposal that you’d written on Sunday night?

OCHI

Yeah, I made it up. I made it up. But some of these little lawyers that earlier had gone over to Bill and said, “What is she doing here?” Because they don’t understand. You know, politics stops once you get in there. It’s now. But they’re sitting there thinking, like, well, “She’s a Bradley person. She knows everything. She knows everybody.” But anyway, Bill said, “Well, she wrote the proposal.” And he said they shut up. But anyway, Riordan is a smart man. He calls me to his office, and it’s not easy to go see the mayor, because, one, he was not somebody that was there every day, and, you know, he had his other priorities, but he’s a political man in some ways or smart man, a businessman, and he said, “Bill, who wrote this?” “She wrote this.” He said, “Tell her to come see me.” And he says to me, “Would you stay?” You know, I’m a Bradley-ite. [laughs] I just said to him, I said, “Promise, one, you take care of my staff, and, two, I will help you get money while I’ll be in Washington.” So that was a deal, and he kept my people for a long time, a long time, enough for, like, some of my folks that were able to go over to other departments and stuff. At some point, I don’t know whether it was Riordan or somebody else starts dissolving all these offices, and some of it was probably under Hahn, but, again, I don’t need to get into that. So, Riordan, he’s a smart man. He says, “You can stay.” And I said, “No. You know what? I’m going to help you. I’m going to be in Washington. I can help you.” But going back, we were going to talk about Terry Hatter leaving and my being appointed.

PARKER

Yeah. I was wondering if I could ask you one more question just about the programs like HEAVY. So you were saying that you coordinated services.

OCHI

We developed the whole concept and brought in the money. The thing about me is, interesting, people would say—okay, and I’m going to say some negative stuff, but in a Mayor’s Office there are a lot of people, in my mind, that didn’t contribute much. I mean, it’s sort of like the mayor takes care of them. And some people were superb in terms of community relations, and they were outstanding. There are other people that have some substantive information that they can kind of direct policy or interface with some of the

other agencies, and there were a lot of kind of political hacks that they just kind of ride the coattails. But anyway, now back to—

PARKER

I was just wondering if it was connected, because at around the same time, Bradley's establishing departments like the community development department.

OCHI

Yes.

PARKER

And so I was just wondering if there was coordination there in terms of creating those kinds of intervention and family services—

OCHI

Yes, definitely.

PARKER

—and things like that.

OCHI

Definitely. And as I said, some of our staff went over there. Actually, one of them, Rhonda—I had Rhonda, this young lady, she came one day to apply to be my secretary. She's African American, young lady from South Central. And then I had three kind of professional kind of grant manager types, account, and they say, "You don't want her." Because there was an experienced person from this city department or this federal agency. I said, "No. She's smart and she wants to go to college, and she can't do it working at McDonald's. They keep changing her hours." Well, anyway, Rhonda not only got the degree and she's ready to leave. I said, "No, you stay with me. I'm going to promote you. You get your master's degree, and then you could leave." So anyway, she gets a Master's degree, and I think until this last change, she was, like, heading up the whole grants over at Community Development.

PARKER

Oh, wow.

OCHI

Yeah, yeah. And then the other little michi that I hired was a little accountant, and she's running the whole administrative staff at the City Attorney's Office.

PARKER

Wow.

OCHI

I just saw her recently. And the other day, I was walking down the street, I bumped into this guy. He's a judge. He started with me. He was one of our program—Abe, Abraham Kahn. And Michael Thompson, the one that I kind of made the deputy, he's now a councilman in the city of Cambria. It's a lovely place. You should visit. But anyway, where am I now?

PARKER

So then you were saying so then Terry Hatter was leaving, and so you were appointed—

OCHI

Terry Hatter was—I guess that would be Carter?

PARKER

Mm-hmm.

OCHI

He was appointed to be a District Court judge, and I think that was quite a milestone down here. He had pretty much all his life been kind of cutting, you know, breaking barriers and all. His mother was a lawyer in Chicago, and he's not, like, this poor kid from the neighborhood. He was kind of destined to do good things. He used to always say that people applaud him because he would—you know, when he picked me to succeed him, and there's all these—the deputy was an African American guy, older and experienced, and then there are other people, but Terry always really—it was never affirmative action. He always saw women as good as, if not better than men, and it came from his mother. His mother was a lawyer. So he always—Terry used to tease. He'd say, "Well, you know, I pick men sometimes if they're qualified." So when I—my personality is—well, it changed. When I was deputy and all, while I kind of knew all the stuff that needed to get done and I helped people, whether it's programmatic, policy, less on the administrative, the financial side, but I was not a grandstander in any way. Externally, I was all over the place. I was in Department of Justice and the state stuff, and I'd be beating up Governor Brown's appointees, the head of Criminal Justice and stuff. That was my job. But in City Hall, I was kind of get things done, but not someone—in the Mayor's Office at all, I was like—all I know is I get the mayor's approval, but I don't hang around. So I didn't have really many friends in the Mayor's Office, other than maybe Jeff Matsui and a couple of others, because I was actually working. I wasn't sitting around talking to people anyway, but I'm not a group person. But at the time I was probably also—and it works well in the Mayor's Office and City Hall, is you don't need any credit. Everything is the mayor looks good. So I wasn't like—nobody gets in your way, because they could see that you're a worker.

PARKER

Mm-hmm. [unclear].

OCHI

Well, that's not the way it happens in most political offices, you know, people running around killing each other for credit and how close they can get to the mayor. I didn't care to—I have a father. I have friends. I didn't need to get close to the mayor. But all I wanted is—interesting, like the date of the Blake

case, when I'm approached by a councilperson saying, "Rose, the chief wants to overturn or appeal this case. What does the mayor want?" And I said, "Well, I'll find out." And my good relationship with Eze, he trusted me, and I'll go see him and I'll say, "Eze, the mayor has to tell the council what he wants." And he said, "What do you want?" I said, "Well, no appeal." Over, period. And so he let's me go in to the mayor without him, and the chain of command is I probably supposed to go to one deputy mayor, who goes to another deputy mayor, and then a bunch of people that are going to talk with one another. We didn't have to do that, because I went to the right one. Like he's the criminal justice, but we had the trust relation, and he said, "You go see him." And then he'll say, "Rose, what do you think?" And I'd just say, "You're going to lose. Delay many more years. You need to bite the bullet and implement." And he says, "Well, go tell Pat." So I didn't have a lot of meetings with the mayor, but they're very critical meetings that made a big difference. One of them is around Manzanar. We can talk about that another time.

PARKER

Could you mention just a little, since you brought up the Blake case, just what that was about?

OCHI

Blake. I think her name was Fanchon Blake. She was a female officer and she and others, some other associations in the police department, brought a lawsuit challenging—an affirmative action lawsuit. So there was a District Court ruling in favor of the plaintiffs, and the chief did not want to implement. He wanted to urge the city council to agree to go to the Supreme Court, and legally it was not going to go very far, but politically, I guess, you know, Ed Davis is probably one of the smartest police chiefs the department ever had, smart and regular smart, but also political smart. But anyway—

PARKER

I don't think we ever talked about—

OCHI

How I met—

PARKER

Yeah.

OCHI

Well, we have an interesting relation. He knew of me. He didn't know about my role in Blake, I'm sure, but he knew of me because, on one hand, they knew that I was sort of like the person that was bringing in the bucks to the department and to the city, and that it was not an easy task, because all the money went to a tripart kind of arrangement with the county, the city, and then the League of Cities, all those smaller jurisdictions. And it was always—it was just like a fight to—there was no formula, whatever, and it was a political fight

to ever get in anything, so you have to go over there and be able to work them. And so I actually challenged a lot of that and I argued—I'd go up to Sacramento and I'd go to the state board and I'd say, "California, the state, receives money [unclear] based on population, and when you then send it to the counties, it's not exactly by population." They kind of try to deal with—they have minimum levels for some of the counties, and so that kind of takes away from L.A. County. But by the time you send it down to the city is that we're not getting anything near what is our proportion of the monies that you get from Washington. So, anyway, I can see myself standing there in front of this big old police chief. I think he was a former police chief of Santa Ana. He was about this big. And I'm doing my little thing. Anyway, Doug Cunningham would remember me. I think he's probably still a judge up in Sacramento. But anyway, so I was kind of notorious where I would fight for LAPD amongst the regional apparatus, which was finally broken down after my advocacy, and then we would get a portion to go to the county and a portion that would come to the city.

PARKER

Okay. So that there was a formula.

OCHI

I created my own planning process, and so then we sit down there and can decide how we're going to spend our share of the money, and we didn't spend it all fighting.

PARKER

Right.

OCHI

Yes. And so that's how I would work with—I'm trying to think. Who was the city attorney? I think it was probably Burt Pines, and he had a wonderful head of the criminal section. I can't think of his name. I think it was George [Eskin] something. [whispers] Handsome. [laughs] Anyway, I went and sat down with him and now I know I have money, I could sit down to talk to people about where were the voids. "What do you see are some of the problems and issue in prosecuting domestic violence?" Anyway, in fact, I remember a name of a couple of people, Earl Thomas and another woman, Alana Bowman [phonetic]. They were folks that were really interested in domestic violence. So we created the nation's first prosecution unit specialized in dealing with domestic violence, and this is a time where we weren't prosecuting domestic violence. I can recall when I developed a rape prevention—I remember going to one of my favorite councilmembers. They have a committee that you need to go before, before you can get any money or approvals to do certain things, and I talked about prevention of rape. This guy named Gil Lindsay, I think he was probably ninety then, and he's a wonderful man, but he said, "Oh, we don't need that. Oh, these

women wearing these little short skirts, y'all bring it on yourself," and stuff like that. But this guy would always say to me, "What are you doing here? You got potential." He used to always say that to me. So then this guy, a Times reporter, he would see me all the time. He'd say, "What are you doing here? You got potential." Anyway, but back to—I got the name now—George, Burt Pines—I can't think of it. Anyway, we got recognized at the federal level, they have the Department of Justice. They used to—old, old days, it was called LEAA, Law Enforcement Administration, but then it became BJA, Bureau of Justice Assistance. And under Clinton, they created another one called the COPS [phonetic]. That's where we got that million-dollar—

PARKER

I had a question, and this connects to having to make the case to people like Gil Lindsay, that these rape programs were important and necessary. So when you got the money under LEAA that would be all the money that would go to the LAPD for programs—but how did you negotiate to separate out the money into the kind of crime intervention [unclear]?

OCHI

When we finally we got our own grant, I created a planning process, and so that we had our own L.A. City planning group, and so we're representative from the city Attorney's Office, from the police department, and other entities, and so we kind of decide what the priorities are. We don't fight with anyone else, and then we decide. But at some point, there was maybe a new classification of money, and, I don't know, it could be a new grant made. So now that money now, a new state director was sending it down to the county, and so we have to go over to the county to fight for our share. I will share one story. So we develop our proposal, and the idea was let's do a drug-abatement program, and we had drug—and so I said what we would do is we would see some issues, whether it's dealing or whatever. Then it was sort of kind combination of Neighborhood Watch, but also creating a network and a process, how do you take that information and prevention treatment kind of—I use the word "diversion," but it was a whole—it was called a falcon [phonetic]. I think who developed that one was not Bert Pines; I think then it was with Jimmy Hahn. This is later on. Yeah, Jimmy—was it Jimmy Hahn? Yeah, it was Jimmy Hahn. Falcon. But it was—I don't know. I'm going to repeat this story, if I told you before. Michael Thompson, I think we were together maybe fifteen years. When we were building the office, now that we're getting these grants, we wanted somebody that was knowledgeable about federal grant process, and so I got Michael from the police department, and he was what they call—he was just a civilian. That's pretty low-ranking if you're a civilian in the police department, but he kind of made sure that the monies were properly administered. So I brought him over to run our office. This is when we had our

own money, and so I want to make sure that we have somebody to also deal with our police grants as well. Anyway, he had thick glasses and he wore, like, a white t-shirt, short-sleeved shirts, he had a pencil holder in his pocket and stuff like that. He was just a little old low level bureaucrat. And I have to say, hanging around with me, he kind of started to blossom. One day I took him out of the office. I'd been trying to make him do external stuff, too, and he'd always just been at the desk. And one day he told me he went to the police commissioner and he got up and he spoke on an issue I suggested that he handle. And then he's walking out and he punches Chief Ed Davis in the shoulder, and he says, "Hey, Ed, I thought you should have fronted," or something like that. And then he runs all the way over to the Mayor's Office. He says, "I did a 'Rose Ochi.'" He says, "I punched him."

PARKER

[laughs] That's great.

OCHI

Ed was—I think he was brilliant. He was a very personable, funny, smart, able administrator. I don't know whether I told the story when Terry left to become a judge, then he told the mayor, "Rose is the best one." And this is all before women—you know, the mayor saw a lot of talented women in his office, but they were not executives. I mean, they had—like, Wanda is an executive, but is in a more administrative role versus policy or programs, and there's a start, but mostly they're a kind of liaison function. So I think it was kind of a surprise, in my mind, that he would pick me, because it was an African American deputy guy, older, mature. He had all kinds of experience. But I guess Terry probably just said, "Rose is the one that has been running the shop." Anyway, so I call Ed Davis and said, "I want to meet you. Let's talk," and I went over and I said, "Chief," I says, "the mayor's appointed me to succeed Terry." He says, "Oh, he's gone done it again," something like that. And I said, "Well, you know what? You know how rough it is." I said, "I have been your champion and your advocate in bringing money to the department. You know that." And I just said, "There're going to be times we're going to be kind of having differences amongst family, but in dealing with the feds and the state and the county, I'm your point." So anyway, so I said, "Just look like as if this is a pickup basketball game, and that sometimes you're shirts or sometimes you're skins." He said, "Okay, Rose. You're skins." And he says, "Oh, my god. You're a lawyer. That is horrible. A woman, a lawyer, oh." And I said, "Well, I was a schoolteacher." He said, "Oh, okay." But anyway, I said to him, I said, "We need to talk and so that we're kind of strong in dealing with external forces." And anyway, fast-forward, he came to acknowledge his—actually, Bernard Parks was, like, one of the young, smart, up-and-coming young people, and they would let me work with him on developing a lot of progressive new

programs, whether it's—I'm sure—well, they have a lot of other young people, Bob Ruchoff, other folks that were ahead of the gang. They were kind of like not the old guard. I mean, these guys could see a bigger picture and they welcomed the interagency kind of work. I remember I loved Bob Ruchoff. He was our liaison to the gang program. When Davis decided he was going to run for office, they had a big ceremony in the police auditorium, and I got there. I had no role and I was just sitting in the back. Then the program was over. Ed was being interviewed by a couple of TV reporters, and so I'm walking by and he stops talking. He says, "I didn't think you would come." And I said, "I want to make sure you're going." [laughter] But, you know, he went on to become a very, very able senator.

PARKER

Right. And I was curious, in that role, how much—what was your relationship with kind of community organizations that were focused on police abuse and things like that? So, for example, in the Eula Love case, like, what was the role of your office?

OCHI

Okay. All right. One of the things—I had two hats over the Criminal Justice Office. One is programmatic, as one is going after the money, and then when we got it, then managing the money and making program design, and then we had this contract administration role. So we had separate functions. Your question was?

PARKER

Well, I was curious about—so what would your role be in sort of like police oversight and relationships between the police and the community?

OCHI

Okay. All right. So that was the Criminal Justice Office role, but at the same time, I was called director of criminal justice planning, but I also was an executive assistant to the mayor. So I had two hats, and, one, the deputy mayor oversees the Mayor's Office, and the executive assistants would work with the deputy mayor on policy and whatever, or if like a substantive area, like if it's police and there's a liaison like Eze, then I would work with that person. So on the case such as Eula Love, well, the mayor also had outside advisors. One key advisor on criminal justice matters was the wonderful Johnnie Cochran. Johnnie Cochran was somebody that was knowledgeable. He was well respected by the justice system and the community. He was a very unique person, and he and I were close in some ways, and he knew where I was at. Well, I don't know whether that term is right. But you have to see that in this role I was doing a lot of external stuff. I'd be serving on the Department of Justice Advisory Council. It's a Minority Advisory Council, where I served as a vice chair. I'd go to the Black Caucus. I'd be a member of the brain trust, so I

would know people like John Conyers, who was head of the brain trust. So Johnnie knew I was doing a lot of this stuff, and the mayor knows a lot of this, too, because he'd go somewhere and he'd bump into people and they'd say, "Oh, say hi to Rose Ochi." Well, anyway, on that side, while I was on the Criminal Justice Council for the Department of Justice, we ran for maybe six years or so. We really got very close. Lee was chair and I was vice chair. But Lee, when he was in Atlanta with all these kids being murdered, he couldn't come to the meetings, so I'm pretty much running a lot of the meetings pretty much, especially up to the end when we had a big final national conference. So my name was out there nationally in terms of policy, criminal justice policy, and I had a nice network of very progressive police chiefs, not only NOBLE, which is the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives, but other police agencies, a police foundation. "Hubie" Williams was executive director. I was called a number of times to be a speaker, like maybe post-Rodney King, and we'd do a panel or whatever. So I was out there now. So whether it was Sam Williams or other police commissioners, sometimes there are issues that come up.

PARKER

You mean Willie Williams?

OCHI

Sam Williams was president of the Police Commission.

PARKER

Oh, right.

OCHI

I think Steve Reinhardt was also police commissioner. So they knew who I was. Anyway, when Eula Love came down and they're looking to kind of develop a new deadly-force policy, then I go through Lee and all these other people, and I say, "Give me the best." Anyway, I give it to Sam, and it becomes policy, and it was probably—it was beyond IACP and everything. It was, like, the first. When I was on the Police Commission, after—I can't even remember the name of the case, but where the officer shot some young man in South Central, people were trying to change the deadly-force policy. And that day I should have got in trouble with Roberta Yang. My appointing authority is Mayor Hahn. When I'm walking in, Roberta says, "We're passing this today." I looked at some proposal. It was going to really affect the current policy, and then there's all the regulars standing up there, Connie Rice and, actually, interesting, the Police Protective League, because it was making less protective for police officers. It was just not well crafted. So Roberta's saying, "You need to do this today, because politically you've got to show that they're acting." And I just said, "Not going to do it today. We're going to do it right. We're

going to do it this week. We'll pull together a task force, but we'll do it this week, but we'll do it right." And so that's what we did.

PARKER

Can you talk a little about what the deadly-force provision, you know, in the original, said?

OCHI

Well, the concept was—this is hard for me—is a reasonable officer. So you would have a standard versus kind of a policy without a measure. So you needed to have something. So that created—it's not an opinion; there is something that you measure against. And they were trying to take the "reasonable" out. It was not there. And it cuts both ways, and I wanted it there. But part of that is Roberta, she was appointed by Hahn. She was just a loose cannon, poor thing. She came as, I think, a prosecutor from the Attorney's Office, smart as a whip, but has no social skills, no political skills, and so she just lost a lot of friends in the department and allies in the City Hall. I went to see her on a Saturday one time to kind of say, "Listen. I grew up here. I'm a commissioner. You can bounce some ideas off of me," and this and that, and she was very dismissive. And it turns out I know the department. They say, "Well, this came from Roberta." And if you want to be successful, you have to know how to make it work. But anyway, well, one thing about Jim Hahn, he trusted me. As much as Roberta would say, "Get rid of her," he trusted me because we grew up in City Hall. One story is that—this is talking about Manzanar for a minute. But when I was fighting the deputy mayor, Mike Gage, to make sure that the mayor has the best information, I was being thwarted in every way at that point. I remember one day Gage had already left, and he was the president of the DWP, and he was fighting harder. He did not want—but anyway, I had developed a gang conference. Now we had our own program. It's a recognized model and everything. So we're going to have a conference, but it's pretty much in this area, driving distance. We were at the L.A. Convention Center. There was five hundred people. We put that together, I think to share our models and strategies and kind of—what is the word? We used to call it technology transfer, you know, just kind of get that info. [interruption]

OCHI

So I had the mayor scheduled to be a speaker at this conference. It's kind of a feather in his cap. We have a national model recognized by other people. They're going to deny me the mayor to speak at this conference. So I call up Jimmy Hahn and I say, "Hey, Jimmy. I need a speaker. Can you be there at eight-thirty to open this conference?" He says, "I'll be there." Well, anyway, I come back from being in the Clinton administration. Who's the mayor? Jimmy. But he knew me because we had— [interruption]

OCHI

I got close to Jimmy through this process, and so it kind of worked for me. But I don't want to start on the Manzanar stuff right now, no.

PARKER

Yeah. Well, so going back to the criminal justice, was there—I was just wondering if there was any shift. Was it more difficult to get money for the kind of diversionary programs or intervention programs like HEAVY once you had less social funding going to cities and more focused on kind of militarized policing with the rise of gangs and drugs in the eighties?

OCHI

Everything sort of evolved, because at some point we were looking for juvenile justice, and that would be a new category separate from law enforcement, and so there was some new monies available, but at the same time it's whether—the philosophy of the lawmakers. You know, the mayor never really saw that any kind of juvenile youth programs is anti-law enforcement. He really felt that it was an important investment, and he saw from his very kind of pioneering efforts that it made a difference in the actual numbers, and it was very well received by our sister law enforcement agencies or education and all. So they all work and collaborate. That model of collaboration and designing and executing made a big difference. And so when the structure's gone, if it's individual agencies creating those relationships, it becomes less effective.

PARKER

I've been wondering—I know there was a lot of intervention around, and I don't know if the Criminal Justice Planning Office was involved or not, but there's a big effort around the Olympics to do a lot of kind of youth involvement and jobs and programs and stuff like that. Was that something that you worked on?

OCHI

I would say that you should talk to Olivia Mitchell. Olivia was head of the Office of Youth Development. She still works there. Not there. She works for the community development department. She's getting up there. She's getting up there, but she's lucid, charming, knowledgeable. You should try to talk to her.

PARKER

Okay. She was one of those [unclear]?

OCHI

Yes. Her youth development program, I really loved that program because I could see, well, maybe she'll develop a program where you get some of these inner-city kids' programs. This is where she would develop a program for girls. I forgot the name of the program, but the whole idea was that if you invest in the girls, they can keep the guys straight. If they're pursuing education and

want a better life, then—so it's really kind of fun. There was one program I recall. She had kind of like a summer youth program, but then she would get all the departments and probably older white men that are kind of running all these little agencies and stuff, and they'd bring in these little chongitas, these girls with maybe one whole mascara wand every day, with big old clumps, and their hair teased up all over. I mean, it must take them two hours to get ready. But there they are in the elevators and everything, and then—interesting. My program success is, one, they come back, and they're adding some value added to the agencies that took them in, but then I look at them, days go by, less mascara, and then less hair. I mean, they kind of look around and they see how they should look, and their dress code changes. And actually, when you see that kind of success, changing so that they can be learning skills and also learning the way to survive and work in a real work environment, I know it was very successful, but it also had this kind of a way of you've got a girl going on the right path, then that's going to make a difference to some young men. It was not a gang intervention, but it was a kind of youth development. So a lot of that was kind of an intersection. Olivia is someone that I really admire. She had this youth development program, and some of the people that are her graduates are Tom LaBonge, Mark Ridley-Thomas, Wendy Greuel, a number of others. People in all kinds of places came out of her program.

PARKER

I remember just looking at the notes, there was also a joint city-county project to that was intervention, called Blueprint for Action, is that right, in the early eighties?

OCHI

Say that again. Blueprint?

PARKER

Was there a Blueprint for Action? It was a joint city-county effort that was also focused on—

OCHI

What subject?

PARKER

Well, still focused on reducing youth crime through kind of activities and community groups and speakers and things like that.

OCHI

What year is that?

PARKER

In the early eighties.

OCHI

When did I leave?

PARKER

After that, I think. I had just taken down a note and I was wondering if that was something that your office was involved [unclear].

OCHI

Yeah. Because I had mentioned that convention that we had. That was really a collaboration, because we had developed—for the HEAVY and from the gang intervention. What was our gang program called? Anyway, you want me to discuss anything with any non-Bradley people? Let's say somebody like a prominent lawyer, his name is Al LeBlanc [phonetic]. He served as the president of HEAVY for many years, but he's a very successful lawyer, criminal justice lawyer, but he played leadership roles in the Bar Associations and whatever. He is my dear friend, because when Jerry Brown called me in about, I don't know, somewhere—I don't know when he got elected, but he called me to be a Muni judge, and I didn't apply. I, at that point, probably—I don't know. I was already on the county board of trustees for the bar, like first woman or first minority, first whatever, but I was doing a lot of stuff, but I wasn't ever interested in a judgeship. I was just trying to be a part—John Van de Kamp got me appointed to maybe my first thing, called a client trust fund, because I had been a Legal Aid lawyer at one point. So I started getting involved in some of the local bar stuff, and there's no minorities to speak of. You've got Williams, but very few. So I thought, "Well, let me get over here and see if I can bring people in." But I don't know whether it was a good idea for Sam Williams, because when I was appointed—it could have been from him, but I didn't pay him back very well, because he knew me from being on the Police Commission. He's the president, first black president of the county bar, and now I'm on the board, and now they have the prestigious annual award. I forgot the name, something, something [Shattuck-Price Award].But anyway, I decided I wanted to go for Judge Bernard Jefferson. I appeared before Jefferson for many months for the Serrano case, and I—did I tell you all the stories about that case?

PARKER

Yeah.

OCHI

Well, you know the bench book that he did?

PARKER

Mm-hmm.

OCHI

Well, that is like a bible to the legal profession, so that is kind of an important reason why I was arguing for him. Anyway, but I don't argue. I call up the little Bell Gardens Bar, I call the Beverly Hills, I call all the little outside bars. Anyway, I make the presentation, and the guy that the bar has already kind of planned on was going to be Judge Gray, because they have this succession and

everything. And then I think that Sam Williams was shaking in his boots. He's thinking, "Rose is going to get up there that and Rose is going to say Bernard Jefferson couldn't become a member of the county bar because of racial restrictions." He'd think I would do something like that. He knows how I am. I'm a Legal Aid person. But when I worked with the mayor, you learn how to behave. You can't do anything that would reflect badly on him. But anyway, instead, I didn't say anything like that, but I just said, "Oh, the contributions—." And I lined up the support, and, wham, he beats out Judge Gray. And then everybody's looking like what happened, because they're not political in the bar. Everything's kind of behind the scene. It's a done deal. Well, I'm sorry. It's not a done deal. But that was my gift to Bernard, because he is a wonderful, wonderful man. And people like him, you know, I know the stories about people like him and Vaino Spencer going to law school and having to go work in the kitchen, and they have no money, nothing. And they paved the way. So I just wanted to make sure that he's acknowledged, because he's a brilliant, brilliant man. Anyway, that's something I am happy I did. He was happy.

PARKER

And then switching gears a little bit, but kind of staying on the kind of political kind of things, you ran for Congress in 1982.

OCHI

Well, I started getting involved in Democratic Party stuff, and looking back, it was probably a stupid decision, but I had not sought public office. I lived in Monterey Park, and there were a lot of role models, people like George Ige who served on the city council and as mayor. And then I taught in Montebello School District. There was a Korean woman who was on the board, so there were people out there. There were some role models and all. But what happened is we had a wonderful, wonderful assemblyman. His name was Jack Fenton. He represented Monterey Park, and I think he's Jewish. Anyway, the Westside Mafia—that's Berman and everyone—they sort of cut a deal with this guy named "Marty" [Matthew G.] Martinez to kind of raise the ceiling on the trash dump over there off the Pomona Freeway. So it kind of relieved the pressures, I guess, wherever it was on the Westside or the Valley, whatever. Anyway, so they got Martinez from Monterey Park City Council to become the assemblyman, and then at some point then they were all going to be leaving, like three or four of them were going to be leaving to go to Washington to serve in Congress. It's Berman and maybe Waxman, who knows. So they're going to take Marty with them, because this guy named—a wonderful, wonderful congressman from Monterey Park, I think it was Nicholson or something [George E. Danielson]. I can't remember. Anyway, he decided to step down for whatever, and he ended up kind of like somewhere near San Bernardino as a congressman again. Anyway, so the seat was vacant and it was open, and so it's

wide open, but there was a young man that was running, I think he was the George's [Danielson] chief of staff, and then they brought in Marty, and then there was another Latino woman, maybe somebody else, and I said, "Well, what the heck," you know. I didn't want Marty, and I just said, "I didn't do my Monterey Park stuff. I didn't do the Montebello stuff. You're working your butt off at the Mayor's Office, so you're not working in the evenings or whatever. You're not connected." So I was just, like, running. And then I made a lot of mistakes too. I had plenty of money, but I gave the money to a very big-time political consultant in San Francisco who designs silly stuff and materials and stuff, and it wasn't tailored toward Monterey Park. Well, the nice part is a lot of people that just knew of me from the Japanese paper and whatever else, a lot of people got involved and they helped. But when I went to see the mayor—actually, I think I may have told this story to you already, is that they—

PARKER

I don't think you told it to me on tape.

OCHI

Well, some of this I don't know is good to say, but I will just say that the mayor, when I went to see him, he already knew and—no, maybe—but he got a call from Norman Mineta, saying—he's probably got the assignment from Berman to say, "Tell her not to run." And the mayor told me that, and then he said, "But I can't tell you not to do that, because I've been there, but I can't help you." And then the meanest thing he could say—it was harder for him to say it. [laughs] He would say, "And what are you going to do after you lose?" This is not a mean man, you know. He can't say things like that. [laughs] That's the best he could do to, like, dissuade me. So I just said, "Well, I'll come back here." And he can't say, "No, you don't have a job here." He couldn't say that. And it would have made a difference, probably, but he didn't say that. He couldn't say that.

PARKER

And so that's what you did, is that you kept working for the Bradley administration after—

OCHI

I came back.

PARKER

Yeah, you came back.

OCHI

I came back. But the one person that was not very nice to me was Grace Montañez, because I guess somebody told her, "Well, there's a Mexican running." Well, the Mexicans—people, a lot of people sort of kind of know that Marty doesn't give a damn about Monterey Park or the Mexicans. But anyway, I'm a brat. Fast-forward, and I'm working at CRS, the Department of Justice

race-relations arm, and one of the things we do is at national political conventions we kind of help provide in the security planning and kind of dispute, kind of conflict resolution for demonstrations, this, that, whatever. So now I'm the director, and the Democratic Convention's in L.A., so I come out and I'm helping. I bump into Howard Berman and his wife. I know his wife, too, because we were involved in politics together. Marty is acting a fool and he's voting with the Republicans. He's doing all kind of crazy things. And I said, "Hey, Howard, I'm glad you [picked]—." Something about, "Our friend Marty Martinez." Anyway, the only way you could stay sane is to be a brat.

PARKER

Alright. [recorder turned off]

PARKER

Okay. So we're going to jump ahead and talk a little bit about—

OCHI

I don't know the timeline, but I'll just say at some point while we had been involved in a strategy pretty much systemwide in trying to prevent violence through gang intervention and youth prevention programs, is that there was there was, whether it's economy or whatever, but there was a lot of rise in gang activity and conflicts. Much of it is against one another, gang to gang. But any event, the department started really kind of upping their pressure, and they created what they call a gang file, and it created a lot of disruption in the community because these police officers, young officers, would stop anyone and say, "What gang are you in?" and then put their name in a file. Did I talk about this already?

PARKER

Nuh-uh.

OCHI

Okay. I'd like to talk about this a little bit because—so there was a lot of backlash and a lot of anger in the community. Well, I would just say that in the Mayor's Office we kind of wanted to get the department to be more targeting, and not like a big dragnet—

PARKER

Sweep.

OCHI

—and it was—what were you talking to me about?

PARKER

So you were having an issue with the police department ramping up—

OCHI

Daryl Gates.

PARKER

—policing and just doing big sweeps.

OCHI

Daryl Gates. Daryl Gates. So a lot of infrastructures that were being built and developing some positive relations with communities, and a lot of it community policing and other good stuff, but some of it with the rise in gang activities, and it could be caused from a lot of economic difficulties in the community.

PARKER

Really high unemployment.

OCHI

Yes, and drugs. So then the corresponding kind of rise in kind of pressure and suppression from law enforcement create a lot of tensions. I wanted to talk a little bit about Rodney King, that after the beating, there was a trial against a number of officers, LAPD officers, and my function was to get the call from the court.

PARKER

About the verdict?

OCHI

About the verdict. But prior to that time, knowing that it could go any way, the police department kind of came to our programs, and they all kind of tried to create a kind of response system, and they wanted to find ways to make sure that communications are—that rumors are bad, and that what could you do, and creating ways that the programs could try to help quiet the crowds or whatever.

PARKER

Preserve the peace.

OCHI

Yeah. And I know one place was that if there was going to be a negative verdict, then everybody was supposed to meet at the—I can't think of it. Reverend Murray is over there, the AME Church, and that's where we were supposed to meet. Anyway, I get the call and I call the mayor. I said, "Mayor, not guilty." And he says, "Call the police department." I called them and I let them know, and then I jumped in my car and I was trying to head over to the [AME] Church, but all this time before it was all the planning was gone with law enforcement and the organization, which is different. Never did it in the past. But anyway, I was driving over to AME Church, and this Mexican man decided to take it upon himself to make certain that I don't go into harm's way. I want to go over there to the church, and he wouldn't let me go. He kept telling me I have to turn around. Well, I don't know what was ahead of me, and I don't think there was any rioting yet, not there at the church, but—

PARKER

And Bradley was at the church, right?

OCHI

I'm sure, yes. And that was the command center. That's going to be where—there was one at Parker Center, but the community one is there. And so this Mexican man not going to let me pass. He just—

PARKER

He was on the LAPD?

OCHI

No, just looked like just somebody that just know that I'm going the wrong way. "You don't want to go there." So there's stuff, bad stuff happening maybe more in South Central, but this is near First AME Church. He made me turn around. He told me to turn around. So I went to headquarters. So I was not there. But the headquarters, I mean, they had a lot of security all around Parker Center.

PARKER

And so what happened in headquarters that those first—because wasn't part of the issue was that Gates was at a political fundraiser—

OCHI

Yes.

PARKER

—and so he wasn't there?

OCHI

No, he wasn't.

PARKER

So what happened in kind of that first night after the verdict?

OCHI

I think all hell broke out, right? Yeah. I can't give you the particulars, but I guess the decisions were not coming from Daryl Gates, and probably that was fine, too, but I guess maybe—I don't know whether—you can tell me what actually happened, but maybe there was a hesitation, and they probably should have been on it much quickly, because once something starts happening, you know, it'll escalate. So I think the hesitation contributed to the—but this is not something that happened regularly in L.A., you know. As much as there were gang problems, we didn't really have riots. I'm sure they had riots back east, but that wasn't the situation here. Anyway, it was a very, very challenging time, but, I don't know, I can't get to the particulars, because even though I'm the mayor's person and stuff, this became a political—not a political, a police matter, so I had a different kind of responsibility. There was a girl named Yuni Kim. She was a young girl and she was the mayor's liaison to the Korean community. So I was going to support her, and so I would go with her to—she didn't have, like, a city car, and then I would take her and I'd go with to Koreatown. This is not the day of, after the day, and so I would kind of support her and then try to develop ways that the community be addressing all the—

anyway, she was very young, but she's the one that they knew, so she did pretty much a lot of the speaking, but she came with authority of the mayor. But there were issues, a lot of self-help in terms of the Korean businessmen were like not within policy either, you know, so how are you going to be dealing with some of those issues?

PARKER

You mean in terms of restoring the businesses?

OCHI

No, they had guns.

PARKER

Self-protection.

OCHI

Yeah.

PARKER

Oh, I see what you're saying, yeah. Did you have conversations with Bradley about the kind of civil unrest after—

OCHI

No, not actually. I didn't really—you know, I'm one of these people that I have my responsibilities, I deal with it, and [unclear] last minute. I'll just say, "Mayor, the court called. Not guilty. I'll call the police department." All my conversations were very short, yes. I don't know how many conversations I had with the mayor. I think the funny ones I would have is he'd say, "Rose Ochi, I don't ever see you. You don't ever see me." I send paper, but if I need to see him, maybe it's very, very—and I go in there, and it's a minute. And he'd say, "Rose." This would be maybe more like a social gathering or something. He'd say, "Rose, I go to New York, and they say, 'Say hi to Rose.' I go to Washington, they say, 'Hi to Rose.' I go to Sacramento, they say, 'Hi to Rose.' I go to Tokyo, they say, 'Hi to Rose.'" He said, "You know a lot of people." I said, "I'm representing you well." I think I did the Manzanar thing with you about him.

PARKER

So, yeah. So let's actually take—

OCHI

Not today, not right now.

PARKER

—a pause here and then let's talk about some of those national roles that you were taking on.

OCHI

Okay. All right. [End of April 2, 2014 interview]

1.4. Session Four (April 9, 2014)

PARKER

This is Caitlin Parker. I'm here with Rose Ochi, and it's April 9, 2014. So we were going to talk about your appointment to Carter's Immigration Select Committee.

OCHI

Wonderful. Let me kind of share with you how I came to be selected. I didn't even know about the establishment of this new commission. I had not been involved in immigration and I definitely was not knowledgeable. I'm skiing with friends up in Utah. These are my UCLA friends. And then someone said, "Hey, Rose, it's the White House!" And I said, "Oh, yeah. Tell 'em I'll call them back." [laughter]But anyway, I took the call, and they said, "You've been selected to be on the President's Select Commission on Immigration and Refugee Policy."I said, "Oh?" I said, "What? I don't know anything about immigration or refugee policy. Let me suggest so-and-so, so-and-so, and so-and-so." They said, "Excuse me. You have already been selected, and we are ready to convene our first meeting." I says, "Oops. Okay." Anyway, I got excited because, you know, I do remember that my parents were subject to deportation, and I grew up in East L.A. and I taught in East L.A., and I could see—and then working in City Hall and seeing how shifts in the immigration strategies for enforcement and policy changes, how it creates all kinds of disruptions, fear. And so I thought, "You know what? I'm going to do this, and I look really forward to doing this." So when they announced the commission, I remember we were in the State Department in this huge auditorium, and everything is all staged. So the chairman, Hesburgh, spoke, and then the head of the House Judiciary, Rodino, spoke, and also whoever was the head at the time of the Senate Judiciary; I believe it was Ted Kennedy. So then they were ready to conclude, and I says, "Excuse me," and then I said something to the effect of, "As we embark on this important undertaking, it's important to keep in mind about the hostile, discriminatory," past immigration, education or refugee policy. So anyway, they all looked at me like, "Oh, boy. This woman came to play." So next thing you know, the next meeting I'm invited by Ted Hesburgh to have dinner with him, and this is in Boston. It was one of our first hearings. So I thought, "Well, this is very nice of him." And then he brings this African American woman staff person. Poor girl, I feel sorry for her. But anyway, he proceeds to let me know that he is on a number of corporate boards and that he's approached regularly about identifying minority candidates for such boards, and that if you know how to somehow be good kid, cooperative, or whatever, then that he would keep me in mind. But then he launches on to kind of criticizing Vilma Martinez, and Vilma was at the time head of the MALDEF, Mexican American Legal Defense Education Fund, and Vilma and I are soul mates, we're friends. And I just said, "Oh, Vilma's my friend."

Anyway, I hardly could eat my dinner and I was just ready, and I said, "You know what? This was something I was going to do, but I want to do this seriously. I'm going to be more ready. I don't know anything about it, but I'm going to be more ready than anybody, and I'm going to play. I'm coming to play." So he really offended me, you know, and so maybe the first meeting it would be something kind of—and it's a meeting, not a hearing, a meeting, and I think they do some things about picking—Larry Fuchs was the staff director, and he came from this x university, and so now I'm sitting there and here's this contract for a zillion dollars to go to his university to do research on, I don't know, immigrant use of libraries and whatever else, you know, services, something like that. And I jumped up and I just said, "You know what?" I said, "We can't do a sole-source on a contract of this amount. You'd think there are other universities that would be qualified to be considered." And I said, "You know, I don't know." So I said, "No sole-source, please." I said, "We can't—." And then I said something about, I said, "You know what? And why can't we be involved in deciding what issues that need to be researched? I don't know. I think it's important whether they're going to get library cards or about their participation in different ways, but maybe there's some other questions that would be more helpful." Anyway, they're all looking at me. So then after it's over, I'm approached by Rodino's staff. He's so important. One of them was a chief of staff, another one that kind of was more legislative. I'll think of his name in a minute [Skip Endres]. They took me to lunch, but they kind of wanted to know, you know, who I was and a little bit about my background and all, and they knew that my parents were immigrants. Anyway, so we became close, which was nice, but they could see that I'm not just kind of a firebrand, you know. I come to be constructive. I come to be a part of giving voice to other people that are not in the room. And while I was selected to be the Asian one, because they have two Latinos and then all the representatives from the Senate and the House, and the cabinet members, Justice, HEW, maybe one other, a couple, but there are four from the administration, and then the House, the Senate, and then four public members. So they could see that I was sincere and I wanted to be constructive, but I came to play. So the next meeting, I said, "You know, I don't know anything about immigration, I told the White House." And I said, "All of you got two, three staff whispering in your ear," and I said, "I want one too." So I said, "I would like motion to have each of the public members have the opportunity to have an immigration expert." So I selected this guy named Bill Ong-Hing, and at the time maybe he was at Golden State Law School or something like that, somewhere. Anyway, I don't know how I had met him, but anyway, he became my assistant, and they would travel for our meetings when they could. Anyway, so that was helpful. But, fortunately, too, not only was he substantively knowledgeable, but he was also

pretty much of an advocate, you know, so no status quo. Cruz Reynoso, he also selected a gal named Josie [Gonzalez] that was an immigration lawyer here in Los Angeles somewhere. Cruz and I, we would arrive from California late before a meeting, and then we'd usually get together for dinner, and so we were always kind of one mind. But I had said to him, "You know what?" This is after he and Rose Bird and folks were voted out of the Supreme Court. I had said, "You know what? Let me be the Mexican, because you know what? There's a possibility that Carter might appoint you to the federal bench." And there was—I'm trying to think of his name right now. John, a guy named John [Huerta] who used to be at, I believe, MALDEF, he was now working for the Smithsonian, and so he would always come and join us for dinner. Anyway, actually, Vilma Martinez's successor, her name is Antonia Hernandez, she was on Kennedy's staff. I guess they wanted to have a Latina. Anyway, so what happens there? I don't know. There's one issue, another all the time, and I was always ready. And I liked clothes then. I would buy—actually, when I was a Legal Aid lawyer, I dressed in jeans and t-shirts, and I had a jacket on my door, and if you have to go to court, you put it on and you go. But then, you know, there was another side of me that by the time I get to the Mayor's Office, then you're wearing suits every day. And now when I'm getting picked to go to this Washington, D.C., my husband, he was working in Beverly Hills. He was heading up national John Carl Warnecke's architectural firm in Beverly Hills, which was nice for me, because you're Miss Legal Aid, Miss Jeans, and now my husband, who was always someone back then who was a clotheshorse, because he'd go to Beverly Hills, and he's an architect. Anyway, so he goes to Neiman Marcus, and he goes and he says he's going to surprise me, and he goes and picks out in the designer section a Gianfranco Ferré. Anyway, this man is an Italian architect who switched to designing clothes. So he gives me this handsome, handsome suit with—I still have it and it still fits. But anyway, I showed up. I was cute. Anyway, that was one of the first meetings. So a friend of mine—I'll connect that later to when we talk about redress—he used to be with some of the criminal justice policy bodies. He doesn't have any money, but anyway, he's going to take me to the Maison Blanc, which is the White House, probably one of the fanciest restaurants at the time nearby the White House. And so here I am, I go walking in there, and, actually, there's no minorities in there. But anyway, these women out to lunch, they have their jackets with their labels hanging over the—and I says, "Look, Jack." I said, "These tacky women, they've got nothing to do but to show off their labels." I said, "Hold on, Jack. I can play that game. It's a Gianfranco Ferré." [laughter] But anyway, that's some of my "take that." But the staff came to see that I—I don't know how much time I can talk, but I'll share maybe three or four stories about the immigration. One day we were talking about key issues. One of them

is amnesty, and so we're talking about amnesty one day, and here comes a proposal handed out to everyone at the beginning of the meeting. And I looked down there, and it'll say something amorphous, something about if you break residence, you are not eligible. So I jump up and I said, "Who wrote this?" I said, "Do you want to say no Mexicans are going to be able to participate in this?" Nobody answered. And I says, "Okay. Let me spell this out." I says, "Given the proximity to the border, the nature of their work, seasonal, and the importance of family, all the Mexicans are going to be ineligible. Is that what you want? Then say so." And they all shut up. Anyway, that was one. There's a couple of times I would really take on Hesburgh by myself. But one day, you walk in and there's like a bank of TV cameras, and there's Hesburgh way up there on this throne, and he says, "Well, I'm a member of the Chase Manhattan Bank board, and I have to leave early or we'll have to conclude early, because I need to go to a board meeting." So I go, "Mr. Chairman," I said, "I'm the lowliest member of this body, but I don't have time to come all the way here from California for a short meeting." I said, "We've got a lot of pressing issues here. We have a very able vice chair," and that was the attorney general, Civiletti, and I says, "I suggest that we move on." [unclear]. Bye. I'm either sitting—I can't remember his name, the Republican from the Northeast or Alan Simpson, because this is a totem pole and there'll be the public member and the Republican, and so we're like this. So Alan would sit next to me a lot, and when I do the—here's all these TV cameras. His head's on the table, cracking up. He's always cracking up, you know, because I get to say the things that he can't say, so he's just cracking up. [laughs] But anyway, I have to say that a lot of them, they liked me, but I'm a problem in a way too.

PARKER

Because you have a very different opinion of what these laws should be.

OCHI

Well, my thing, what I'm talking about is process, you know? Let's get everything out there, you know, and let's talk about this honestly. And anyway, so one time Hesburgh said something about refugees and that, "Japan ought to take more." And I don't know why, I don't like him, so I'm going to jump up. This is not my issue. I kind of prioritize my issues, so that I don't want to kind of become a bore. But when he said Japan, I jump up and I says, "I'm not an apologist for Japan, but," I says, "you know what? Just think about it." I said, "They have a very small island, they have a huge population, they have very little bit of land that's actually usable with the mountains and waterways and what around." And I said, "They don't want to have any responsibility as America because we intervene." I mean, I probably used another word [unclear]. So that was my way of trying to counter him. One day I just had a fit—I can do some more stories later on. They're funnier stories. But I had a fit

and I heard that Ted Kennedy—I don't know where I heard this from—leaned over to a colleague and said, "Where in the hell did they get that woman? Boy, does she have balls." When I used to give speeches, when I was a little girl trying to challenge my father, I said, "Daddy, I want to go to college." "You're a girl." And then I'd come home—I don't know if I told this story—I'd have trophies from athletics, I have class office, I have good grades, and he'd always turn to my mother and say, "Oh, what a shame this child didn't come with kintamas," which means "balls." So I always say when Kennedy said, "Boy, does this woman—," I says, "Oh, my father would be so happy."

PARKER

So proud.

OCHI

Yeah, so proud. But anyway, back to some stories. Now I could see, like, the Mexican government. When I would get out of the cab and I would have not suitcases. Ordinarily, I like to dress to kill, but I figured, "No, I can't carry all this stuff." So I would maybe take one suit, maybe three tops if we're going to be there for three days or something like that, and then in my briefcase or something like that, and then I would take all my briefcases. The Mexican consulate would pick my stuff and carry it in. They figured, like, "Oh, my god, she's a Mexican champion." But anyway, there was all kinds of stories. So Fuchs and his people, there's a change. It was, under Carter, pretty—you know, it wasn't ugly. It was okay. And then it switched to Reagan, and we were not done, and then you could see staff primarily started shifting a little bit more towards more harsher stuff, and so you could see what's going on. One time my job was for the people that appointed me, Esther Kee, and her husband was an immigration lawyer. The Chinese Asian people were really interested in Fifth Preference, which is the reunification of, I think, brothers and sisters. I'm surprised I could still remember this. But anyway, one day there's a proposal that, like, we kind of eliminate or restrict. We had a lunch break, and the most conservative member of the body was Bob McClory from Illinois. He was an older man, and nobody talks to him. He's not that fun or anything. But I go hang out with him at lunch, and I don't know whether it was daughter-in-law or somebody, she's Chinese. I find out about his family, and I talk about the importance of family and this and that. We come back from lunch, and Bob McClory, who never speaks, stands up and talks in favor of brothers and sisters, maintaining that. And I swear to God, I wish I had a camera. When Bob jumps up to speak, Kennedy and everybody looks at me.

PARKER

They knew you were behind it. [laughs]

OCHI

Yeah. And so that was one very, very proud moment, yeah, very proud moment. But the staff got more and more conservative, and they started looking at policies of trying to change the policy. They're going to say that in order you can become a citizen, you would have to return from your sending country before you can apply, and that was dropped on us. This is dropped on us, like the day of. And I jump up and I just say, "You know what? If you want us to entertain anything, I want to see this beforehand." But anyway, I said, "Okay, let's go forward." I says, "I don't have any preparation. I don't know anything about this." But I says, "Let's see. We have the former head of immigration." And I know his name because these are lawyers now. And I said, "Tell me. It's been suggested that it's unfair to the people who are in line if people who are here want to adjust their status, regularize, that they need to go home." And they said, "No, it doesn't affect the people in line." And then I said, "Okay. How about you Mr. so-and-so, Mr. State Department?" And I make them help me answer all the [unclear].One of the guys on the staff is one of the smartest immigration attorneys around; his name is Peter Schey. He's from South Africa. He used to head up, I think it was the Center for Constitutional [Rights] whatever. Anyway, he does a lot of Supreme Court stuff. He was on the staff. Lots of times he would come whisper in my ear to just say, "You know what? They're going to do this." Or if it's not in your package, he'll drop it off. So I think maybe that time he whispered, "Rose, they're going to say points for speaking English." And I says, "Okay." So I just jumped—and then somebody introduced. It's Civiletti. They would hand it to him and say, "Okay, we're making a recommendation to give points for English-speaking." So I jumped up. I jumped up. I was standing up and I said, "Okay. Let's think about this. Do you think that this is fair? It's going to favor places where there are colonies from English-speaking countries like in Africa or India—." I named a couple of countries in the islands that are black, Bahamas or something like that. And then some of these people are thinking, like, "Oh, shoot. We don't want any more black people," probably thinking. [laughs]And I said, "It would disfavor people from Asia or Italy or Mexico." I said, "You know, Mr. Rodino, Mr. Civiletti," I said, "your father, your grandfather would not be eligible." They pulled it back. I never had so much fun. I had a ball, I really did, because I made a difference. I really did. We were in existence at least three years, maybe more, and I came to play and I made an impact.

PARKER

One of the other things I think I read that you required—at one point they wanted to have, like, closed-door sessions, and you demanded that they be open and accessible to the media and—

OCHI

That's right. But the funny thing is I was, like I say, low-key in City Hall. I did the advocacy with the council and then externally at the state and feds and stuff like that, but I was not a flamboyant, you know. I do everything in my personal life, but in City Hall, low profile. So there's this wonderful guy named Jim Seeley. For many years he was a city lobbyist in Washington, D.C. So when you have members from the city, like, that day, the President, John Ferraro, wonderful man, anyway, big, tall former football player from 'SC, and a wonderful man. Jim came taking him around the Hill and stuff, and so they pop into the Immigration Commission, and the door's open. I think that's when I was taking on Hesburgh about cancelling the meeting. They left without saying hello. And after a few days, Jim said, "Oh, John was here."I said, "Well, why didn't you come by? We could have had coffee and do something." "Oh, you were busy." [laughter]Anyway, but John was shocked, because I'm deferential and I'm staffy, and there I am [demonstrates]. But that side of me is from the Legal Aid side and it's like I don't need to be liked. That's important, you know. So I think it was good for me. It was good for me and, I think, for the issues. And in the end, I have to say I know Hesburgh probably still hated me, but I know that the way I was very kind of, like, whether it's working with McClory or working with Simpson, the issues of immigration refugee policy are not in one side or the other. It's very interesting. Simpson's very conservative Republican, but he didn't want I.D. cards, I didn't want I.D. cards, so we both fought against I.D. cards. So some different kind of civil liberties and human rights issues, they're not necessarily on one side or the other. One thing I know how to do is kind of like work the aisles and my colleagues, whether it's coffee like I did with McClory or their staff, and the immigration staff, because Larry was maybe an academic who may know something about immigration, but a lot of the staff understand making laws or rules or policy and how it plays out, and that's not how Larry thinks. But I come from the ground level in a municipality. You're visualizing not words, but you're saying how is this going to affect people, governments, whatever. So I thought I brought—because a lot of people didn't have that, whether they're senators or members or the cabinet members, and they may just look at an issue like a lawyer does, and I'm more thinking about how is it going to work. So at the end, I was pretty much close to everybody except Hesburgh, because, you know, they were respectful. They know that the main word was I'm sincere. It's like a lot of people that are just antagonistic and [demonstrates]. No, I was sincere.

PARKER

And what was the outcome of that commission? Was there like a final set of recommendations made?

OCHI

Oh, yeah. There's a huge report. Actually, Bill was really busy with something. Bill Hing probably left from Golden State Law School and went somewhere else, so he didn't help me write my dissent, so I kind of wrote it by myself. Anyway, I heard later that my dissent was on the front page of the Mexico City Excélsior for a couple of days.

PARKER

Wow.

OCHI

So I got to know some of the intellectuals that covered this issue. If we're in a university somewhere in California, people would approach me. But Cruz knows. He was there standing by me. John Huerta is the name of the guy. He used to be at MALDEF and then he ended up at Smithsonian. He may have retired by now, but they also helped me, two people give me advice.

PARKER

What were the issues that you dissented on from the main—the overall recommendations?

OCHI

Well, definitely—well, I'll have to—I can just go to my dissent and take a look at it, but definitely no I.D. cards. Yeah, no I.D. cards. And I think we were talking about amnesty, some form of amnesty, and I don't know exactly how they came down with Reagan at that time. I think there was a chance, I think because there was amnesty. But anyway, I'm just going to jump to something else. When I would go to Washington, D.C., I'd stop in and see Rodino, and this is connected to redress. I'd go see him, and he'd say, "Rose, we're trying to pass this legislation, but your girlfriends—." And this is Vilma Martinez and—no, I don't know if it wasn't Vilma. Maybe by then it was somebody else. But anyway, he says, "They're blocking it."And I just said, "What?"

PARKER

This is MALDEF?

OCHI

MALDEF. And I said to him, "Well, you know what? This is my suggestion." I said, "It's getting really ugly in L.A., a lot of immigration activities, sweeps in factories, and stuff like that." I says, "Why don't you ask—." I don't know whether it was Antonia, whatever. I said, "Ask them. I know what you want. I can't do it now. Tell me what you'll settle for." And then they passed legislation. And I would go also—no, the other thing is I said to him, "You know what? Redress." He brought it up. He said, "Rose, why doesn't Bob Matsui and Norm Mineta push this legislation?" I said, "You need to understand they don't come from a solid base. They are being attacked, and you need to protect them, and I want you to find somebody from a safe district to champion this." And he picked Barney Frank, a gay man from Boston, and

he made it happen. On the Senate side, I could talk a little bit more about Simpson, but Simpson and I became very good friends because he's a brat. He's a brat. He's very, very—he's a principal brat. We don't agree on a lot of things, but he was a principal brat, and I think he welcomed my participation because I could be the sword. He hated pomposity. He's a cowboy, a cowboy from Wyoming. And interesting, I'm a cowgirl, because my age when we were growing up, we liked Roy Rogers, Gene Autry, and we only had Hometown Jamboree, Cliffy Stone, and so you'd be singing cowboy songs, Spade Cooley. That was our entertainment. So I was a cowgirl too.

PARKER

I was curious if I could ask you just quickly before we shift to the Manzanar stuff, what was the kind of, overlap between when you were working in D.C. on the commission and dealing with these issues of immigration and kind of what was going on with criminal justice in L.A.? Like you were talking about it was a time of there were a lot of sweeps at workplaces. There are also deportations of suspected gang members and things like that. And I was just wondering if there was kind of an overlap between what you were doing in D.C. and then your work having to coordinate with LAPD and things like that in Los Angeles.

OCHI

You know, I'm trying to think about it, but I believe that L.A. always was kind of like a forerunner on having a wise policy about immigration and contact with illegals, way back, because I don't know where they came from, from Davis or whatever, but I guess it was so basic. It's like, "Okay, you've got all these Mexicans here. They're victims of crimes and they are witnesses. If they are fearful of the police, will they come forward when your wife is killed to be a witness?" So it was very not necessary philosophical or progressive; it was more good policing.

PARKER

Sort of pragmatic.

OCHI

Pragmatic. Pragmatic. These people are here. They're the dishwashers, and the owner of the restaurant's shot. Are they going to hide, run away? So I forgot the rule such-and-such, what was the number, but—is it forty, whatever.

PARKER

I'm not sure.

OCHI

But I used to talk about this when I was on some criminal justice bodies and stuff, because L.A. was kind of at the forefront. But I could think it could come from Ed Davis. He was a smart man, practical.

PARKER

Do you want to switch gears and start talking about the organizing for Manzanar?

OCHI

We can do that, could do that.

PARKER

All right. So let's switch to that. Can you talk about just forming the—incorporating the Manzanar Committee?

OCHI

What time is it? [recorder turned off]

OCHI

You know, when I look back on my participation on the Immigration Commission, as I said, I didn't know anything about the issue, but I was very serious, I studied. But while I was an advocate, at the same time, I kind of brought some of my style from City Hall in that the idea was to find a consensus and build alliances across, I don't know, fences. So I did a lot of collaborating with the Republicans, I became very close to Alan Simpson, and I feel that the idea of having a commission and bringing in different kinds of interests so that rather than just assuming, people can share, and then maybe you can come to a consensus on some key points. So I think it was very worthwhile and I think that the idea of doing that model again, I think would be very worthwhile.

PARKER

So do you want to switch gears and talk a little more about Manzanar?

OCHI

Okay.

PARKER

So can you just talk about how the organizing got started in the first place?

OCHI

All right. I guess this all began while I was a legal public interest lawyer at Western Center on Law and Poverty. In addition to working on Serrano and other cases, when there was kind of a little down time, I'd make myself available to nonprofits or organizations that were seeking nonprofit status. So they knew of me from college. They were the Asian educators, and so I incorporated them to become a nonprofit.Sue [Kunitomi] Embrey at the time was chair of this very small Manzanar Committee, and she wanted to incorporate, so she sought me out, and I did all the 501(c)(3)s and the state applications, and so that's how we began our friendship. Then I left Western Center, and my boss, Terry Hatter, was appointed by Tom Bradley to be the director of Criminal Justice Planning. We may have discussed some of this before. Now I'm in the Mayor's Office. So what happened next? The federal government, there was a passage of a legislation to study sites associated with

the Pacific war, and the Park Service was tasked with the responsibility, and they brought in the mandate to study former—we don't want to spend a lot of time talking about names, but they're called former relocation camps. So I'm not certain exactly in the sequence, but the National Park regional office located in San Francisco contacted Tom Bradley's office because they wanted to designate Manzanar as a national landmark, and it didn't require really any special legislation, something within their authority. However, they needed permission from the city because it was located on city land, Department of Water and Power up in Inyo County. So when the Park Service asked for approval and assistance, then I was tasked to work with them, and I wrote the letter to DWP, and I said that this is something that the mayor wants, and so, begrudgingly, they went along. So I got to know the people up at the Western Regional Office, and I was there. We got involved to the point of selecting the rock where the plaque was embedded. Now, one thing, there happened to be—I don't know whether there was going to be a change in administration, but they were under a gun. I guess they—

PARKER

The DWP?

OCHI

No, this is Park Service. They wanted to do this quickly, and so they said, "What do you want on the plaque?" So this was a dilemma, because they said they wanted to know now, but I thought that I need to invite, let some community groups beyond Manzanar Committee to know that this is going on.Well, then Manzanar Committee, Sue would want it to say "concentration camp," and JACL would say "relocation camp," and other people whatever. Anyway, I only had a day or two to say move forward. So I just said, "You know what? I want this to happen. I'm not going to get stalled by a debate now. I don't have time." So I just said, "Put 'Manzanar.'" So when you go up there right in front of the historic site entrance, there's a big rock that I selected with a plaque that says "Manzanar" and nothing else. Anyway, back to the establishment of the historic site. We had a landmark, and now we're a historic site. And what happened next? We had the landmark, and this staff person from the regional office trying to go on the site to do a feasibility study, and, again, DWP would not allow him to go on. Anyway, so I interceded there. And then they wanted to have a meeting with some of the townspeople about the possibility—I think it was called a general management plan, and about the possibility of becoming a historic site, and I said, "Okay." They needed the approval, not technically for the park process, but for the political process, support from Inyo, so I said "let me work on that." I wrote a letter, Rose Ochi, and I wrote a letter to the board of supervisors, saying that, "The park's exploring this and this and that. Why don't we sit down and talk. Let's meet at

the Big Pine Cafe on such-and-such day, and we can discuss this further." Anyway, there's an Inyo County reporter that was in the boardroom, and he heard that Keith Bright took my letter and said something about, "Never happen. Never happen. Over my dead body." So the day arrives. I drove up. I don't know how many times I drove up to Manzanar myself. My husband laughs now because it seems so far, but then it was so close. I used to zip up and down in a day. Anyway, I arrived with Dan Burton, and I stuck my head in and I said, "Which one is Keith Bright?" I said, "Tell him to come here, outside." He's a big, tall guy, maybe at least six-two or -three, good-sized. He comes over to me, and I said, "Hi. I'm Rose Ochi," dah, dah, dah, dah, dah, and then I just—I didn't tell him, "I know. I heard what you said." I just said to him, "Tell me. Tell me what you don't like. Just tell me what you don't like." He was taken aback, and he says, "Well, I don't want to be embarrassed. I don't want to have any—." And he said, "I don't want anything that's bad for—." He went on and on about what he didn't want. I said, "Okay. I hear you." And I said, "Tell me what you need." He looked at me. And I said, "You need economic development. You need something that will attract visitors." I says, "Your economy will grow. You're going to have people come stay, people are going to eat, people are going to—." And I said, "That will be good. That will be a wonderful legacy." And he looked at me and he said, "Let's get to work." I love this man. There's pictures of me being videotaped crying because I'm making a presentation to him. But, you know, this is, again, whether it's Simpson and Davis or Keith Bright, you know, it don't bother me, Republican, big white man. I think good people can come with good will and find solutions, and this has always been my approach. Anyway, he said, "Let's get to work." And I really admire this man because now we're going to have public hearings in Inyo, and part of it is beaten up by the DWP people, staff, a lot of the employees. They're beaten up. But there are other people that have kind of erroneous assumptions about who was in the camp. They think they were Japanese war prisoners and whatever, but they also were still [unclear]. In fact, there was a state landmark designation where Sue and other people kind of really tangled with the community. The driving force of getting the state designation was it was a slam-dunk because you had a woman named Nadine Hatta, who was on the state commission, and the staff by Eugene Itogawa, who's Japanese American, so there was no political difficulty. But what happened is in the naming, whether it was "concentration camp," which prevailed, and other names, there was a big fight where Sue and Warren [Furutani] and other people were involved. Anyway, so there's a lot of bad, bitter feelings in the community. So I didn't invite anyone to participate other than I went to a meeting of the 442, and I said, "Show me. I want two guys that can come with me to a hearing." So I met with them. One of them was Hiro

Takusagawa, and he was a 442 vet, and he's a teacher at Trade-Tech, and so he was very articulate. And there was another guy. I think his name was—I'm not sure exactly. I can look it up, but I think it was Shiro. But this one of my favorite moments in advocacy. So the big day of the hearing, this town meeting in Inyo arrives, but we're going to have, like, a preliminary day session, and then there'll be a night where the men would be coming from after work. I met Hiro in front of the Inyo County Courthouse, where the meeting took place, and here they come, wearing their American Legion jackets and all this ribbons and stuff in their hat, American Legion hat. And I said, "Oh, wow!" And then unbelievable moment happened. Here comes a crusty old man from World War I. His name was [Melvin] Bernasconi, and he was sent to fight the proposal. He's walking down the path, and he crosses Hiro and Shiro, and he says, "American Legion?" He said, "You fought on our side?" It was amazing. And he said, "I was sent to fight this, but I can't do that." You know, I've done a lot of stuff in the community and all, but this is one of the most, most memorable moment for me.Anyway, when we went inside, Hiro got up there and he did his thing. "I'm no hero, but, you know, our family was here, but we wanted to go. I'm an American. We went to go fight." Everybody was just taken aback, and the women that attended, they said, "My husband—." They may be Korean, whatever, vets. "They're all going to be out." I said, "Well, you go home, cook them dinner, and tell them what you heard." I mean, I knew a lot of them were DWP. There is not more philosophical, more—the job was telling them, "We don't want this." But anyway, after that wonderful change of heart of that World War I vet, and then the women listening, and then there are people there from the early pioneer families, and I just said—me, I run around, promise anything. I just said, "We will make certain your story's included," because they were displaced by DWP. And some Native Americans, I said, "We'll have your story too." [laughs] I gave away everything. Anyway, the meetings went well, and notwithstanding, there was a lot of people in town that were still against it, and so I really give a lot of credit to Keith Bright, because he was on the supervisors, and he could have been hurt politically, but he knew that this was good. And so if he did not do that, we would not have gotten past that point. Then as we were moving forward on the legislation, I approach Mel Levine. I looked to see—I did a lot of kind of Democratic Party stuff and all, but I really wanted to see who we want to author, so you've got to look to see their committee assignments. So, Mel Levine, Westside liberal, was on the Appropriations Committee for Park Service, and so I called him and asked him to author. And then on the Senate side, it was easy, too, because Senator Cranston, a very good friend of the mayor, and I had actually friends there in his office, they did the Senate side. So on the House side, it was easy, no problem. I'll talk about the day that we decide to go and testify. So I was

working with Jim Seeley. He's the city lobbyist. He is housed in Washington, D.C., so he kind of like takes care of a lot of the logistical help. We go over to his office and we run copies of testimony and this and that. Anyway, the day we were in a cab heading to the Hill, I pass the Archives, and on the wall there is an inscription, "Past is Prologue." So anyway, I didn't have any remarks. I was going to let Sue testify and Hiro. But anyway, we get there and staff come over and says, "You know what? We're going to have to kind of carry this over because we're running late."I says, "I'm sorry, but you know what? We flew here from California." I said, "I promise you. Give me three minutes." And they said, "Oh, very well." So I tell everybody, "One minute. Drop your speech. We'll submit it for the record." And Sue said, "I'm Sue. I was high school, I was going to college, and when I was in Manzanar, I made camouflage nets for the war effort." And me, I just said—I didn't plan to testify, but I just said, "On the way here, we saw this inscription, 'Past is Prologue.'" And I said, "If we're not mindful, we're bound to repeat the mistakes from our past." Then Hiro, he gets up there and he said, "Well, I'd like to share a little-known fact that the liberation of Dachau and some other camps, concentration camps, were led by Japanese American 442 vets." And Mel is Jewish, and he just looked over, and we could have all the time we wanted. Anyway, he said that the general took us all out of the picture because of the paradox, "Aha. They're going to explain that their families are in American incarcerations." Anyway, so that's what happened, and boom. We passed it, and we [unclear].On the Senate side, it was more difficult. By that time, somewhere after the House, my mother passed away, and we buried her. I came to work, and I was called to meet with Mike Gage, and he said, "You—." He can't fire me. So he said, "You are going to Piper Tech." That's an auto garage. But then I mentioned that I was rescued by Bill Elkins and Will Marshall , but I know that it came from the mayor.

PARKER

To give you office space inside City Hall, yeah.

OCHI

I believe Gage was brought in because he's, like, a known firebrand, so I think—but the mayor in that time, he needed somebody to beat people back, whether it's the Times or whatever, because people wanted to kind of get him to not run again or whatever.

PARKER

Yeah, get him out of office.

OCHI

So, back to Gage. Gage, he's going to do everything he can.

PARKER

And at this point is he deputy mayor, or is he—

OCHI

He's a deputy mayor when he kicked me out, and then at some point then he resigned, and I believe he was brought in to kind of help mayor to fend off all the media and other people, and then I think he started getting higher aspirations. I think he wanted to become mayor. He used to be an assemblyman. Anyway, I'm making that up, but I think that. So he went to DWP and was the president. So I decided he was a very visible person, trying to do a lot of this whole environmental stuff, these new kind of things that people didn't talk about. Environment, yay! So somewhere in there he told—I think his name is John Stoddart, some of the people that he brought in, to rewrite my mayor's testimony, because I was going to be going to the Senate. And then I'm in Washington, and Jim Seeley, my friend, because I used to go to Washington all the time, and so I used to see him, he gives me this thing, and it says nothing. There's nothing there. It's like, oh, the sky is blue, the sun came—I mean, there's nothing in there. And so I just said, "Hmm." He says, "And they said you can't testify."

PARKER

Mike Gage said this while he was still in the Mayor's Office or when he was—

OCHI

No, no, no. He's gone. Now it's coming from, I don't know, John Stoddart or whatever, somebody, somebody, Fabiani, somebody. But John Stoddart rewrote my testimony, and then they said, "You cannot testify." That's fine. So I told Jim Seeley, "Jim, could you make fifty copies of the mayor's House testimony that I had submitted?" And he did. And then we took it to the Senate side, and we said, "We apologize, but with the mail and all, it did not come, so we have identical testimony we provided for the House, so please accept this." Anyway—

PARKER

So you just entered it into the record?

OCHI

Yeah, I gave it to the Senate staff. Anyway—

PARKER

Do you think that was coming from Bradley that he didn't want you to testify or—

OCHI

No. Gage.

PARKER

Okay.

OCHI

Gage. And Jeff could verify this because, number one, mayor loved his Japanese staff and constituents because they were probably his first constituents for his council seat.

PARKER

From his council district.

OCHI

Yeah. And that he knew, number one, that we're totally loyal. We don't have any agendas other than our assignments. We're not trying to—anyway, but he—like I say, I can't count the times I went in his office, because I was not my daddy's girl, you know, I wasn't anybody. That's not my style. But he knows that things happens because he signs this stuff and he's bringing in money or making programs. He knows that I get along with the council. I get along with the police department. He knows. And so he knows I did good work. But back to—I think he was very close to Jeff because he's more like a money man, brought in all the political money. So anyway, I came back, and then everything started coming down. I told you. I already probably had been moved upstairs. They took my office and everything and then starts taking my responsibilities. And some of it started when Gage was still there. And then they'll, like, take my community crime prevention person, take him [unclear].Then they went to Richard Alarcon, who was working for me before and did gang stuff. I brought him in from Project HEAVY in the Valley. Richard, I love. He said, "She's my mentor. She's my friend." But then they tried to get him. He said, "Take her drug stuff?" That was Julie Tugend and gave it to somebody. Anyway, it doesn't matter because nothing came from them. Everything comes from my bringing it in with the money or whatever.

PARKER

From the federal government and the state [unclear].

OCHI

Yeah. And so anyway, they tried in any way to kind of thwart me, but at one point I—I'll talk about Sue in a minute. But I had a conversation with my husband and I said—all of that stuff wasn't in there?

PARKER

It's fine. It'll work.

OCHI

When Mike Gage was coming after me, taking after my staff, kicked me out of my office, now he's trying to dilute my authority, trying to block me from participating in the Senate hearing, doing everything, blocking my testimony, my mayor's testimony, we just kept going. But anyway, so I got a feeling that he's going to try to fire me next, but I don't think it was going to happen because the mayor knows that I'm kind of—I bring in my own money for my office and for the city, so it isn't like I'm not—they're not carrying me. But

anyway, so it looked like they wanted to fire me. I talked to my husband, and he said, "Don't worry about it." He said, "You can go anywhere." He said, "You know, if they want to do that, it's on them." So I said, "Fine." I just wanted his permission, you know. But I just kept fighting. But let me turn to after the Senate hearing. Now the bill was kind of language where the Senate side is being drafted, and it mirrored the House side. Now Gage is president, and he's going to find every way to block that. So it could have been a little earlier, but I decided, "Well, let me get the council to approve this." John Ferraro was the president, and I said, "Okay, I know all the council members. Sue is a neighbor of one of them." I can't think of her name right now, but Echo Park. But anyway, she—I can picture her right now. But anyway, I said, "I can't testify." Anyway, so I said, "Sue, come testify so we can introduce this motion." So the staff drafted the motion. I didn't see this, but I heard that when Gage got it, he crumpled it up and threw it on the council floor. So I knew I had—I know all the people. I knew I had pretty much the majority, because even the Republicans from the Valley, one of them, he went to Roosevelt High School, so he knew some of the people from grammar school or junior high school that were taken away. So we had pretty much all the votes. So now Gage balls up the motion and throws it on the floor, and now we've got everybody. We've got everybody, because they don't like him anyway, but that's so disrespectful. So the day we were going to have a hearing, I tell this story, is that Sue was kind of in the back, and she's kind of a tiny petite little lady, maybe five-one, -two, and slim, and here comes a big hulky fullback, Mike Gage, looking over her and saying, "This is never going to happen." And he said, "How about you settle for a city park?" And Sue tells me later that she said, "No, we were not incarcerated by the city. Only a federal park will do." Then she came over to me and she said, "I was shaking like a leaf." This might be on tape, is when I was kind of talking about her after she passed, I told a story and I just said, "Well, from where I stood, it seemed like you were just [unclear] shaking with indignation," something like that. But anyway, we got all the council support, and that really ticked off Gage. And so now we're working on the language with the Senate, and so what should happen is Gage—they're powerful. He was very powerful even in Washington, but they told the committee, "Do not talk to Rose Ochi until—." [recorder turned off]So where was I? I just said—

PARKER

The Senate.

OCHI

I was talking about here the bill went in there, and so I was supposed to be prohibited from talking to the Senate. So this is what happened, is Kathy Lacey was [unclear] staff, and she would talk to this wonderful gal that was a leader

of the Mono Lake—I can't think of her name right now—and then she, in turn, would call.

PARKER

So you had an intermediary.

OCHI

Yeah. We didn't need to—yeah. But anyway, what we find out is there's some legislation that was being proposed, and Jeff Matsui gives me a copy, and he said, "Mayor said take a look at this." And I look at this and I said, "This language is not neutral." See, what I had at some point we were going back and forth on language, and I went to Fabiani. I said, "Fabiani, why don't you get a judge? Why don't you get somebody instead of staff bickering and find a way to develop neutral language?" So he said, "Good idea." And so he told DWP to repeat, said that they did this, and they give this to the mayor. So mayor gives it to Jeff, Jeff gives it to me, and I said, "This is not neutral. This is a DWP Protection Act." [Parker laughs.] Anyway, so what I did is I said, "Where did this come from?" They said, "A Stanford Law professor." Well, remember Bill Hing, who was my [SCIRP] assistant?

PARKER

Yeah.

OCHI

He's now at Stanford Law. So I call Bill. I say, "Hey, Bill, who's your water expert?" He said, "Well, there's two, one from L.A., one from Northern Cal." I said, "Give me the name of the L.A. guy." I called him. Mary Nichols was from O'Melveny, and she's on the board. I said—we're going to have to finish soon because they're having their lunch. But anyway, so I said to Bill, "Find me the guy and ask him to call me." So he calls me, and I says, "You know what? Our hopes and dreams really hang on what you're going to tell me, so I'm going to fax something to you. Would you take a look at it and let me know if it's your work?" Twenty minutes later, he calls me. He says, "It's not mine." So the—what do you call that? The jig's, gig's up or something?

PARKER

Yeah.

OCHI

But I went to see the mayor. I said, "Mayor, I spoke to the author, and he said that's not his work." And he said, "Rose, call Cranston." So it was all over. But I—

PARKER

So the DWP had hired an independent person and then written their own report—

OCHI

That's right.

PARKER

—and replaced it.

OCHI

And they redid it. But this is Gage. And so, you know, excuse me, but he doesn't know me. They see—here's staff. You know, you're doing your work. And so he doesn't know that I'm politically cunning and that I know everybody, and that you know what to do.

PARKER

Yeah. [laughs]

OCHI

Anyway, and the mayor, he knows that you appoint him to DWP, and you're going to lie to him?

PARKER

Yeah.

OCHI

Oh! But Jeff tells me he was always with me, always with us. But anyway, but that's how it ended.

PARKER

So why don't we—should we pause there and we can pick up again [unclear]?

OCHI

Okay. [End of April 9, 2014 interview]

1.5. Session Five (April 16, 2014)

PARKER

This is Caitlin Parker. I'm in downtown Los Angeles with Rose Ochi, and it's April 16, 2014.

OCHI

Well, we left off when the mayor gave me the go-ahead to call Senator Cranston's office to move forward with the bill, and that went through very smoothly. So I just want to add a couple of things. Following pilgrimage, the mayor—we had a hundred people there, and here comes a helicopter, and the mayor comes to the pilgrimage. It was an iffy. His schedule was such they said, no, they don't think he can come, and, anyway, here he comes out of the sky. He comes down and then he gets on the stage and he talks about the importance and he was happy that he played a role, and now he's ending his remarks and he said, "And Rose, no more memos!" [laughter]Anyway, it was, in my mind, that, you know, here you have the deputy mayor, who now is the president of DWP, very close to the mayor, saying no, and so, you know, I thought perhaps that we may not win. But Jeff Matsui, he's the mayor's right-hand, he was kind of liaison to the harbor and other areas, he said to me the mayor never wavered,

never wavered, and I believe a lot has to do with the mayor's personal relations with not only staff, but constituents. The first district that he represented was made up of a lot of Japanese Americans, including George Takei. So the mayor was very familiar with the issue, and so he was very happy to be a part of kind of preserving this for history. Anyway, I would just say that there were times where my job was threatened. I lost my office, I lost staff, I lost responsibilities and assignments, and I put on this big five-hundred-people gang conference, and they denied me to have mayor to do the opening.

PARKER

Because you were also working on [unclear] Manzanar?

OCHI

Because any ways to try to shut me off—

PARKER

Wow.

OCHI

—and so they started taking away my staff, tried to take away my areas of responsibilities: domestic violence, gangs, drugs. Anyway, it was fine because it's kind of hard because another thing, anything I had, mayor didn't give it to me. I was creating, I was bringing in the resources and getting it from state and federal and other sources, so it was not something easy to do. But I could see that there was a time where after my office, my responsibilities, it was going to be my job. And I had this conversation with my husband, and he told me—I love him. He said, "Well, you'll lose your job, but you're going to finish this." And so I told Sue. And Sue, you know, she's busy. She's trying to raise a family and teach English as a second language in the L.A. Unified. Anyway, so I don't tell her about everything. I don't want her to worry. But one day I told her about some of the stuff that was going on and the possibility that Gage would like me out of there, period. And what I care about and appreciate about Sue is as much as this has been like a lifelong dream and aspiration to preserve what happened and tell a story, she said, "Rose, you can quit." So that was—

PARKER

Do you think Bradley would have let Gage fire you, or would it—

OCHI

No. No, I don't think he would. He probably wanted to. He tried to take away my responsibilities, take away my offices, but he couldn't do that. Part of it is because I'm not close to the mayor. I wasn't close to my parents. I wasn't like, "Okay, Mama, Mama, Dad." You know, I'm out there doing my thing. And so I was the same way as employee. I'm out there doing everything. But, one, he knows that I made him look good, and I brought in resources and had kind of great relations with various sectors, whether it's the bar or different groups, women's organizations, and that was kind of like new too. And I was doing a

lot of that, probably even more than a lot of people who had constituency responsibilities. I just did that, not as part of my work, but as part of all the things I'm involved in. But anyway, no, he would not have. That's what I've come to know, but—

PARKER

The threat was real at the time.

OCHI

Yeah. And I have people, like Richard Alarcon, who I hired when he was a young man, to one of our programs, and at that time he was now in the Mayor's Office, and they wanted to get him to take away some of my gang stuff, and he said, "She's my mentor. She's my friend." So, you know, there are people, they were doing things, too, that I don't even know about, but he told me. And others, you know, I don't blame them. Gage is very not only politically powerful, but he's just a big football fullback type of person, and he was very intimidating. He yelled and screamed at people. So I don't blame anyone. Fortunately, he yelled at me once, and I said, "I just buried my mother," and I just turned on my heels and got out of the office. Then I went to see the mayor. I says, "Mayor," something about his sensibilities. I said it as nicely as I could that, "This guy is uncouth." Anyway, but, you know, it's okay because I'm going to go to the Manzanar pilgrimage at the end of the month, and I understand from the numbers that they say over a million people have visited the site.

PARKER

Wow.

OCHI

But every year, like last year when I was there, the night before, then I bump into ninety-year-old women coming for the first time with their children and their grandchildren.

PARKER

Wow.

OCHI

It's really, really very gratifying to me to see that. And then all the Manzanar staff gets letters from young people. There was this one family, this little girl, they were going to have a big bat mitzvah for her, and she said, "No." And she says, "How much money, Daddy, you going to spend?" And she gave it to the friends—

PARKER

Oh, wow.

OCHI

—for more interpretives. So it's kind of nice, you know, that it's not only educating people, but making to see that in their little way they can make a difference.

PARKER

Do you want to talk about some of the things going on at Manzanar now?

OCHI

Okay. I was just going to just say that right now Manzanar is being threatened by the Department of Water and Power is going to build a solar farm, which in eye view of the site parking lot. And so the Park Service had tried to stop it, but, of course, they have no power. And the people in Inyo have organized and they're trying to oppose it. The decision's going to happen very shortly, and I know that Manzanar Committee chair, he's been so eloquent. This is Sue's son. Wonderful, wonderful. He was up there in Inyo maybe a week ago saying why it was important that they move it. Anyway, I wrote a letter to Mel Levine about a week ago, and this week he called me and he said that he was so happy to hear from me. And I said to him that—my original intent was to say, stop this thing. Then I decided, no, I'm going to talk about other things. So I just said to him, "You know, we're going to be memorializing the founders and putting a plaque in the doorway." And I said, "Your name's among our key founders, and I want you to know about this," and that I wanted to know whether he's available to talk to a researcher about his role and put a date to be determined on his calendar to be up there. And so he calls me, and I haven't talked to him in years, and he called me. He's a lawyer at Gibson Dunn, he's president of DWP. And he said he was so pleased to have received the letter, and I think the important thing he said to me was, he says, "You know what? I've done a lot—." [recorder turned off]

PARKER

Okay. So we left off where Mel Levine called you.

OCHI

When Mel called, it's in response to a letter I sent to him, he shared with me that among his legislative bills he feels that he's very, very proud of his being the author of the Manzanar bill. He and I talked a little bit about the hearing itself, and I reminded him about—he wrote to [unclear], who talked about the Japanese 442 vets being a part of the liberation of Dachau, and that the U.S. Army took them out of the picture because of the dichotomy of how are they going to explain that their parents are in American concentration camps. Well, anyway, he said that he feels that while he's done a lot as a member, that he feels so proud about his work on Manzanar. So I said to him, "You know what?" I didn't talk about the solar panel controversy. I just said to him, "You know what? We're going to put up a plaque of the founders, and I want you to make your schedule free to participate in that some time to be determined."And

he said, yes, he'd loved to do that.So that's sort of my kind of a design to block something that's going to happen at DWP, but it's more my Japanese kind of feng shui approach instead of, you know, Mau Mau. [laughter] I've done that. I've done that as a Legal Aid lawyer. I know how to do that. But sometimes finding a way to get something a win-win is the way to go.

PARKER

Right. So I was wondering if you could talk about, thinking back about the Bradley administration and your role in it, some of the kind of biggest changes or accomplishments that you see during your time.

OCHI

Well, I mentioned earlier, Terry Hatter, at the mayor's invitation, came to create a new office. It was the Policy and Program Development Office. So I was pretty much involved from the ground floor. So whether it was—you mentioned HEAVY, juvenile diversion, we did the whole range of crime prevention, Neighborhood Watch type, and then community policing. But then policy was very important, whether it was policies having to do with deadly force that followed that Eula Love case, and also affirmative action, the Blake case. So I feel that my role and the mayor's role was kind of giving another different look at police responsibilities and oversight. He brought in some very serious, knowledgeable, talented commissioners. The department probably never had people that took such an interest. People like Steve Reinhardt, Sam Williams, these are top-drawer lawyers and they're change makers, and so the oversight of the department, and then my opportunity to kind of maybe input by dropping in things that are happening at the national level, I'm kind of still a low-profile lady, but that's where I feel that I've been able to make a contribution. But by being a lawyer in the Mayor's Office, maybe they'll say, "Okay, we want to create a Women's Commission." So then I would write up the bylaws and whatever and then assist. Sue Embrey, actually—I got to select the agent appointee, so Sue, she was someone that was not only interested in civil rights, but was interested in women's rights, so she was the first Asian appointee in that role.

PARKER

Oh, wow.

OCHI

Yeah, she was. Anyway, so just being in the Mayor's Office, you know, before I used to be Legal Aid, legal services, but you come to understand that you can do all your lawsuits or you can do your advocacy, but the bottom line is you have to understand politics or you need to make friends. And so then I somehow slowly got involved in supporting different candidates, and I got involved in some of the women's groups, not just for lawyers, but now people involved in policy change. So from there, I somehow kind of moved into being

involved in politics, and I would say I was never really like a campaign worker, but I became the president of the Japanese Democratic Club, and so then maybe from then will raise money for Norman Mineta or Bob Matsui, and that didn't hurt, because Bob will be my friend, and then when I wanted to expand the site of Manzanar when they discovered this archaeological site beyond the original boundaries, I just call them up and they make the change. So I understand that you want to do a good thing, but it's nice that you could be able to open the door and get results. So that's how I got involved. And then, actually, I really did not work for Carter. I think I told you the story how I got selected because my reputation of not being afraid of chief—

PARKER

Ed Davis?

OCHI

Yeah. But somehow by the time it came to Clinton, I got involved much more in a political way. Mainly they're interested in money. I don't have a lot, but it's like also a way to mobilize people, supporters, and—

PARKER

Could I just stop and ask one more question going back to Bradley? Because you brought up the shift from moving work, from working in Legal Aid in the Western Center on Law and Poverty to working inside the administration. I was just wondering what your relationship was once you were in the administration with those groups who are often advocacy groups that were still very much involved in fighting the administration on certain policies or lobbying the administration to do certain things. I just wondered what that relationship was like as someone who'd been on both sides of it. Does that make sense?

OCHI

No conflict, no problema, nothing. Nothing. People are pretty sophisticated. They've got a friend inside, but they know how much you can and what you can do. People, as I say, they're smart.

PARKER

Yeah.

OCHI

But getting to the Clinton administration, I don't know exactly how, but I got some friends, some political friends, probably more Asian political friends in Washington said did I want to come help with the transition. And that is so key. There are not a lot of people that are going to go and work for free. So I asked the mayor, "Mayor, can I go?" And he said, "Okay." But I was on my own. They didn't pay me. I had to pay my hotel and whatever else and all. But I went there, and at the time I did not have any plans of taking that position. I just thought I'd go there and see if I can help get some people appointed. That the Asian that invited me, that's what he wanted me to do, to find people and try to

get them connected. So I was doing that, and I got to know people like Maria Echaveste, one of the heads of the transition team, and then another—I just saw him the other day— Fernando Torres-Gil. He's at UCLA. He was on the transition. And I remember one time near December, it was getting kind of close to the beginning of the administration, and I said, "You know what, Fernando?" I said, "How many Mexicans have you found that have Washington experience and have the credential and the experience to become like an assistant executive, a high-level political appointee, not just a staff?" Very few. There are academic folks, but they really want not just academic. They wanted—you know. So I says, "You know, you should apply. You're going to have to apply." And I said, "[unclear] my husband, because Maria, she says you need to apply." So anyway, one of the things I did is I had like a criminal justice portfolio of finding people for them, and then Lee Brown, he was chair of the Minority Advisory Council, I was vice chair, and maybe at that time he was police chief in Houston. Anyway, I stuck him in for drug policy. He didn't apply for drug policy. One day he calls me. He says, "Rose, the president called me. He wants me to be the drug czar." I said, "Well, sounds good to me." He says, "No, I want to be FBI director." I didn't want to tell him that there's at least ten names, and they're all judges and they're wired. So I just said, "Well, I don't know. I think that'd be a nice place." So he invited me to the swearing-in. I didn't have any money. I couldn't go on city money. I've already spent this money being on transition. So I called a friend at the Justice Department. I says, "Do you have a conference next week? Do you need any speakers or backup speakers? Anything, drugs, crime, you name it, domestic violence?" He says [unclear].So there was a conference going on, and I went to the conference. But I went to the White House Rose Garden and then I went to the Drug Policy Office, and I see him sitting behind the chairs. I says, "Mr. Drug Czar, one question." I said, "You know what?" I said, "When I was working on transition, I made a list of my top priorities, positions, three." I says, "Either DOJ, this, CRS, or a number three in your office, domestic."And he says, "It's yours."

PARKER

The domestic was yours?

OCHI

Yeah. But he knew me very well. So I just said, "Okay." As I went back, I wanted to make sure that my staff was going to be picked up by Riordan, so I had to be there a little while to make certain that—I think I told a story about I wrote a proposal about community policing and got a million dollars from Clinton, and they had a press conference at a hotel that was beamed from Washington. I'm there, and Riordan's staff said, "What's she doing here?" But this guy, Joe Violante —Bill Violante, he said, "She wrote the proposal." But

anyway, he finds out. And the mayor was a very resourceful person. He's a Republican, but he's not political-political. He asked me to come to his office, and he says, "You wrote this?" I said, "Yeah." And he said, "You could stay if you like." I said, "Well, thank you very much, but I'm going to Washington. I'm just here to make sure that you take care of my staff, and then I will help you from Washington to get more money." Anyway, so my boss became Ray Fisher. Ray Fisher used to be on the Police Commission with Sam Williams. Well, anyway, he's now an Appeals Court judge now, but small world. But anyway, Riordan kept his promise, and the staff was pretty much there until probably Riordan, and I don't know, maybe, probably, maybe with Hahn maybe some issues. It started changing. Fortunately, I happen to have a good idea of what's going on, but if you don't have somebody watching and advocating, a lot of resources are going to get lost and they'll be absorbed by the county or other people. I don't know what's going on, but community development is in disarray and they probably would like the money, but you can't just be a recipient. You have to be an advocate. You have to develop those relationships and do the advocacy. So I can't worry about that.

PARKER

What kind of policy things were you working on in your role in the Clinton administration? Was it connected to the community policing plan that you had started when you left L.A.?

OCHI

Actually, the father of community policing is Lee Brown. He did that, started in New York, but he'd been a police chief in a number of places, but he started there, and he did it in Atlanta and he did it in—but some of the stuff I did at drug policy would be—this is how I met Reno. Before even I left the city, I was interested in dealing with drug addiction, and we started kind of a free pilot program where we got acupuncture students go down to Skid Row. We were over here at—I can't name the place. Something Center. Anyway, we had free coffee and doughnuts and acupuncture, and the people would line up, and these guys, hard addicts would say, "You get me through a day." And the way we looked at it was crime prevention is they didn't have to steal something, money or take money, steal or rob people and whatever. But anyway, I could not convince the county to be interested in anything like acupuncture. So one of the things I tried at drug policy—but Lee Brown was also a law enforcement guy, and he thought I was nuts. But Miss Reno, when she was a D.A. in Miami, she brought acupuncture into drug treatment for a diversion program. So we were trying different things, and one of the models I had developed, called Break the Cycle, I got HHS to come in and sit down and talk about putting treatment in the justice system. You know, it's not like turning go in there and punish them

and then house them. So we integrated that. So we developed a model for Break the Cycle.

PARKER

This would be preventative or once people already incarcerated?

OCHI

They're addicts, and now you have—this is now prevention, yeah. This is how you try to deal with the addiction.

PARKER

To rehabilitate people.

OCHI

Yeah. But that was not something they were really thinking about at that time. It was just punish or this. And I just thought that's kind of futile. But I was only there—that's probably—it was really a fun time because the boss trusts me, and so whatever ideas I have, I can just bring in all the HHS people, and I said, "We're going to create this model. Let's do this." And actually I can do whatever I want. But anyway, there was the other model called HIDTA, which was High-Intensity Drug Trafficking, and they developed one model and it was in Maryland. So that program was in the interdiction side. It was in supply. There's supply and there's another office to manage treatment, and I was state and local. So Lee Brown, he says, "You know what? I don't want drug enforcement in supply." He moved the whole HIDTA into my shop. And so then I said, "I'm going to expand this. It's going to be called Full Spectrum." So this is like working with Rich [Yamamoto], who was this young man that was heading the program, and then we'd bring in the treatment people, bring in the interdiction people and all the federal agencies, that includes law enforcement and armed services, army, navy, air force, bring everybody in and talk about collaboration. Everybody's doing their own thing, and then in the early model, they didn't include state and locals, and so you can't have an interdiction just the feds. First, they don't even want to talk to each other, much less to the state and local. So we kind of create a new model. I went to Congress, and I created five before I left. We moved them in other areas. And then I go to Congress, and they say, "I want one. Can I have one?" It was something. Anyway, but what I have is—I'm not really smart or anything. My husband says I'm very creative. He says, "What do you attribute to your success?" He says, "You're very creative." And I kind of like think out of the box, kind of stuff. So that's really good when you're in a position to move money and people and ideas.

PARKER

Well, and you're effective politically, too, in getting people to—

OCHI

Well, yeah, politically I was fine. But interesting—I don't know if you want to talk about silly stuff like this, but, you know, it's really hard going to Washington. One, they don't see Asians, they didn't see Mexicans, and certainly not women in power. There wasn't anyone. And so I'd go to meetings and some of these guys, they can't look at me. They're very rank oriented because they're all military or law enforcement, but they would look at my assistant, who was white, his name is George Kosnik .But anyway, for me it was a dream because these guys from all these departments and stuff, they liked the idea. You know, it makes sense that we talk to each other and define shared goals and respective responsibilities. They love all that. That sounds like a schoolteacher, but I got them. So what happens? I'm there a year or so, and Lee Brown decides, "It's time. I have to run for mayor in Houston." So he says, "I'm going to leave." So I said, "Okay." And then here comes General McCaffrey from the army, and, well, my gosh, I've got to be nice. But you know what? I don't know how we win any wars, because it was amazing—this was the first time I got exposed. Maybe he has to have like ten people following him, you know, and part of it is a lot of ego and stuff. So I remember this woman. He had one woman. She called me into the office and says that the general is going to be bringing in his own people. And I says, "That's fine." I said, "I didn't come here to work for the general. I've come to work for the president, and if he wants to make any changes, the general could talk to me." So I set up the appointment, and I'm sitting there in this chair, and he says, "How do you manage to stay so lovely in this town?" You know, because it's—

PARKER

Right.

OCHI

And I says, "Thank you very much." And I just said, "Your assistant said that you want your own people. I understand that. I didn't come to work for you; I came to work for the president. The White House is working on a suitable position that I would like, and so I will remain here until that happens." Anyway, he's not used to have a woman or anyone telling him what he—anyway, I just went to my office. There's no secrets in these buildings. The secretaries and everybody, they're all going [demonstrates]. And so all the air force, navy, all those guys, the army people don't want to even deal with them. Anyway, so now they're like getting rid of all these—this air force man, he comes into my office. There's a long line of people. He says, "My son's one more year in medical school. I need to work a little bit longer," and stuff like that. And so I said—Czar told everybody they're going to get rid of him. And I just said to him, I said, "Remember his speech when he took over, he says that he's going to be fair and he's going to be—," whatever, transparent, everything.

Anyway, I say, “You go in there and you tell him you can have my position. You find me a suitable—another job, and I’ll go.” So that was like kind of taking him up on his word. And so I became sort of like the office where everybody came for counseling. [laughter]

PARKER

You’re the guidance counselor.

OCHI

Yeah. All these people were getting kicked out and stuff like that, but they all heard that Rose told him to go to hell. [Parker laughs.]Anyway, but the army people, they all called the White House, the head of personnel, whatever, and say, “I want her out.” And they said—I don’t know who it was, John Emerson or somebody, he said, “Do you know who she is? We’re going into an election. She’s Miss L.A. She’s a well-known figure. You leave her alone and let her do whatever she wants until we arrange—.” They already know where they were going to put me, in Justice, my second choice, but they had some transition to go over there. They were kind of moving staff out and stuff. So then that was the easiest time of my life. I says, “Okay, where do you want—you don’t want to go? Oh, Puerto Rico conference on drugs? Okay.” [Parker laughs.] So I always used to go in. It was airport to airport, hotel, and home, and I go to El Yunque. Puerto Rico, you go to the jungles. I took some side trips. I had a nice time until—anyway, but, see, it’s kind of hard, people expecting everybody to roll over, and so you have their way. Anyway, so he’s going to pay me back. Now I’m at the Department of Justice, and we’re at a law enforcement probably—I think it was black police chiefs [conference] or something, and I’m speaking on whatever because I’m now community relations. And in the back of the room I see the general and ten guys, and at a certain moment—including George, who used to work for me—they come in like a swarm of bees [demonstrates] all the way up to the front row and sit down. These black people, they don’t like him to be offending Rose Ochi, a friend. I’ve sort of been affiliated with black law enforcement or with Mexican law enforcement. I got beautiful eagles and trophies from them because whatever I was doing, I was not an Asian person. Whether it was women’s issues, whatever, I was doing it for the issues, and I’d be concerned about Latino issues. Anyway, they got offended. [laughs] So I was done. People keep asking questions to make them burn. They’re just sitting there waiting. But I’m not so nice. They have a Black Caucus dinner. Maybe there’ll be five thousand people, and I would go every year. I used to be a member of the Black Caucus brain trust for criminal justice.

PARKER

When did you join that?

OCHI

That's when I was with the Minority Advisory Council. John Conyers was in consultation with our group on policy. Anyway, so I continued to [unclear].

PARKER

This was in the Clinton administration now?

OCHI

That started in Ford. So he knows me very well. So anyway, I go to this dinner—now I'm at Justice—and I see Conyers sitting with Miss Reno, buzzing away in the corner at a table. So I said, "Well, I've got to go over and pay my respect to John and say hi to Miss Reno." And so there's Barry waiting, waiting to say hello to Conyers. Anyway, Conyers looks up, and he says, "Hi Rose." [laughs] I go over there and I just says something about, you know, dah, dah, dah, dah, dah, and I say something to Miss Reno, and then I'm so bad. I go to Barry and I said, "Oh, I'm so glad you didn't want me. I just love being at Justice with Miss Reno." See, I'm naughty. It's the only way to survive.

PARKER

Yeah. So what did you do at community relations at the Justice Department?

OCHI

Ah, community relations. Oh, my gosh. I have to think about this and write some of this up, because this morning I started with an email. In July they're going to have an anniversary of the Civil Rights Act, and Department of Justice, led by civil rights division and CRS, is going to have a big celebration. So one day is going to be devoted to the civil rights department, and then the other was going to be CRS. So I let them know that I'm coming. But I'm thinking about some of the things we did at CRS. At first when I arrived, there was a real issue of church arsons. This is about a time where there were arsons of black churches, and it was creating a lot of fear and community division. So ATF, the federal agency having to do with arson, firearms, or whatever, they came to CRS to see if we can put a task force to work along with them because they can deal with the issues in terms of investigation and whatever, but there are just a lot of fears and cooperation. They wanted to have CRS move. At that time, just before I arrived, because the people that were before me, I mean, they just messed up and they didn't have good relations with Congress, so they were kind of like almost like half the agency, and they were like a bunch of people that are just floating. So we developed an arson task force, and I asked Miss Reno, I says, "Can I bring some people back?" So we started bringing people back and they were part of the task force. But I know when Congress honored ATF, they said, "No, this goes to CRS. We want to share this award with them." Some wonderful adventures. I remember going to—definitely in Tennessee, and it was Al Gore's birthday, so Clinton was there, and they were meeting with some of the church pastors. And then my team, this one guy, he's been with CRS from the beginning, he's from out of the Atlanta office, he says,

"Rose, can I say hello to the president?" And I had a few other guys. So I go to one of the handlers for him, and I said, "Can he go in there?" They were cutting cake or something like that. They had somebody's [Al Gore] birthday and they were celebrating. And so he says, "Sure." He knows me. And so then he said, "You can go in there and take in all your staff there." So one line, and here comes Clinton, and he sees my staff and he says, "Hi." He knows them because when he's running for office, this guy is kind of like politically active in Atlanta. So he says, "Oh, hi." I can't think of his name right now [Ozell Sutton].So part of our history was started with the church arson, but our nuts and bolts is community conflict, and it could be around all kinds of issues, but a lot of it centers around law enforcement. And so part of why Miss Reno selected me was even though she had filled positions everywhere, there was a problem with CRS with some problems with the Hill in trying to fund then because they didn't like the idea of civil rights, whatever. So she didn't fill the position. There were all kinds of people from the civil rights background or judges. This is actually a Latino seat. They sort of kind of divided up and said the attorney for civil rights will be black, and the CRS is going to be Latino, and then HHS, it will be an Asian. Somehow there was sort of kind of a little formula. And now we had Deval Patrick, wonderful civil rights thing. One day he'll probably be senator from Massachusetts. Anyway, he was there, and so I'm over at CRS. I don't know where I'm going with all that. [laughter]But anyway, so we were dealing with all kinds of issues, so we started doing a lot more collaboration, we said, with ATF and then with civil rights, but we found that we had so little staff to be able to deal with all the issues, whether it's hate crime or the kinds of police conflicts, so one of things I wanted to do was do a lot more training, and so I want to put on a national conference, and I want to bring in teams with law enforcement and whatever, religious or community. So I planned this five-hundred-person conference, and it's kind of tricky, but for the most part, Justice Department is pretty civil, and you don't mess around with Miss Reno there. But the problem people are the politicals. There's politicals all over in the office. Anyway, they decided they didn't want me to do this conference. In their mind, they want the money to have whatever they want to do. So here's my friend, he came from L.A. Police Commission, and now he is my boss, the associate director, number three at Justice, and he calls me and says, "Rose, we're going to have to cancel the conference. Miss Reno and I have discussed this." And he's waiting for my response, and he said, "Well, what do you have to say?" I said, "Well, I work for you and Miss Reno. Whatever you say is fine." And then he said, "Well, Miss Reno wants to know what you would recommend," because these little people are on the line. I could hear—anyway, the politicals that wanted the money.

PARKER

So when you say politicals, who are those people? The people on the Hill?

OCHI

No, in Janet's office. One of them I can't even think—his name is Richard, his name was. Anyway, he used to work for the associate. I'll talk about turnaround's fair later. But anyway, he wanted to do a conference. They don't have any money, and so they wanted my money.

PARKER

Got it, okay.

OCHI

So they made it up. So I said, "Well, you decide." And he said, "No, no. Miss Reno wants to know what you want." I said, "Well, what I would say is we're beyond the point of no return. Tickets have been bought, I've reserved the hotel, they've ordered the food. We're going to be stuck with the bill anyway, and so I think we should go forward." And then he said, "Okay, Rose. I will tell Miss Reno your decision." And he says, "Anything else, Rose?" I said, "Yes, I expect you to be there to open the conference with an opening address." [laughs]And anyway, he says, "Okay." Anyway, he's a good man. He did it probably because the "munchies" told him to do something. But you know, it's funny. The thing is, you look at me as pretty. I was pretty soft.

PARKER

You are pretty.

OCHI

—Asian woman, and they figure you could just walk all—Washington's very rough. I could talk about the White House, very rough, but I just only look sweet. I'm not mean and ugly, but, no, you can't push me. You're not pushing." Anyway, so we had this wonderful conference, and so what they did was deny me Miss Reno. She was supposed to come for the closing, and they said that she was out of town, but actually her schedule changed, and I knew that she was back on that last day, the third day. I called and I said, "I understand your schedule changed. Have her come by. It would be wonderful." Anyway, they don't tell her. They don't tell her to come. So what happens, I have Peter, Paul and Mary, one of the singers. I don't know whether it was Paul. Anyway, we had this closing thing, and I invited the solicitor general, the one that represents the U.S. in the Supreme Court. He's a delightful man. Anyway, I invited all these other people of the Roundtable that she does on Thursdays. Anyway, he had a ball. I mean, we're all singing Peter, Paul and Mary songs. [laughter]And he goes back to the meeting, and he said, "Oh, I had so much fun. When Rose puts on something, everybody come." And anyway, Miss Reno was so upset. She loves Peter, Paul and Mary, and they didn't tell her. But anyway, so I think they heard from her. But I grew up in Mayor's Office and I know it can get kind of tough in City Hall. Nothing like it, nothing. You go to the White House,

you know, they kill people before lunch. [laughter] And I, by that time, I'd been a lawyer and I'd been in City Hall. I said, "I don't want to fight anymore. I'm just more into feng shui."I remember when I was there packing up stuff, and we'd have these little disks, they'd be gone. And then you go to a meeting, somebody's giving you a proposal, and I said, "Whoa. I have to take this stuff home." But anyway, one day I had a new guy assigned to me, and he's kind of a personal friend of Lee Brown, and he was going to help on working with liaison to law enforcement. He was new, and he came to the executive staff meeting, and here is the chief of staff's assistant. She's a political woman from Rhode Island somewhere. She's a mean, ugly lady, but anyway, she was very clever and was very jealous too. Anyway, I made my presentation of a concept, and she jumped in and started criticizing it a little bit, and Lee's friend is now sitting there. I said, "Reisha [phonetic], those are excellent ideas. Why don't you and I sit down after this meeting and flush this out." Anyway, so we got the go-ahead, and later this guy comes over to me, said, "Rose, why did you do that?" I says, "Because it'll be another week before I can get the approval I need to move forward, and she just wants me to look bad." But she didn't really have anything to add. She didn't want to work. And anyway, so I said, "You can't worry about ego." I remember there was a bunch of little munchies that are all involved in more the liaison kind of stuff, and so they were planning a trip for the czar to California, and they were running around for a week, and anyway, they got nothing. So they're ready to go next week, and they come in to see me, and I had my own stuff, and they said, "Oh, can you help set up the czar's trip to California? We want Sacramento, we want San Diego," and this and that.

PARKER

This is the drug czar for Clinton?

OCHI

The drug czar. And I just said, "One, I will do this. This is very last minute. You should have told me earlier. I will do this. But, number two, get out of the way. Three, I'm going and so is George, my assistant. We've got to be doing this on the road." And then I just says, "Get out of the way, and you can take the credit." They all want credit. They're little people that don't know anything, and they just want credit. I said, "You can take the credit. I'll take the plan. Just get out of my way." And so we did alright. But I wouldn't recommend to many people to go to Washington, D.C. unless you know how to do hand-to-hand combat, really. [laughs] You can come naïve and very knowledgeable or talented, but so much of it is like when Lee Brown, he said to me, he said, "Rose, I want you to come and be my—." And I know. I already did that exchange where he said that I could have the job. But when we were talking one time, he said, "Rose, I want you to know that in Washington, they stab you

in the front." [Parker laughs.]And I said that when I'm at Justice, they were busy and were trying to reorganize, that they made me start working before I had kind of a ceremony. So now I had already been their boss for maybe several months, maybe half a year. And so they all know me, so they all get to come. Also I kind of build it around where staff come in from across the country. So it's kind of a fun thing. I got up there, and then we get sworn in, and then the staff gets up to say some stuff, and it's kind of nice. There's like one woman. Miss Reno loves this one guy. His name is Tommy [Thomas Battles]. I can't remember his last name, but he came out of Florida, and Miss Reno comes from Florida, and they have strife, you know, conflicts there. And she'd called Tommy, and Tommy'd go in there. He would mediate all this stuff. So she loved Tommy. Well, anyway, he got up there, and they were doing some of the accolades of their new boss who's fighting for them and this and that. But Miss Reno—I don't know. I'm so naughty. I got up there and I said, "Well, when I went in to my interview, I'm sitting at this huge waiting area, and then Miss Reno comes to take me back in her office, and I was kind of nervous." I said this gal, she's now like Jerry Brown's right-hand. They did a nice article about her. Her name is [Nancy] Ferguson. She had called me and she said, "Rose, when you see Miss Reno, don't get disconcerted. She may be so preoccupied, she won't say anything. She's got a lot of things on her mind." So I'm in her back office, and she doesn't say anything. She leads me back there. And I said, "Well, I'm Rose Ochi, and I'm interested in the position of such-and-such." And she said nothing. And I just said, "Well, this is my background, and this is what I will bring to the office." Nothing. And then I said, "Some of the thoughts of how I would like to—," something, "structure this and that." And nothing. And I said something else, "Well, I have some other ideas about what could be done," and stuff like that. Nothing. And I just said, "Miss Reno, I'm perfect for this job." She apparently had interviewed a lot of people who were judges and this, that, and whatever, and they were really looking for a Latino, but then they went and called and said they called Esteban Torres. I was his lawyer for the East L.A. incorporation, Lucille Roybal. I know her father because we're both in the Hall of Fame for Roosevelt. But I've been a supporter of her. I don't know who else they call, but the Mexicans or blacks or whatever, Julian Dixon. She's everything, but she's not Japanese. She couldn't take care of everybody. Anyway, so I said, "I'm perfect for this position." [laughter]And she said, "Well, I'll call the president." And I ran all the way back to my other office from way from the Hill all the way to the White House area. Anyway, I was very, very happy. So now I'm having this swearing-in ceremony, and I'm telling them about Nancy telling me don't get disconcerted because—and then I told one little thing I did this. And Miss Reno, she gets up there, and everybody's laughing. She says, "Rose!" See, lots

of time, she's not there; she's got so many things on her mind. But when you engage her with this story, she's funny. She gets up there, "Rose, that is not how I remember this. You talked so much, I couldn't get a word in edgewise." [laughter] Anyway, brought down the house.

PARKER

What were some of the things that—so that was the role where you were kind of doing similar community policing things, right? [unclear] police and community relations.

OCHI

Yes. There's a whole list of things. We'd put on conferences. I think I feel really good about—probably CRS was probably one of the most active CRSs in the history during my tenure. And besides the arson of churches, then we were doing hate-crime initiatives and national conferences. We were doing a lot of the community policing. And then we did something. There was some major incidents. Maybe it was probably the brutal dragging death in Texas. Yes. I'll think of his name in a minute. But anyway, so President Clinton says, "We need to—." This is one of my favorite moments in Washington. He said, "We need to do something about race." Most of the time the president says, "You don't want to go there," but ugly things that were happening beside the churches, and then you had James Byrd. He was tied on a truck and dragged, a brutal dragging death. Anyway, so this is one of my favorite days in Washington. I'd been asked to represent the Department of Justice to a meeting with the president and whoever else at the White House to discuss a race initiative. I take my portfolio and I arrive, and we're in this kind of inner office. And so there is the guy who's the Chicago mayor now.

PARKER

Rahm Emanuel.

OCHI

Rahm Emanuel. They're all kind of like his political as well his maybe programmatic or maybe news kind of related people in this room. No one had a pencil or paper. And so first the president spoke. I'm taking notes, listening. And then people would chime in and say something. I'd take notes. And then Al Gore says something and people contradict him, this and that and whatever. I'm taking notes. And then Hillary said something. I'm taking notes. Well, anyway, I looked at these people—this is new for me—and they all look like really smart people, but they've not been toilet-trained. I think it was a kind of a White House where people are empowered and they say what they want, but it was not the kind of respectful kind of relationship with your boss that I saw from the Mayor's Office, you know. Anyway, smart people, nobody taking notes, nobody listening to one another, and everybody wanting to be heard. I says this reminded me of kindergarten. But anyway, I went back and I did a

conference call with staff, and I says, "This is what I heard." So one of the guys from L.A. said, "All right, let me take some of this down." And then I took it, and we called it a race dialogue. And anyway, I put this document together, and we called it One America. And then we did a consultation. We brought in some of the organizations that have been in this area of trying—whether it was Jewish organizations, religious groups, all the [unclear].

PARKER

Interracial.

OCHI

Yeah. And just bringing all—and so we kind of refined on this, but very quickly. Then I took it to one of the meetings, but you can't discuss in a meeting with all these little White House people. So what I did is I slipped it to one person. And then Minyon Moore, she's an African American woman, she's very kind of personable. But anyway, we share all this. And then one lady, she likes to write speeches, so she might make some kind of word changes and stuff. It becomes their document. And then anyway, this woman—she was in the newspaper the other day—Sylvia Matthews was head of the race initiative, and I gave it to her, and she gave it to the president, and he wrote on it, "Thank you, Rose." I lost it. I have it somewhere. But anyway—

PARKER

What was the name of that document?

OCHI

"One America Dialogue." It used to be on the website, but then the Bush people took it off. And I told people, the new people, "You need to find it and leave it there, so people can use it as a resource." But anyway, we did the first one in Philadelphia, but we did this toolkit, so that all churches, any schools, whatever, everyone can use.

PARKER

So it's sort of a model for how to hold these dialogues.

OCHI

A process. It's not content so much, process. And then CRS people put on dialogues all over the country. Anyway, I went to a dinner, I think it was NAACP or something, and Sylvia was there. She says, "Rose, the president loves this." And she said it really helped her because she had a thorny issue, and he wanted to do something. But to forgive the people in the White House, they have to think I'm a press person, I'm a policy person. They come with their own view. But we're looking at how do you bring people to discuss their differences and find ways to come together, you know. So that's our process. So that's CRS. So anyway, it became the model and it became theirs, so they're not going to tear apart because I watched them. So anyway, the president loved

it, and I went to his museum or whatever in Little Rock, and there's a copy of the race dialogue there, and he wrote on my copy, he says, "Thank you, Rose."

PARKER

I'll have to look that up.

OCHI

Hmm?

PARKER

I said I'll have to look that up.

OCHI

Yeah. It was nice. So we did a lot of law enforcement stuff. At that time in Maryland, people really felt like I-95, that they were kind of profiling. That was an issue, so we did a conference on profiling. I remember I had then Bernard Parks come. We did everything during that time. He really was a minority black president. He understood. And then Miss Reno, she's great. I don't know whether she's gotten all the, I don't know, recognition, but she was very smart, and she brought in really good people, and she knew what she wanted.

PARKER

Were there specific changes or policies that you saw come out of some of those conferences and dialogues that were initiated by the CRS?

OCHI

Yeah, I think so, definitely, mainly, I think, in the area of law enforcement. We did a lot of stuff with police, whether find ways to keep from creating conflict, but then also helping them on—the IACP and a lot of these major law enforcement groups, somehow then they started. They would invite us. I know that I would participate in speaking, talking about how to deal with conflicts in the community. So there was a lot of partnerships, not only at the national, but we'd go to the black law enforcement or the Latino law enforcement organizations and speak. But the whole concept before, instead of just law enforcement doing their thing, is finding ways—this is even before. This is a combination of community policing, but it's how to deal with community conflicts or how to ameliorate or avoid conflicts. I said the word "ameliorate." [Parker laughs.]Anyway, so it was an amazing time. I was what she was looking for, someone that can work with the cops and the community. I was in a black thing, I was in a Mexican thing, I was in an Asian thing.

PARKER

Especially coming out of L.A., you'd had so much experience with all those different types of communities.

OCHI

Yes.

PARKER

And so then where did you—

OCHI

And they paid me too. That was so much fun.

PARKER

So did you transition into another role in Washington after that, or was that your last [unclear]?

OCHI

Well, no. I was there. And interesting, you know, when—who was elected after—

PARKER

Bush?

OCHI

Bush. Is that he picked an attorney general from the Hill, a very conservative kind of religious guy. Anyway, I'm on a term. It doesn't end with—but anyway, I would get invited to come to these meetings. I says, "You know I'm a holdover." And they says, "No. He said come, come." And I said, "While they're having a welcome reception?" "Come, come."

PARKER

This is the attorney general?

OCHI

Attorney general.

PARKER

Who was that?

OCHI

I can't remember his name, but he's the one, the Bush guy. He was a religious conservative, but he's a very kind, generous man, and so I didn't feel like I had to run back. So I had some things that I wanted to finish. And so then I didn't come back immediately, but when I did come back, a lot of young people that I had invested in when I was in the Mayor's Office, one of them was Darlene Kuba. She was sixteen when she went to City Hall.

PARKER

Wow.

OCHI

She was a high school student and she was working for Gil Lindsay, and she wanted to be a police officer, and so he sent her to me. He says, "She's criminal justice." And anyway, she's now my surrogate daughter. We've been very close. But she's now in power, or when I return. So Hahn says, "What do you want?" She said, "I don't want anything, but you give my mama whatever she wants." And she said, "What do you want?" I said, "Police commissioner." So that's how I became a police commissioner. I'd walk into town, and I'm police commissioner. Everybody said, "Oh, wow." Actually, there were a couple of other people that was close to the mayor, and so they wanted to take care of me.

PARKER

And so then you were on the Police Commission in L.A and after, when your term was up in the—

OCHI

So I was here. Yeah, I left and returned and I came—

PARKER

In the Bush administration.

OCHI

Yes.

PARKER

John Ashcroft. That was the attorney general.

OCHI

Yeah, thank you.

PARKER

That's what I was thinking. I just wanted to make sure I was right. [laughs]

OCHI

He loved to sing.

PARKER

Yeah.

OCHI

And so they call and they said, "Could you come to his swearing-in, the ceremony?" I says, "You sure?" I says, "Okay." It was a musical program. He likes to sing and he had all these people. It was a lovely program. Yeah, you know, he's a nice man.

PARKER

And so when you came back to L.A. and were on the Police Commission, who was the police chief at that time?

OCHI

Parks.

PARKER

Parks, okay. And what changes did you see kind of coming back to L.A. after having—

OCHI

It was very difficult—

PARKER

—left [unclear]?

OCHI

—because I grew up in City Hall with Parks. Parks is smart, hardworking, very open to new ideas. And so I worked with a lot of—John Smith, different young people, Bob Ruchoff. He was interested in gang intervention. You pick these guys, not hardline, just lock-them-up kind of guy. And anyway, Parks was

terrific. Anyway, I came back, and he was not the same guy I knew. He'd been now schooled under—I can't think of his name [Daryl Gates]. Anyway, he became pretty much more not the kind of guy that is collaborative. I would like to see him succeed, but I didn't see him wanting to collaborate with the commission. I think he figured that—he's very smart, and he thought he could do whatever he wants. And the commission, this is a new commission. They're going to assert their authority. And I see that happening, in the paper today, that they're not pleased that the commission was not advised about the tampering with the cameras. That's something that's serious, and that's not something that you keep from them, because they look foolish. Anyway, so the hardest thing I did was we decided not to keep Bernard Parks. It was very, very hard. It was very hard. And at some point, you know, it was so hard for me because I know all the black people because of the mayor, and I got a call from everybody, Jesse Jackson. But the interesting thing is Johnnie Cochran, probably the most kind of highly respected lawyer in the black community, he knows me very well, and he was an advisor to the mayor, and he knows exactly what's in my head, so he knows we're in sync, that he knew it didn't matter whether Bernard was black. He knew I was right, and he would let me know that. But I had people that were role models, like Vaino Spencer, judges, and other, like, Jewish friends that are really—like Tom Bradley's friends or friend. Anyway, a lot of people were really angry at me, but I felt in the long run that he—anyway, it turned out really well because he's done a really good job on the council. He became like a budget expert, and I think he's been an ethical voice on the coliseum commission. I think it's really sad. I can see that, you know, everybody there, they kind of gave away whatever to 'SC, and they now took the parking lots from the museum. You know, 'SC's very powerful, and the people, they got their way, and there's no kind of tradeoff for the museum and all, and he's the lone voice. I could see that, but anyway—

PARKER

But as police chief, he had moved to sort of—he'd moved more from a kind of framework where you were thinking of intervention and things like that, to law and order.

OCHI

Yeah. And community. It's—yeah, yeah.

PARKER

It's more punitive.

OCHI

Just more "suppression" is the word. Suppression versus finding ways to kind of prevent.

PARKER

Right.

OCHI

Yeah. Collaboration is an important key. He understood that, and then he changed. I don't know. But it was kind of hard for me. Like if I go to City Council afterwards for different things, like if they're going to honor me for Manzanar or something, he won't be there. But then if I see him, I [demonstrates] pat him because—but he hasn't warmed up to me. I think sometimes the worse things, you know, had he been chief, he wouldn't be in city council.

PARKER

Right. Again, it opened up a different opportunity.

OCHI

Yeah, so he's done a good job on city council.

PARKER

Who was he replaced by as chief of police?

OCHI

Big mistake was Willie Williams.

PARKER

Oh, that's right, yeah.

OCHI

Yeah. And so then—yeah, not a good choice.

PARKER

Why not?

OCHI

Hmm?

PARKER

Why not?

OCHI

Philadelphia, it's a big city, and you have to—I don't think he ever got—well, there's a lot of thing is culture, is like he's fat and chubby, and people in our department, up to a few years ago, they looked like the way they came out of the academy. I was just talking to somebody the other day. I said, "My god!" I look at some of these people that you would never go to them for help. [Parker laughs.] I said a lot of it has to do with diet and people are getting fatter and fatter and sedentary, but everything. If I was on a commission, I would—I don't know whether you can do that, but you'd probably have some kind of guides about expecting them to be able to run so fast or be able to—anyway.

PARKER

And so how long were you on the Police Commission?

OCHI

The full Hahn's term. But he kind of was fighting the secession effort in the Valley.

PARKER

Fight.

OCHI

That was it.

PARKER

That was the number-one focus.

OCHI

Yeah. And then Antonio won, and then now Garcetti, my view, I think he's very smart and he's free to make his decisions. I think Wendy would have been kind of a just like kind of beholden to the Riordans and all the people that put money into a campaign. So like Villaraigosa, he's sitting there focusing on school district issues, but, you know, I know people who are on the board. It's like Riordan, his law firm would get the contracts or some of their friends get all the building stuff. They're not going to give them to kids. They don't give a damn about kids. It's money. Oh, my. I'm going all over the place. [recorder turned off]

PARKER

Okay. So we're back on.

OCHI

What are we going to talking about?

PARKER

So after you were on the Police Commission—you were on the Police Commission through Mayor Hahn's term.

OCHI

Yes.

PARKER

And then you transitioned from there to the Institute?

OCHI

Well, at the same time, while I was serving on the commission, the collaboration was performed with LAPD, L.A. Sheriff, and the State of California. Actually, the leadership was provided for financing, creating this joint crime lab on the Cal State Los Angeles campus. I guess the leaders were Bob Hertzberg, he at the time was Speaker of the Assembly, and also Gray Davis.Anyway, today the building stands, and the university wanted to support this collaboration by developing an institute to provide training and public forums, public education, as well as other things such as raising scholarship money for the forensic students, and I became the director. I was sort of brought in to kind of create the concept and create a board and bring in money. My first thing, I got an earmark from Lucille Roybal, probably maybe about close to a million dollars, and then, thereafter, I think I got one from Adam Shiff to develop some more DNA training and help to clear the backlog of both

Sheriff and LAPD, and I was working on Judy Chu's earmark. But then they said no more earmarks. But at the same time we applied for grants and then we put on some trainings that were cost-free. I think one important area was our policy forum. For example, we did one in City Hall where we have chamber full. It was on identification lineups, and what we did is changed it so you can get what you would call continuing education points. So the public defenders, the city attorneys, and the D.A.'s, they came and we put it in City Hall, made it convenient for them. So we would have a full house, and so it was not only to educate—part of the idea was to educate our criminal justice system leaders. For example, I think we had Chief Moore representing LAPD, and we had Lee Baca. Lee Baca, interesting, in his remarks, after he heard the presentation, he suggested that that's where they are going. And actually LAPD process was, in the view of our experts and presenters, not up to par with law enforcement standards, and that could lead to an erroneous identification. So it's a wonderful thing for the audience to learn, but for the interaction amongst the criminal justice leaders, and then we'd have the public defender there, we'd have the D.A., Steve Cooley, always participated in all my forums. Some forums I would talk about—this is pre-backlog, where we're talking about the need to allocate more resources for forensic services. You have law enforcement. You keep increasing the capacity. However, if you don't add more criminalists, then you're going to have a backlog.

PARKER

Regardless of whether [unclear].

OCHI

And this is way back. And then we're doing meetings on how to deal with the backlog and stuff. So then this is when we got the shift, million dollars to help clear the backlog at L.A. We brought in students and trained them to help the criminalists in processing them. But anyway, it was a wonderful concept and was realized with the cooperation with all the entities: LAPD, L.A. Sheriff and the state and the feds. That's something I like to do is try to bring new things together and create collaborations for a mutual goal. So I enjoyed that. And now for the last year or so, I've had a little quiet time, so it's a wonderful time to be reflective about my career. But now in a few months, after I kind of try to remember my story and try to commit it to writing, I think I'm ready to go back to work. I don't want to be bored. I tried. I did a major fundraiser for Friends of Manzanar for Manzanar, and oh, my god, is that a lot of work. We put on a musical program and a silent auction, and I decided that it would be easier for me to go to work and write a big check.

PARKER

Well, thank you so much, Rose.

OCHI

Oh, I had fun. I had fun. And you're going to share some of that with me. That way I can—yeah, at some point—[End of April 16, 2014 interview]

Date: