Interview of Joel Jacinto
UCLA Library, Center for Oral History Research, University of California, Los Angeles Interview of Joel Jacinto

Transcript

SESSION ONE (July 7, 2011)

0:00:24.2

CLINE:

Today is July 7th, 2011. This is Alex Cline. I'm interviewing Joel Jacinto at my home, strangely enough, in Culver City, California. Joel's house is getting some work done on it, and we didn't really want to have the accompaniment of hammering—

JACINTO:

(laughs) It's true.

CLINE:

—and pounding and things. This worked out at the last minute. So, good morning.

JACINTO:

Good morning, Alex. Thank you for having me here and for being flexible. This is great. Your home is wonderful. I'm familiar with the area, and just to see all these familiar things, these idiophones here, you know, makes me feel right at home, so, good.

CLINE:

I'm sorry it isn't more organized, but we do what we can do.

JACINTO:

Perfect.

CLINE:

These interviews always start at the beginning. We tend to go chronologically, but, you know, detours are welcome. I'll start with the perennial first question, which is where and when were you born?

0:01:43.6

JACINTO:

Good question. Was born in San Francisco, California, December 10th, 1962, the product of an immigrant family from the Philippines. My mother was in the Foreign Service, Department of Foreign Affairs, so she was part of the diplomatic corps, and at the age of probably her late thirties, along with my family who, between them, already had three children at, like, nine, eight, and two, decided that life in America might be better for them.

My father was a working architect and my mother was part of the corps, so on her ability to get reassigned somewhere in the world, they chose San Francisco, California, as their point of entry at the old Ferry Building. In 1961 they packed up on a plane and left with three children in tow, the five of them, to start their new life. When I look back at that, I just—at midlife, basically picking up and going to another country, saying, "Hey, we can get a better life here," it's amazing to me. So that was September 1961, and about a year later, they—I don't know if it was a mistake or not, but I happened, and I came in December of 1962, about fifteen months after they had come, after they arrived. So I was the American-born. I was the different one than them, the bunso. Bunso, b-u-n-s-o, is the term for the youngest, and as the youngest, you're afforded all those things in that role that you play in life, in familiar life, where you get picked on but you get spoiled, and you're everybody's favorite because usually the youngest is. So I enjoyed growing up in the Richmond District of San Francisco, Alex, a very happy life, a very middle-class life. My parents, we had no pretension. We had relatives here, but basically my parents worked, and we just grew up in, you know, the urban setting. So that was our village, playgrounds and parks, movie theaters, and friends and age-mates. So that was my early childhood. I went to school at a Catholic school about two and a half blocks away, Star of the Sea Academy. Incidentally, that's where Grace (Gracie Allen), George Burns' wife, went.

0:03:55.8

CLINE:

Oh, interesting, okay. Gracie Allen.

JACINTO:

Yes, Gracie Allen. It was in the Richmond District, so it was very close by, and we spent twelve years in our home. It was an old Victorian. Around our home it was called the Richmond District, Clement Street. It was very famous for being very multicultural. You have Label's (Table) Delicatessen was there. You had Man Hing Market, Chinese dim sum and everything like that. You had the Holy City Zoo, where Robin Williams got one of his early gigs, was right around the block. So I grew up in a very immigrant, Russian, Eastern European, Chinese—we were one of the few Filipino families in the neighborhood, but very, very multicultural. These were my playmates, these people, older guys, you know. My brother's eight years older, so at that time growing up they would be doing bad things underneath the bleachers, and we would be there watching them, saying, "Wow, we're going to grow up one day and do those." (laughter) But it was a very urban thing, basketball and sports and schooling, nothing extraordinary. So family life was very blessed in terms of being able to just have a good setting, parents who loved me and who worked a lot, too, you know. So both my parents were very dedicated to their careers. Father was an architect, Mom traveled a lot later on when I was about ten years old. So fast forward to—if you want to catch me and go back and ask questions, go ahead.

CLINE:

I'll catch you then. You mentioned your parents. Let's start with your father. What do you know about his family background and sort of his roots?

JACINTO:

Jaime Jacinto, my father, was born in 1925 and passed away in 1993 at the age of sixty-eight, and his family life in the Tagalog family, which Tagalog's one of the major languages in the Philippines, they usually adopt the Chinese style of naming the children. So the eldest is kuya, eldest female is (unclear). The second is diche. So there's the terms, number-one son, number-two son.

0:06:10.6

CLINE:

Right, the numbers, yes.

0:07:48.2

JACINTO:

Right. I think my father was san go, which is the number-three son. He was one of twelve. Imagine, a tremendous family, the Jacinto family. My grandfather, Alfredo Jacinto, was, in the early part of the century, not a diplomat, but he was an administrator within the American framework of government in the Philippines. He took a civil service test and was found to be proficient, so the early government—this is before Commonwealth (of the Philippines), the Republic of the Philippines, before 1946—put him to work being a provincial treasurer, being a provincial mayor, actually becoming the mayor of the first chartered city, Cebu (City). Cebu's a very famous city in the Visayas region too. So Alfredo was a very esteemed individual and later became the Commissioner of Customs in the Philippines, which is a pretty high-level ranking. So he had all these different children and children outside of children. My father, I think, my grandfather kept him close because he wanted to monitor him, for whatever reason I don't know. So he kept him with him. My father traveled with my grandfather and then studied architecture. So my grandfather was the type that was very exact in that he would determine his sons and my uncles' careers and really guide them into what they should be doing. With twelve or fourteen in the household, is incredible, but, you know, that's life in the early forties.

So Jaime, my father, was a very hard worker, very quiet. I think when you grow up with fourteen siblings, you don't get to talk that much, you know what I mean, because everybody's talking at the same time. They would tell me later on in life that he was pretty quiet. "Your dad was pretty quiet." And so my relationship with my father was, of course, one of love and that, but I don't remember a lot of interaction and I don't remember a lot of heart-to-heart talks, although my father demonstrated the paternal love that just was so unconditional, that I really benefited. Only as you grow up do you remember that. So he worked hard. He was a golfer. He drank socially. He drank fiercely. He was very famous for holding court amongst my older brothers' friends and his compadres, Alex. So he really was very jovial and very adept in that. And he smoked as well, too, which is what a lot of males did at that time too. So he fizzled out early. He had a good life, but he checked out a little bit early at sixty-eight. At the end of his life, we became closer when I was able to share with him some of the things I had been doing, like working in the community and my folk arts organization, so I was very happy that he was alive for our wedding, to see our union and to see the beginnings of the life that I would have now. So my father's relationship and I was really good, very spartan, you know, so I tend to be not the opposite, but I tend to be very cognizant of that with my own son (Kai Jacinto), but in the end, sometimes you turn into your father. (laughs)

0:09:34.7

CLINE:

True. That's transmission for you.

JACINTO:

Yes, genetic. Collective unconscious. It happens no matter what. But I have fond memories of my father, the provision, just the duty to family and to community, to a larger degree. He was very famous for having hired a lot of Filipino draftsmen in his firm, which is a firm up in the Bay Area called Davy McKee, and they did a lot of architectural engineering. So he gave opportunity, he gave access, he serviced his fellow countrymen, (unclear), by getting them jobs, and they were, of course, qualified. So he really had a lot of compadres. So I learned about this issue of having compadres at a very early age, not only hearing my father speak to these gentlemen in the way that they were good friends—I know they weren't relatives, but they were compadre, compadre in a good sense, and that really helped me build my service ethic about what am I doing for my fellow compadres or countrymen. So that's Jaime. He was a golfer. That was his sport, you know. He didn't do much of cultural stuff. That generation was very just, you know, all about the family life, and as urban contemporary Filipinos, you know, that colonial mentality was still there, where we're not really so much traditional in the expressive arts, but, of course, in the psyche and the idea of culture, we were very Filipino in that, Filipino American, but not so much in the expressive arts. So that's father. Mother, Luz Bertha Angeles, was also born in 1925, passed away in 2001 of metastatic breast cancer, and so she had that for about four years. She had a mamectomy (sic).

CLINE:

Mastectomy.

0:11:35.70:13:58.60:15:43.8

JACINTO:

Mastectomy earlier, about ten years earlier, and then she had that. So she survived my father.

She was the diplomat, the mother of the household, you know, the entertainer. I think I sort of get some of my expressiveness and my diplomacy from her, because everybody became her friend, you know, and she built very strong relationships on her ability to engage and to create, I think, instant kinship. People would tell me, "We loved your mom. She was just a wonderful woman," not in the sense that she was very passive, but she was very proactive about reaching out and keeping in contact. So she was in the right line of work in terms of being a diplomat. So with her, she was also hardworking, but she ran us as a household very well and she was a very doting Filipino mother. As her youngest, she tended to keep me under her wing more than my brother and sister. As her being expressive, you know, I think I picked that up in terms of wanting to explore, whether it be just playing the piano or dancing in front of a consulate party where I was imitating Michael Jackson at the age of five. She would encourage that. So I think that was a very important part of that it's okay, it's good, and it pleases my parents when we do these things, either play the piano—and all of us played the piano. The piano was the fifth child in our household because it's also the sign of not prestige, but of means, that you have now just—you're past sustaining yourselves, that you are into expression. So amongst Filipinos and maybe other countries, a piano was definitely a sign of some sort of status, a moderate social status too. So I remember going to a lot of different parties in the Philippine Consulate because again, it was the diplomatic corps, so I was always around people. At an early age they would get me up to dance, and parties, and sing. My sisters,

my two oldest sisters would do that. My eldest sister would do that with me, too, as well, so I kind of got into this habit of just sort of going and going and putting on with the Jim Morrison, "Come on, baby, light my fire," or those things that were—Michael Jackson, you know, the Jackson Five. So those things, I think, shaped me, to a certain degree.

So my mother, she worked very hard, the diplomatic corps, went back to the Philippines. So when I was ten, I was going to mention—in 1973 when I was ten, my mother brought me to the homeland for a summer. And as a ten-year-old not knowing anything about the Philippines, and on the plane ride over there, landing, you know, I said something to my mother and it stuck in her mind. She goes, "Mom, I think I'm going to like it here," and I just had no pre-concept of what it would be like, but immediately (unclear) on the plane and, you know, being welcomed by your kin, your extended family. Remember, my dad is one of fourteen, so I had a hundred cousins, you know, that were various degrees of proximity to us, and my father and my mother lived also in a compound. A compound was basically a center courtyard surrounded by a number of houses. In the Philippines that was the pre-World War II type of—for families that had large families, what they would do. So they grew up in that. So at ten, being exposed to the Philippine culture, my family was really shaping for me as well, too, and I really had a good time that summer, and just knowing about family, knowing that this is where I'm from, this is where my parents are from, even though I play basketball, even though—and I've got to say the aside for all of this is that I grew up in San Francisco and physically I don't look Filipino. That's just it. People would always mistake me for Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and even my own family would call me "Koreano," a Filipino term for—(unclear), "You don't look Filipino."

So they would kid me, but it affected me, and I think to a certain degree not a very profound way. I'm not damaged for it, but it always was in the back of mind. It's like, man, I'm Filipino and my parents are Filipino, but I don't look Filipino, so how's that going? So I didn't know how to come to grips with it till later on in life, till I would learn about issues of identity and diversity within even the Filipino culture, because as I say, I don't look Filipino, but we do have Chinese and Spanish blood in us, as many Filipinos do, so being very Chinese-looking, but also having some sort of light-colored eyes, you know, I was really just like an anomaly, even amongst my family, too, as well. So the idea of it, it would push me later on in life, I think, I want to connect with my Filipino-ness. If I don't look Filipino on the outside, then I want to connect on being Filipino on the inside. So it really was, I think, a driver for me in many ways to seek out my own roots, to seek out my own being, what was me, because I identified as very Filipino. I didn't identify as Chinese, not because I didn't want to be Chinese or of Chinese origin, but culturally all I knew was I'm Filipino. Whatever we are, whatever we are today is basically what I want to be identified as. So when you're visually pegged for something that you don't identify with, there's dissonance in that in growing up, and some it wasn't that bad, you know what I mean. It's totally fine now because it's a gimmick for me now, Alex, but it did sort of shape me and, you know, just sort of drive me and sort of tweak me here and there amongst my friends. I was very sensitive about not looking Filipino.

0:00:13.0

CLINE:

What do you know about your mother's family background?

JACINTO:

Artists. Again, she came from another large family. She was one of twelve, I believe, the Angeles family. I never met my mother's parents. They died relatively young in the Philippines. But I realize I think my grandfather was a schoolteacher, and I don't know what my grandmother did. But my mother comes from a family of artists where they really value the arts. My Uncle Carlos Angeles was the first winner of a national poetry award in the Philippines, a writer's award, a literary award called the (Don Carlos) Palanca (Memorial) Awards (for Literature). Carlos Palanca was a very famous poet in the Philippines. So in the modern era he was the first awardee of this prestigious award akin to something from the NEA (National Endowment for the Arts), you know, in terms of literary arts, an award. So she was very proud of that, and although I never really turned out to be a writer, my brother turned out to be the writer, that I would recognize Uncle—because my mom would show me his poems and his stories. My mother's family, because they were in the Philippines and L.A., in Los Angeles, I didn't really get to know them till I became an adult. In San Francisco it was mainly my father's side, so I identified much more with my—my father had a few siblings that lived in San Francisco around the Bay Area, so we saw them every other weekend, and I grew up with my younger cousins. I don't have a cousin that is exactly my age, so it was about four years younger and eight years, so I was kind of the older cousin, even though I'm the youngest of my family. That's my family in terms of my mom.

0:19:32.9

CLINE:

How much do you think having your father's relatives be in the San Francisco area influenced his decision to relocate there?

JACINTO:

I think that it was one of the major ones, because my mother and my father were one of the first ones—so as part of the diplomatic corps, you bring your household members. So, actually, my mom and my father were sort of the pioneers that brought over other—they petitioned at that time. Remember, in 1961 it was pre-'65.

CLINE:

Yes, that's right, anti Asian immigration.

JACINTO:

So it was the diplomatic corps that was the ticket. So my mom was the ticket for elder aunts and for siblings, and I believe that she did sponsor a lot of people, again, pre—you know, it's only a few thousand Filipinos coming in pre-'65 before the immigration thing too. So my mom and dad were here. Now, I think a lot of people said, "Okay, it's good because Jaime and Luz Bertha are here and they seem to be doing well. Let's try." So my father had a younger brother and two younger sisters that came over and an elderly aunt, as well as we had second cousins that were here already, too, as well. My mom didn't have really family here in the Bay Area, up in the Bay Area. They were here in Los Angeles, so that's why I don't know much about the Angeles side. My mom's an Angeles and my dad's Jacinto. I know much more about the Jacinto side.

0:20:56.1

CLINE:

Now let's talk a little about your siblings. Let's get their names and what your relationship was like with them.

0:22:59.5

JACINTO:

Correct. Well, the eldest of us four would be Maria Eloisa (Jacinto). In the Philippines culture, all the females, you would give them "Maria," no matter what, because they're going to get a Catholic name. So she was Maria Eloisa. So we would contract that to Mariel, okay, nine years older than me, born in the Philippines, like a second mom to me, too. We're very, very close because we are that far apart, you know, almost like—nine years isn't huge, but she was old enough to really look out after me and really nurture me as a younger brother, you know. I just saw her over the weekend over a wedding, and it's always good to see her. She went to school locally, went to school in San Francisco and just stayed in that area pretty much her whole life. So she has three children and married a gentleman from—not a childhood sweetheart; a teen sweetheart, Ilocano. His name is Jojo Valdez. So they have three. She has a child in New York who's an artist, who's a dancer off of Broadway, has a daughter that lives in Hawaii, and a youngest one that lives in Hawaii as well too. So she has three children. So Mariel, I got along very well with her because we were pretty much far apart, like a second mom too. She works for the executive assistant for a property management company, I think, Shorenstein (phonetic) or some big firm off of Market Street in San Francisco. She's in the business world. My only brother, who's a very pivotal person in my life, too, is Jaime (Jacinto), Jr. Jaime is a product of the sixties and seventies growing up too. So I always peg him for all my bad habits, and get into the big brother, right, eight years older and stuff like that. You learn stuff from him, too, but he's also your idol. He's also your role model. He's also the person who beats you up and who tortures you in a very familiar way. (laughter) You know what I mean?

Jaime, he is a founding member of the Kearny Street Workshop writers' group, an Asian American writers' workshop out of San Francisco, which in the seventies was really the epicenter of sort of Asian American literary arts activism at a time that was very pivotal in this field. So Jaime was a poet. He

followed after my uncle. I think growing up in the sixties really formed him to be a part of the whole movement, not so much the hippie movement. It was more of just, you know, the activist movement and the self-reflection. So he is a published author. He is a winner of a Bay Area Book Award winner, and he went into ethnic studies. He went into ESL (English as a Second Language). So in 1978 he went with my mom to live in Mexico City. So there's three years that my mom was in Mexico City, and Jaime went with her, you know, because he had graduated. He was in college. He went to (University of California) Davis and then (University of California) Santa Cruz in fine arts. Critical writing was his collegiate degree. So he went over there and he met the love of his life. Her name is Victoria, and she was also part of the consular corps, her father. So my mother and her father worked together, so they became friends and romance. So he married. She's a mestiza-Bicolana Spanish, so she's part Filipino, part Spanish. So Jaime took very much to the Mexican, the Hispanic culture, became fluent in Spanish and began to teach and really became an educator. So he put in a lot of years in San Francisco State (University), where he taught ESL and taught in the College of Ethnic Studies.

0:24:54.4

CLINE:

That was like the big thing then.

JACINTO:

Yes, so he really represents that. These Upward Bound programs that take inner-city youth and really step to college, that was really his field of nurturing, being an educator, mentor. So he continued to do that. He has two daughters with Victoria. One is Camille, and Alexis. So, two daughters, and the eldest one just had a baby, so there's a generation, although he didn't have offspring, male offspring. I got the responsibility of doing that. He has a grandson now that is a male in his line. So Jaime now, in his mid fifties, lives in Hilo, Hawaii, on the big island, and he runs a Japanese immersion school that's based in Hawaii, but sends Japanese foreign students for two very intensive English learning experiences in Hawaii, of all places. So it's been ongoing. So he's a vice president there. He's the headmaster of the school and he takes care of all these Japanese students like that too. So he's very worldly. Jaime is very worldly, traveling to Mexico, learning languages like Mandarin. He wanted to learn about our Chinese culture because of our ethnic background, and then Hilo, Hawaii, dealing with Japanese. So Jaime is very much the linguist and the world traveler, so to speak, and he's a role model, too, because, again, of the arts. With him, as I got older, it changed from being kuya, which is "older brother," a term for "older brother," to now he's, of course still my kuya, but we have a reciprocal relationship where I develop my cachet and my career. So he looks to me and recognizes me for my accomplishments as well as just always my older brother. So it's very nice. I don't see him that often, but we do keep in contact and we do follow each other's careers and I do want to visit them. I visit him every few years on the big island, and we're due for one, a rite of passage for Kai, my eldest. Around eleven or twelve, I think, is when it happens, when everything blossoms, so I'm due to bring him for a little rite of passage with Jaime next year.

0:27:20.4

CLINE:

Cool.

JACINTO:

Yes. So that's Jaime, my older brother, second. Then third one of us is another female, Josephina (phonetic), or Joji (phonetic) was her nickname too. She's almost four years older than me, about three years, nine months. Because we're closer in age, we have closer-in-age dynamics of intimacy and fighting and struggle like that too. Joji lives now in one of the most exclusive neighborhoods in Hawaii, called Portlock, which is right before you go to Hanauma Bay and this bay called Maunalua Bay. "Maunalua" means two mountains. Her backyard is basically a whole bay. She lives a little (unclear), a little up from the water, and in the distance in her backyard from her infinity pool and her 40-foot lanai opening, indoor/outdoor living, she can see the backside of Diamond Head.

CLINE:

Oh, wow.

0:29:05.50:31:01.30:33:17.2

JACINTO:

Top 1 percent real estate in Hawaii. Her husband is a Hapa Hawaiian that she met at Marin (County), at San Francisco State from Marin. They have inherited a business from his father, Arnie's (phonetic) father, was health insurance. So Joji lives a very charmed and a very blessed life, and I'm so happy for her because she shares that with us, too, as well. So defining things about my sister Joji is that we nicknamed her "Queenie." It's okay. I know this is going to go on the thing, too, but she was always—the middle child, you know, especially when they like to be special, so Joji was the high-maintenance one out of all of us.

We fought a lot because of, I think, that age thing like that. Only till we did move away did we start to appreciate each other a little bit more, too, but I'm really happy for her now because of the life that she has and how she's brought up her children. She has three children, her and Arnie, two of them in Hawaii and one is just a graduate from USF. So she provided a very good life for them, her and her husband in Hawaii, and they invite us often to come to Hawaii, even though, you know, it costs a pretty dime to get over there. But when we're there, they basically take care of us. So she's there now and very much into philanthropy and volunteerism. She runs a family and really works with Arnie to help him run his business. She's also involved in the hula. Strange, but I will say this as an aside, that Hawaii and the

mystique and the experience of Hawaii as just a group of islands, but not just as a group of islands, but as a process and as a frame of mind, Alex, has really drawn our family westward. So at an early age in high school I began to travel to Hawaii in the summers and winters to spend time with my godfather. My godfather was my basketball coach, like my erstwhile father. His name is Morris Baker (phonetic), or Morrie Baker, who I met when I was ten years old as a fifth-grader playing basketball. You know, you talk about those special coaches that you have in your life. Well, I'm forty-eight now. We've had a thirty-eight-year relationship where we maintained that not only as a basketball coach, but just becoming a second father. So he latched onto me and I latched onto him in terms of relationship of basically erstwhile father and son.

You talk about nurturing. You talk about how my father was very spartan, of course, and that was a very Filipino way. You weren't very demonstrative. They called it c____ with your children, you know, because you had so many, many. You're a disciplinarian. You've just got to keep them in line, right? You can't let them think that you love them. (laughter) But Morrie was the nurturing party. He never was my father, but he was my basketball coach. He turned me on really to the ways of life, and so wherever he went, he'd say, "Joel, you want to come visit me? You want to stay with me?" So that was a very pivotal part of my life, Alex, the Hawaii experience, again, that I'm talking about. So I started spending summers and winters with him when I was a junior in high school and we continued for a few years. Over those course of the two or three years and the summers and winters and my own development, my own personal development, Alex, was tremendously fundamental in my appreciation, in my want to learn about others as well, mainly the Hawaiian culture. So I began—the Hawaiian and Pacific Islander culture, began this love affair with dance. I don't know how, because I was used to dancing in front of the consulate parties. From the consular parties comes dancing on cruise ships, on Sunset Cruises, where here I was this mainland boy, I was sort of brown, you know, looked Asian, so I kind of fit the roles, so they used to give me these gigs where I would dance on the Sunset Cruise and learn these Pacific Islander dances. So that was cool. That was fun when you're seventeen and eighteen, right, very exciting when I joined it, but what I realized is that I needed to immerse myself in the local culture to understand what one's doing. It wasn't just about dancing. So that was one of the first times at about seventeen or eighteen that I sort of grasped sort of this concept, what I would later understand at an emic point of view of culture, not just what you do, what you imitate from others, but what's going on, what are the values behind it, what's the context of all this, and it would really shape me in my drive to want to learn hula.

Eventually when I was eighteen at UCLA—so I graduated from high school. I went to a very accomplished high school in San Francisco called Lowell High School, very smart high school. I wasn't very smart, although I graduated from there. At the end of my time there, I was going to apply to a college, so I checked this box on the application, the UC (University of California) system, because I said, "Hey, man, I want to go to UCLA because I saw this Filipino guy play basketball there one year." That was Raymond Townsend. Raymond Townsend was the first player of Filipino descent ever to play in the NBA, and he was a guard under Coach (John) Wooden. So when I was twelve or thirteen, fourteen, junior high and high school, it was Bruins. It was Bill Walton. I was depressed when they lost that one year, right, when their eighty-eight-game winning streak lost. So you have all those people that played, Kiki Vandeweghe, all those people, all those stars, you know, made me really want to go to this college. So I checked a box on the application that had an equal opportunity program. I don't know why. Someone just told me, said, "Check that. You might have a better chance of getting in." Came out of high school with a 3.4 and an SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test) of 1100. That's Bell curve medium. I didn't stand out at all. I don't think my essay was halfway coherent as well. But by checking that box, they had an outreach program UC system-wide in 1981, targeted Filipinos as underrepresented Asians, African American, Hispanic, Latina, and Filipinos, only Filipinos, in the UC system from the time that the population of statewide high school seniors to the incoming freshman group. So there was a special outreach program. So I got in through a program, a special outreach program, and only later when I was

at UCLA in my first two years did I realize that I was a part of this AAP (Academic Advancement Program), Advanced Placement, and AAP, the whole movement at UCLA that targeted underrepresented groups. So when I got to UCLA in 1981, September 1981, comes another important chapter, and I need to stress this.

0:35:33.2

CLINE:

We may wait on this. I want to back up.

JACINTO:

Please do.

CLINE:

We'll get to UCLA.

JACINTO:

Guide me on this journey.

CLINE:

Couple of things. One, your erstwhile father. This is someone you met in San Francisco, but somehow he wound up in Hawaii.

JACINTO:

Wound up on the big island.

CLINE:

So how did that happen? Maybe as part of that you could explain sort of a little bit what you know about his background and the kind of person he is, because he's clearly not Filipino. What about him?

0:36:27.5

JACINTO:

Well, Morrie Baker is a very—how should I say? Came from a Jewish family from Pennsylvania, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, went to Penn(sylvania) State (University). He's sixty-nine years, so he's twenty-one years older than me, too, as well. So he just migrated his way westward after going to Penn State and said greener pastures. You know, he had that very spirit.

So, ended up in San Francisco, of course, which is a great place to be if you're a single male, and was married first. I remember his first wife. It was a very conservative Jewish wedding. And we didn't like her and she didn't like us. We met her. That was his first wife. When he first met us, he was married to Gail, and we didn't get along with her because she thought we were just too much rambunctious kids, so he got rid of her. No, I don't mean that lightly. But that marriage ended. So Morrie was an entrepreneur. He got involved in real estate, so he didn't work for anybody but himself. Being a self-made made, he's a businessman. He sold pens. He did a bunch of different things like that. But somehow he actually met my older brother first. He put an ad in the local paper. He lived like four blocks away from us in the Richmond District, put an ad in the paper, said, "Hey, I need some kids to help me clean my apartment up," or whatever. So he met my older brother, my older brother and his friends and a couple of his age-mates. So Morrie knew Jaime and a couple of his friends. So he became friends with them, and then my brother told him, "Hey, I've got this younger brother in fourth grade." They went 0-and-9. So we lost every game when we were fourth grade. We were traumatized, Alex. We were the bottom. We were terrible. We didn't win a game in fourth grade. We were nine-year-old guys playing basketball. So Morrie, because he was sports fan, coached us in fifth grade. So in fifth grade, which is the first year that I met him as my basketball coach, he turned us around from 0-and-9 to winning city championships, 11-and-0 in our league.

0:38:08.9

CLINE:

Wow.

0:39:52.1

JACINTO:

From 0-and-9, just 100 percent, just a 360- or 180-degree turnaround, Alex, was really pivotal in terms of visioning what could happen if you apply yourself, if you believe in yourself. So he nurtured us and he trained us well. So that really locked in our relationship, too, with this guy who—and not only did he coach us well, but he would nurture us. He would take us out to eat. He could feed a whole team at like twenty bucks at McDonald's back in the day, right? I had age-mates of other Filipino guys. Three of us were pretty much pals. We would sit and ride in his old Karmann Ghia. He would turn us on to the ways of single male. So we were very inquisitive young boys, and he would help educate us as to the ways of life. I'll be very PC (politically correct) about that too. (laughs) But we became of age hanging out with Morrie. So about him, he then got involved in real estate and bought and sold some houses in the Panhandle and part of Divisadero and part of San Francisco. He made a little bit of money. So in like 1978 or '79 when I was, like, in eighth grade, he decides that he's going to go to the big island of Hawaii. I don't know what drove him to Hawaii, but he says, "I'm going to buy some land. I'm going to buy a piece of property in Hawaii." So he was in between marriages and he was seeing this one other second wife, so he decides that he's going to buy a plot of land on the big island of Hawaii on the Kona coast on the west side, on the dry side, and he's going to build a house. I go, "Wow. What a trip." I was still in high school.

So he left to do that, but then he invited me to start coming and staying with him on the summers and winters with them, on his dime. He'd bring me out there and just take care of me and stuff like that. So my parents said, "Great," because my parents trusted—they knew him, Morrie, they knew he had his best interest, they knew that he really loved me. So I started doing that.

CLINE:

That was my next question.

0:41:46.1

JACINTO:

Yes, and my parents were cool with it, too, although my dad didn't like it because Morrie used to indulge us. He used to let us drive his cars. My dad didn't want me driving his cars and going out late and night, too, so there was a little bit of tension there, but he had good relationships with my father because he was a family friend. So those summers and winters, Alex, in Hawaii on the big island just being exposed to a local culture really shaped my being today, and Morrie, he just let it happen. He encouraged me. He just kept saying, "Hey, you could do this. You could do that," help me get a job on the Sunset Cruise, you know, so start my lifelong profession of being an entertainer, to a certain degree. You know what I mean? So I have nothing but love for him, and I still keep in contact with him. He's like a grandfather to my boys. He lives now in Scottsdale (Arizona). So he, after getting married—his second marriage was in Hawaii, and I'm eighteen, I'm his best man. We're sitting under a chupa in Kona, Hawaii, on the lanai of his half-finished house, you know. Then a year later, his son David

(Baker) is born on the big island of Hawaii, and I become his godfather, and I learn how to sing the baruchas over his bris, the prayers over this guy's bris, phonetically. It was a trip, but that was sort of, you know, just very not avant-garde, but very progressive. He said, "Joel, I'm going to teach you these prayers, and these are the prayers that you do over this bris," and a bris is a circumcision, right, for a Jewish male. So I did that and became godfather to his son.

Then he moved to Scottsdale a few years back, and we have mutual friends that we connected on Facebook. It was incredible, too, after thirty years, finding all these people like that too. So now Morrie's in Scottsdale and his son grows up and he has a couple of other marriages.

CLINE:

Oh, wow.

JACINTO:

So he really didn't find the right one, you know, and I always wanted for him the best in life because he gave me the best in life. You know what I mean? So I've seen him, and the current woman that he's with, Marsha now, is the one for him, and I'm glad that he found the woman. He had to find, I think, the right combination, so he had like four, four marriages.

CLINE:

Wow. Amazing.

JACINTO:

But still to this day, every conversation, every interaction would be one of nurturing, of encouragement, of affirmation that you could do anything and you just dominate play because that's the person you are. So we talk about not inflating, but to just nurturing and to driving and just encouraging. Alex, Morrie was that person for me.

CLINE:

Wow.

JACINTO:

So I'm not the person I am today hadn't it been for his just nurturing, just belief.

0:43:21.9

CLINE:

So what do you know, if anything, about how he developed this particular quality that would cause him to basically volunteer this sort of nurturing care for somebody who was just a kid in the neighborhood?

0:45:22.5

JACINTO:

Right, right. You know, that's strange. I think that, one, because he really has a coaching spirit, he has a nurturing spirit about him. Realize that he's a contemporary Jewish American whose father, Efrem Baker, was one of the founders of the ADL, Anti-Defamation League, in Pennsylvania, so he comes from an experience of struggle, of defense, and of passing on. I used to go to his contemporary seders, so he turned me on to seders. He turned me on to a lot of Jewish things, so the analogies of learning about Jewish tradition helped me sort of pave the way to say, hey, but you have your own traditions, too, as well, and you could learn those as well. So I was eating blintzes and chopped chicken liver, you know, when I was a kid, and sticky buns and all these Jewish iconic things. By just him exposing me—and he would tell me about his grandfather. He'd tell me about the Holocaust and some of his relatives and that you must never forget and all these things in his messages. I remember outside the Russian Embassy when Anatol Sharansky was being incarcerated, and he wanted him to be free, and he would bring me to these rallies and say, "Joel, you know, you need to know what's going on." So from his own orientation of being a Jewish American, finding out about his roots and wanting to pass them down—I mean, I was eighteen when his son was born, so I'm really his firstborn. He adopted me sort of spiritually. So he just sort of did this dump to me to say, "Joel, you've got to do this. You've got to understand this things about that." His frame, of course, was the Jewish tradition, but he encouraged me to figure out everything else. He encouraged me to go to Hawaii, all these things as well.

So in looking back—and as we're talking, I'm peeling back the layers to understand, because I don't do this often, Alex, but I'm connecting pretty quickly with the rationales and some of the things and try to put things together, too, as well. So I'm having a good time in connecting the dots about how did this get back, because (unclear) I say, "Oh, Morrie, he's great. He liked me and he loved me and raised me," but when you ask me these questions about that, what in his background did make him want to nurture you

like that? So his own orientation now of wanting to just pass on, to be progressive, that he sees a spark, he sees something in me that, unlike the age sets around, he gravitates towards me. So he dumps a lot of focus on me, as well as attention, and that has been very apparent in my life, too, as well. So by Morrie paying attention to me a lot, too, I realized, damn, I says, "Morrie really likes me. I must have to do something to keep that up, and I have to live up to his expectations." It wasn't any pressure, because it was fun. He didn't like pressuring me at all to do anything like that, but he just was really out there too. So the continuing chapter of Morrie Baker continues.

0:47:08.3

CLINE:

It's unusual. I was going to say, too, that here you are, you're growing up in San Francisco. You said you were in a very sort of multicultural middle-class neighborhood, not growing up, it sounds like, with a strong sense of your own cultural roots, but then you have this trip. When you're ten years old, you go to the Philippines, and it sounded like around the same time you also had your first trip to Hawaii.

JACINTO:

No, a few years later. So Philippines at ten, and then the Hawaii experience happened a few years later, about six or seven, when Morrie turned me on to that, too, as well. So that was a little different. Sort of along those lines—and you're right that the traditional expressive culture in the Philippines, as traditional and folk arts are known to be, was not really that present in my family. It was more the implicit cultural context of we're a Filipino family. My parents spoke Tagalog. They didn't teach us—the didn't pass on the language to us.

CLINE:

Okay, this was one of my questions.

JACINTO:

They did not, because whatever that colonial mentality says, you can't teach your kids Tagalog or Filipino, because you want them to succeed—

CLINE:

In America, yes.

0:49:15.3

JACINTO:

In America. So very much vestiges of the colonial mentality. The food, the familiar relationships, that was very Filipino. And how do you deconstruct and describe that idea of Filipino? You have to realize that my parents were contemporary urban Filipinos who came from middle to higher middle-class families who studied in public universities, in private universities in the Philippines, so they were urban. They weren't from the country. They weren't country folk. They weren't farmers. They weren't from cultural communities sometimes that live more traditional lives, you know. I mean, so they were pretty much part of the 90 percent that are Catholic urban Filipinos, okay. So we have to qualify what that means by "Filipino." So in one aspect we were very Filipino in our lives, and in another way we were the product of the layers of colonial mentality, where we didn't sing Filipino songs so much. The fact that my mom worked in the Philippine Consulate means we did more Filipino things.

But I remember my first exposure to Philippine dance and Philippine culture was probably watching a performance of this group in San Francisco called Bagong Diwa, new soul or new spirit. It was an avant-garde Filipino dance troupe that used the traditional idiom to get with contemporary dance. It was so strange because it was on TV on Saturday one time when nothing Filipino was on TV, you know what I mean, so my parents made a big thing about it, and I didn't care about it and I didn't even watch it. But the fact that I heard that there was something Filipino on the TV, I was like, "Whoa, that's weird. That's something Filipino." But I didn't get into Filipino dance till I was a senior in high school and learning a dance for the Filipino Student Club, okay. That was my first exposure to sort of a Filipino dance thing, although my sister would do Tinikling as part of her talent competition early on in grammar school. I didn't do it till I was in high school. So the Filipino experience happens when I was ten, and then progresses a little bit more and really blossoms in college in 1981. Then Hawaii experience happens when I was later in life when I was like sixteen or seventeen, and then progresses. So that's how that went on, too, as well.

CLINE:

But I'm just thinking, for example, the Philippines or Hawaii in terms of just the feel of it, the climate, the look of it, everything is so not San Francisco. What was this like for you just as a visceral-like experience?

0:51:31.9

JACINTO:

Yes, that's a great question. Viscerally and sort of in your insides—well, the Philippines was more like a sea of humanity. The proximity of the closeness of everybody in Southeast Asia, about personal space and about cousins and about that intimacy really was new for me. I didn't think it was bad, it was just like, wow, my cousins, they hang onto me, they put their arms around me like that, and I dug it. I dug it. As a ten-year-old, I really dug it, because I'm the youngest. I'm very touchy-feely as being the youngest, you know, and being like that.

Then the climate and everything like that, I said, wow, I says, like a hot place. I'd never been any tropical place like the Philippines, and when you're ten, the heat doesn't bother you. You know what I mean? You can hang. But the visceral, like this is where my mom and dad are from, this is who we are, was really just a rush. I didn't go back to the Philippines till I was twenty-one, so eleven years passed since I went as a child to when I went as an adult when I turned twenty-one, Alex. Hawaii seemed much more familiar, you know. I think Hawaii drew me because of this issue of not only did Morrie invite me at a time in my life where I was an adolescent teenager, and so therefore it was really the girls, it was really just the mystique of being in Hawaii, and the culture was really exciting to be there. It was very much sort of like the Philippines, in a way, where people are very friendly. There's a very traditional culture there, you know what I mean, and I seemed to fit in in Hawaii, you know, because in Hawaii everybody's sort of local. You don't get pegged as Japanese, Chinese, Korean. You're kama'aina. You're local, and when you're local, that means you're emic. If you're haole or you're outside, that means you're etic, you're from the outside looking in. So I really developed this issue of am I in the know or am I in the out. So I always want to be in the know wherever I'm at, because I want to connect, and so that's where sort of the Hawaii thing went, yes.

0:53:23.3

CLINE:

Your family is coming from a Catholic background. How much was that part of your family culture and how religious was your family?

0:53:50.1

JACINTO:

Yes, pretty much church every Sunday, and that was a family thing. I was an altar boy. As a kid, I don't know how, but young kids, young boys, it's prestigious to be an altar boy because you get this training and you get to participate in these rituals of religious experience, but you've got to get up early. But I think I did that for a couple years.

And growing up in San Francisco in that, there were problems in the Catholic church in terms of the way they treated young male boys. I saw it around and got impacted by it fringely in terms of growing up, and that didn't turn me off, but I just—because you kind of suppress it. You weren't really damaged by it, but it's just like you go back to those things, I said, you know, that's a tough shot, that's a tough situation. As an adult, you hear all the things, the problems in the Catholic Church with priests and everything like that, and abuse, and that shouldn't be the basis of religion. But I've remained a Catholic,

Christian, being much more spiritual, I think, as you get older. I didn't change religion or anything like that. So my parents really—prayer was very important part, too, although we didn't pray together as a family, although in the Philippines when we visited, every five o'clock every day, no matter where we were, whoever's in the house, we would pray the rosary.

0:54:49.8

CLINE:

Wow.

JACINTO:

Yes, every day, Alex. So that's like a call to prayer. That was only one time. That's not five times, but that was a ritual that a family time that I experienced in the Philippines that really reinforced another important ideology of family, of prayer, of devout prayer, devotional, not fanatical, but pretty devotional.

CLINE:

Wow. How would you characterize your religious context in relation to some of the more traditional cultural things you were encountering, particularly when you get to Hawaii, where for maybe lack of a better word, it can be a very sensual culture, very different kind of context and not so controlled, especially at an age when there's a lot of big feelings coming up?

JACINTO:

Oh, yes. No, I think it was very shaping on me. It was very positive because in the end, you see everything as sort of ritual. There's all these things that you do, all these, you know, rites and stuff like that. I saw the Mass as a series of all these different actions that people did, all these prayers, all these chants, right.

CLINE:

You're learning about the Jewish thing on top of that.

0:57:23.9

JACINTO:

Right, that, too, so you have all those experiences, all that history. You mix that together now with Hawaii and kahiko hula, and kahiko was what I learned first, ancient hula, where either using the pahu drum or the ipu heke, the double-headed gourd. But they're saying these chants. For me, it was familiar because it was like, wow, this is the way the Hawaiians do their prayer and their rites and their rituals. I saw it as complementary. I just saw it as another outlet, but I was familiar already with this idea of ritual, you know. Of course, I didn't even identify it as ritual back then, but I was used to seeing people do these things, so it was cool for me. I embraced it. I really just became in love with the movement, the manifestation of hula and dance to illustrate what the spoken word is saying. How wonderful is that? It's just like basically you're learning, you're doing these songs about nature, about deities, and you are playing them out. You're using your body as sort of to amplify them, if you will.

So then I became aware that there was a language base to Hawaiian culture and that for other Pacific Islander groups there's no dance if you're not going to chant as well. There are some, like Samoan, different types of dancing and other Pacific Islander dance that's dance-based and not oral-based, but by and large, Hawaiian dance, hula, whether it's kahiko or auana or modern hula, is based on the mele or the oli. It's based on the song. So I learned about all these things. So as I'm looking back, it's like there's a Filipino dessert called halo halo. Halo halo means "mix mix." You probably have had variations over Southeast Asia, where basically you have azuki beans, you have garbanzo beans, everything that's sweet, and jackfruit and coconut and sweet things and nuts and all kinds of stuff together with grated ice and coconut milk and stuff. So it's all this stuff put together, all this stuff that's thrown in. Halo halo means mix mix. But it's a dessert, and it's intended as an afternoon snack. I'm looking back now at my life and you're helping me put together all these things, all these ingredients put in to making something that was uniquely Filipino, which is not pure. We have to realize that our essence as Filipinos is one of layers. We're not like Chinese. We're not like Japanese. We weren't insular. You know what I mean? So we don't have a pure Southeast Asian culture or pure Asian culture, and I think that that really just created who we are, not only the opportunities and the challenges as we are being a halo halo type of culture, you know, East and West and all that stuff. I mean, there's all these stereotypes, right? The Filipinos are Southeast Asians, so they've spent three hundred years in a commune and fifty years in Hollywood. That's pretty kitschy, but, you know, that's—

CLINE:

Yes, it's really almost like an archetypal colonial model, you know.

JACINTO:

Yes, you're right.

0:59:26.3

CLINE:

You can't do anything about it. That's your history.

JACINTO:

What we can do is understand it and embrace it and to work with it. What I find now in the community, sometimes we work against ourselves, because we have to work with our assets, you know, whether it's self-hatred or being colonial or whatever. Deal with it. Utilize what our abilities are. So that sensibility, that framework of asset-based management as opposed to self-hatred, you know, that's why I think our organization (SIPA, Search to Involve Pilipino Americans) has been pretty successful. So I use that as an analogy that really helps me hone in on my background experience of having all this stuff, Jewish American, Hawaiian, stuff like that, and even in our performances in Kayamanan Ng Lahi, there are those elements that are very much tangible in our approach to folk and traditional culture. We'll get into that later on, but more questions.

1:01:01.7

CLINE:

Growing up in San Francisco, what sorts of experience may you have had—or maybe you didn't—related to your ethnic identity? Two things. There's always the potential for racial discrimination, which maybe in your multicultural neighborhood in a city that was so heavily populated by Chinese people was not maybe a big issue, but maybe it was, and the other side of that being what was your sense of what people in your neighborhood knew about or what their idea was of what it was to be Filipino?

JACINTO:

Yes, good questions, good questions. On the first level, you know, I didn't experience racial discrimination growing up in San Francisco. You know, it's pretty hard to experience racial discrimination in such a progressive place. But I didn't mention this issue of appearance, of the superficiality, and I was—I'll try to encapsulate. I didn't think I was inferior to other Filipinos, but I was different because I didn't look—and people would always reinforce that in me. So that issue, again, of

not looking physically like archetypical Filipino, you know, it played in me. That's what sort of drove me. It's like, but I want to identify. I want you to recognize me for who I believe I am. You know what I mean?

CLINE:

Yes.

JACINTO:

So, therefore it drove me to—because how do I do that? You know, I can't look any different like that, too, as well, so I was searching for ways, because again, it made me feel somewhat incomplete not to be, you know—oh, Joel, he's Filipino. You know what I mean? I was always very happy when people identified me as Filipino, and I would always be like, "No, I'm not Chinese," you know what I mean, when they would mistake me for, even though I am ethnically, but it's like culturally, you know, culturally, my identity, my self-identity. So I never had that. It was sort of a lesser, more subtle, more dynamic issue of where does my own ethnic community—in high school, even though I was part of the Phil Am Club, the Filipino Student Club, too, as well, they didn't think I was Filipino, too, as well, and even I'm eighteen, I have a Filipino girlfriend. I did have a Filipino girlfriend when I was about a junior in high school. They still didn't think I was Filipino, too, so again it's like, wow, you know. It's like you even join the Filipino club and things and it's not really working.

1:02:57.8

CLINE:

Wow.

JACINTO:

The second question you asked about in terms of—

CLINE:

What people's sense of what Filipino (unclear).

JACINTO:

Right, right, right, right, right. In my neighborhood there were old families. They weren't really so much recent, recent immigrants. So the Filipino community that we dealt with was pretty much the older families that had been around a while, and people's perception of us, too, was—I don't think it was negative. I think that we were very much part of the fabric of the local neighborhood, so they didn't look at us so much as foreigners, because we came at the same time as them. You know what I mean? It was very diverse. So when you're all around in the mix, you know, there's no hierarchy, pretty much, of, like, we came and now you're more recent, not like the Filipino Americans who had been here generations and then the more recent immigrants coming from the Philippines. There's very much that division of culture and of language and everything like that, too, as well. We blended in pretty much. Filipinos, I think, were always, even back then, looked at as hardworking families, you know, Catholic families, pretty stereotypical, although back in the days we had sort of barcada or gang issues around there related to the—there were prominent Chinese gangs in around that area in the sixties, and Filipinos had their counterparts as well. So that was another element of the community that we would deal with, and later on in life I would deal with them at SIPA where I worked. So again, all these things came back to affect me about addressing these issues, about, you know, those types of behaviors and the reasons why they come about. So I, in general, think that my whole experience wasn't so much negative, you know. It was multicultural.

1:04:53.5

CLINE:

Not much conflict.

JACINTO:

Yes, not much conflict. I'm not going to put myself out as like I had a hard life. (laughs)

CLINE:

You said you, really more than anything, wanted to be identified as what you were, Filipino, but how much, if at all, were there times when you really wanted to perhaps identify with the dominant culture,

which, of course, was Caucasian and European Americans?

JACINTO:

Never.

CLINE:

Never. Wow.

1:06:13.9

JACINTO:

I never tripped on that, Alex. I was always proud of who I—you know. Yes, I just never wanted to be sort of—I never questioned—I don't think ever sort of questioned—I knew who I was. I knew where I came from. I knew I was Filipino. I was proud to be Filipino, so I never lamented. I never wanted to go mainstream, per se, identified a lot with being local from Hawaii, so there was issues about how do I identify. Do I identify as being from the mainland or do I identify as being a local from Hawaii, you know? Even though I had very strong, I tend to calibrate myself to say I'm a mainland boy who's very much shaped by my experiences in Hawaii. So even to this day, when I interact with people from Hawaii, there's a mindset that comes in that's very local, that's very kama'aina, that's very either Pidgin-based linguistically, so there's a sense of familiarity. (1:06:13.9)

So I tend to be a cultural chameleon because I'm a cultural broker. So if all these things are inside, when I go into a store and there's someone Hispanic, Latino, immediately I'm speaking Spanish to them because I want to make connections, right, immediately, immediately. It's like second nature to me. If I'm dealing in the corporate world, obviously, you know, you come out, then you interface as a representative. So all these things, and I'm always wanting to make connections with people. My wife knows this about me too well, you know, and that's because that's my job, my profession, in a way, not only for SIPA, but for Kayamanan and being the program director and being the emcee, not the performer; emcee. So that's the element now where I'm the cultural broker. I'm the facilitator. I'm the front person for my folk arts organization, and it's very important that we have that level of engagement as opposed to, okay, we're going to dance for you, you're going to say, "Nice," clap, clap, clap. You know what I mean? I want people to be transformed. I want them to know us. I want them to know themselves at the end of fifteen, twenty minutes, so I look at every opportunity, every performance, no matter how small or short it is, Alex, to be transformative not only for the audience, but for my performers as well, because it's never the same thing. You know what I mean? (1:07:38.4) So, yeah, I never had problems, you know, sort of wanting to be mainstream, because we are mainstream. Like, hey, look at where we are. This is normality. I never grew up in a dominant culture where we were the minorities and everybody else is out there. I never really saw it like that till I got to UCLA, and then

there's much more diversity and a bigger pond. So that whole chapter of UCLA later on is really, really significant for me.

CLINE:

I think that'll be our next session. But you didn't grow up seeing, for example, Filipinos on TV every night.

JACINTO:

No.

CLINE:

You didn't hear their songs being played on the Top 40 radio.

JACINTO:

Not commercially. For families and stuff, once in a while we'd have the Santa Cruz and the procession that you do, the Filipino club in the parish, usually a Filipino rosary group, right, religious-based group, that would do these things. So we'd get up there and I remember holding, you know, one of the poles to walk around, and I didn't know anything about it. It was just, again, more ritual, you know. (unclear). In the family, you know, we had a couple of famous singers who was a distant relative. His name was Jumidas Manturan (phonetic). He was like the Andy Williams or the Perry Como of the Philippines in the sixties. He was a distant relative. He would come to sing once in a while at our family gatherings, and everybody would gather and just listen and croon, but he'd be singing these Filipino songs. So again, linguistically I didn't grow up with knowing the language, but hearing here and there. It was very sparsely, wasn't very, very much entrenched. You know what I mean? And commercially, of course not. I don't remember hearing it, other than that one thing, and till you get to, like, high school, and then, you know, you create your own environment now. There's a Filipino Student Club there, and yet what were we doing in the Filipino Student Club, is basically girls that were doing the drill team, right, and guys that were doing junior ROTC (Reserve Officers Training Program).

CLINE:

Oh, golly. (1:09:38.2)

JACINTO:

Those were the people that really comprised the Filipino Student Club, and then we had these cultural nights, you know, so therefore then you start to dance a little bit. So, very sporadic, very, very sporadic, but there were punctuations, okay, because you don't see them all the time, so when it does happen, it's like, ah! You know what I mean. It piques these things' interest in you, so I think they were very important, nonetheless, although sporadic.

CLINE:

But related to the thing like TV and radio and all that stuff, here you are, you're in the United States, you're in a big, very, very diverse cosmopolitan city, urban environment. You mentioned, for example, Michael Jackson and Jim Morrison. What was the impact of popular culture on you growing up?

JACINTO:

Oh, very, very huge, because I had older brothers and sisters that would listen to the music, and I would listen to their music. I grew up on Earth, Wind and Fire. I grew up on Stevie Wonder. I grew up on Santana. I even grew up on Leonard Cohen.

CLINE:

Wow.

JACINTO:

For a couple years my brother was into Leonard Cohen. We used to share the same room. He was maybe in late high school and I was in grammar school, but I would remember going to sleep and trying to sleep with this droning voice, (singing) "Suzanne takes you down," and as a kid, it's like, oh, man, that's—right? And you need a mature mind to get into that music. It didn't depress me, it just, like, got me into, like, this funk, because it was very melancholy music. (laughs) So I had a very diverse group, Bread and all kinds of, you know, pop, popular, Motown and everything like that, because they used to buy all these—the Carpenters and all the things, Alex. (1:11:19.1) So I had a very eclectic pop background and really didn't get into ethnic music or cultural music till I got involved—till my brother-in-law, Arnie, who's from Hawaii, gave me this album by the Brothers Cazimero, and they are a very famous duo. It's such a blessing, because through some shape or form and knowing their family here in L.A., I had become a consultant to Robert Cazimero and his halau. So Robert and Roland are, like, the duo. They were there at the beginning, the renaissance of Hawaiian music in the seventies, along with the Peter Moon Band and the Sunday Manoa. So they provided the music that a generation of hula dancers danced to, because their music is so iconic and it represented not the Don Ho—and not that he was bad, (unclear) "Tiny Bubbles," but it was the Hawaiian renaissance, so that. Arnie gave me this album called Ho'Ala. Ho'Ala is the Hawaiian verb meaning "to awaken," and it was a very important album that came out in 1981. He said, "Joel, (unclear)." It was an LP, and I looked at the liner notes and I looked at all the words and everything like that and I said, "Wow," and I listened to that thing (unclear) every day.

CLINE:

Wow. (1:12:34.8)

JACINTO:

Every day for months till before they prepared me for one of my first post-secondary trips to Hawaii. So the summer of '81 was really, really important for me, summer '81. From July on to December '81, my life was written. (laughs) We could talk about that, but he gave me this, and then so I got really turned on to Hawaiian music. To this day, I am a connoisseur of Hawaiian music because I understand the language, I understand the mele, I know the artists. Being a hula dancer, you know, you appreciate music at a different level like that, too, so that was a very important—

CLINE:

Wow. Interesting.

JACINTO:

—ho'ala, or awakening, that it had. So it was very, very fortuitous.

CLINE:

Before we leave your youth, you mentioned sports. You mentioned basketball, which I'm going to come back to in my second question here, but what, if anything, in school or in your other life activities were you showing an interest in as you were growing up in San Francisco? Any subjects that you were interested in? What's your picture of what your interests were that may or may not have ultimately related to what you wound up doing?

JACINTO:

Good question. You know, I was a pretty good student till I got to Lowell High School, and Riordan High School, where I spent two years, I was pretty straight As, you know. I played freshman and JV (junior varsity) basketball, so again, basketball was my arena.

CLINE:

Okay, well, this walks right into my question. Why basketball? I mean, for one thing, you're not a tall guy. There are a lot of other sports out there. What was it that (unclear)? (1:14:25.6)

JACINTO:

Great question, Alex. One is accessibility, you know. Basketball's accessible. It's not like tennis. It's not like baseball. You can play basketball anywhere and everywhere. We lived right across the street from a public school where I went to grammar school for a couple years.

CLINE:

What was the name of the school?

JACINTO:

It was named George Peabody (Elementary School) grammar school right on Sixth Avenue between Clement and California (Street). So you walk over there for hours and you just shoot baskets. Accessibility was an important determinant. Then I would say I got hooked to not only the physical aspect of, you know, the competition aspect of it, but by the dynamics of a team, where what is your role on the team, and more it really helped me define that, again, going from a 0-and-9 to 11-and-0, where (unclear) said, "Joel, you're going to lead this team." So obviously he saw in me physical capacity at that age to play well, you know, to go, but he just kept nurturing, you know, says, "Here's what you've got to do," and encouraging me. So that almost manifests itself in your behavior, you know, and has such an impact on you. So I excelled in basketball in terms of, you know, relative to my height and my skills in grammar school, and then I play all the way to varsity basketball at high school at Lowell.

CLINE:

Wow.

JACINTO:

So through the basketball experience, you learn about teamwork, you learn about encouragement, so I was always known as the most inspirational player, the MVP or the inspirational player, because it's not so much just what you do and how good of a player you are, but how good you make your teammates be as well. So I started to develop that aspect of my persona to say, hey, I've got to encourage others. You've got to get people pumped up. You've got to be a leader out there as well instead of just doing it yourself. (1:16:30.3) So that became very, very important. So I just think that because of the accessibility and because there were more opportunities—I used to go to these basketball camps, and I did it all the time—that was really my number-one sport. I only played, like, a year of softball at one time, and then in high school I ran track. You know, I've got short legs. I was a sprinter, but it was just really tough for me, too, so I just stuck with basketball throughout my whole life till I got (unclear), played intramurals at UCLA, and still pickup-wise, that was still your persona. If you could play basketball, that was your social arena. As a male, how could you compete? Did you have skill or not (unclear)? So it became a very important field of performance, if you will, right, performing, performing sports, putting yourself out there, and how you perform, how you compete was very much a performance for me, too, as well, so still to this day, yes.

CLINE:

How do you think that Morrie Baker learned about basketball?

JACINTO:

I think he was a big sports fan, you know, at Penn State, and he used to have season tickets at the (Golden State) Warriors, you know, in the glory years when Rick Barry and Phil Smith—when we won the NBA championships in 1975, so he was that type that could go into the arena and finagle his way down to center court. He just had that thing, like he just—you know, "I'm going to find some way of just talking my way down there." So he used to get us these opportunities where we would be a little team that would play for, like, ten minutes at intermission, the full court at the Oakland Coliseum.

CLINE:

Wow. (1:18:11.3)

JACINTO:

So, you know, he would give us those opportunities. Some of his friends were people on the Warriors squad, Clifford Ray, you know, and he'd have these parties and (unclear), "Oh, my god, Morrie's friends with him." So he turned us on to the fact that you could be friends with anybody. You could talk to anybody. You just have to have no shame. You just have to go for it. You just have to go for it and you have to develop your confidence. So the idea of confidence and not so much charisma, but just confidence and engagement, is really what Morrie helped me to identify and understand like that, too, you know. He was always a sport fan, and still to this day, he's a great sports mind, and he continued coaching, you know, for a few years back, but he just has that persona about him. You'll meet him one of these days. I have no doubt you'll meet him. He comes (unclear) once in a while.

CLINE:

We're probably drawing near the end of our session today, but I wanted to ask you before we leave this period in your life, this came up a little bit in connection with the whole Hawaii experience in this time of your life, but things start to change when, you know, the hormones hit and life starts to look and feel very different. You mentioned at one point that you had a Filipino girlfriend, I think you said when you were eighteen or something. (1:19:37.9)

JACINTO:

Seventeen.

CLINE:

Seventeen, okay. Growing up in the diverse neighborhood of San Francisco, how did that work for you? How did that manifest as you started to show an interest in the opposite sex?

JACINTO:

Actually, I moved away from that neighborhood when I was twelve, and then moved over to another part of San Francisco called the Balboa Terrace. It wasn't as diverse. It was more upper middle-class, just outside of St. Francis Woods, which is a very exclusive neighborhood. We didn't live in the woods. We lived off of Ocean Avenue, Alex. So I was twelve, so I finished my eighth grade, and then high school was when—it was about when you're, like, a sophomore that we started to try to date and everything like that. So we'd have to go to these other girls' schools and everything, and you have your age sets, so it was very awkward for me because you don't have your game yet, you know. So it was really sort of—for me, it was just sort of trying to develop relationships with other females. I had girlfriends from grammar school, you know, but then now you leave that sort of adolescence and now you're into more of your teens. So there was a couple years where I was just trying to find myself, you know, and I had girlfriends, in a way, and then my first formal Filipino girlfriend when I was seventeen. We were together for about a year and a half before I graduated, and, you know, boyfriend-girlfriend, was pretty steady at that time, too, even though I was involved in everything else like that too. (1:21:17.6) But I think in terms of what you're alluding to, or what I captured is I really got fixated on the power of dance to express and to receive, and I saw it in play in these shows, in these performances in Hawaii where they're very, very powerful, and I always latched on. I always enjoyed watching the males dance more than the females because the males, for me, had some sort of power and some sort of attraction, that it was a good male dancer, to me, it could stump any female dancer because of that energy of that mana that was coming forth. I looked at these guys dance, these Polynesian, these Pacific Islander guys, dancing on these performances. I want to be like them, because there was power of attraction. And attraction, pure attraction, you gravitate to people. Doesn't matter what your orientation is. It's like, wow, you gravitate to people who move well, and there's this issue of masculine grace that,

for me, is just incredible. So that really drove me to say I want to do that because I want to be able to express myself and I want to attract females with that type of persona, and it did, it did pretty much work that way. You know, I got a chance to work on one of those Sunset Cruises. You really get notoriety from being a good male dancer. I'm not going to toot my horn, but for hula, being a non-Hawaiian, that I accomplished a pretty good level of accomplishment and artistry in being a hula dancer, because, I think, of my ability to be emic, emic not only in cultural knowledge, but emic in your body. So at UCLA I became a kinesiologist, so kinesiology helped me to understand the vernacular, the vocabulary of movement, Alex, and how through movement, you could speak. You could speak with an accent or you could speak very fluently. (1:23:21.3) (Ricardo D.) Rick Trimillos, the excellent ethnomusicologist, calls the Filipino polykinetic, and I think through our genetic makeup and everything else, we are that very much. So if you look at the populations of hula halau, or hula schools, throughout Hawaii, Pacific Islander, Polynesian dance companies throughout California and the mainland, heavily populated by Filipinos. Amy Stillman from University of Michigan had been doing studies on sort of the issue of Filipino participation in Pacific Islander, Native Hawaiian activities, but I think because we are polykinetic, we have it in our genetic makeup, that Filipinos are able to adapt, to be flexible in that. So I became aware of the power of movement and the intricacies of movement, of how you move, what type of style, what type of language, type of accent, whether it was a very etic, very outsider movement, just learning the movements, and you could tell right away, or were you versed, were you just very much in the culture.

CLINE:

Fully absorbed.

JACINTO:

Yes, yes, were you fluent in the movement vocabulary, to coin the term. So that's really what's driven me, because if you look at Philippine dance, you look at all our repertoire, we have dozens and dozens of cultural communities that have their own movement vocabularies, so the parallel is that being a Filipino dancer is like being a Polynesian dancer. You do dances of Hawaii, Samoa, Tahiti, Fiji, New Zealand, and in the Philippines, very parallel, you do dances of the north. You do dances of Maricla (phonetic). You do very tribal dances, very communal dances, and anything in between, so it was very parallel.

CLINE:

Not to mention Spanish. (1:25:06.9)

JACINTO:

Oh, yes. So you have a different carriage, you have a different vocabulary. It's a Western movement, but very Filipino, but still Western-based. So all those things helped me to understand that I could use dance to attract, to express, to attract, to build, to do all kinds of things that I think were identified as positive in my life.

CLINE:

Wow. Did you find that you were attracted to lots of different types of women, or was it still mostly—

JACINTO:

Polynesian women, Filipina. I always liked—I was attracted to Filipina women, and the love of my life is archetypical, you know, (unclear). She's says, "I look like everybody." I said, "But you're mine." So I (unclear), but Ave and I met when we were eighteen, when we were freshman at UCLA, and we met, it was like love at first sight, Alex, and god is good. The universe is good, because he brought us together at an early age, and we've been together for thirty years. Thirty years we've known each other, too. But I always had that attraction to indigenous, indigenous women in terms of who looked very Hawaiian or looked very Filipina and looked pretty in terms of—not that all indigenous women are not pretty, but had that flair, because it always complemented me. I'm not looking pure. I'm not looking—you know what I mean? So it was complementary to me.

CLINE:

Interesting. Yes, wow. So you mentioned that you moved neighborhoods in San Francisco. (1:26:44.9)

JACINTO:

Yes, pretty traumatic.

CLINE:

Yes, that's kind of what I was wondering.

JACINTO:

I had to take the bus to finish grammar school. That was only two years, and then high school was right down the block from me, and so I took the (unclear), but just the whole change when you're twelve is kind of tough. You know what I mean? So that tweaked me a little bit, too, but then, you know, my new neighborhood, I made new friends and stuff like that. It was a nicer neighborhood per se, and we liked it that way, and the house was nicer, but I just didn't have so much a—I didn't play outside all the time when I was, like, in—we didn't have a playground so close. I had a friend in the background and became good friends with him right across the alley, and we used to hang out for hours. So it was just more of the maturation. You know, my junior high, my first three years of high school were pretty uneventful. Two were at a Catholic high school called Riordan. It was run by the Marianists, so they run University of Chaminade out in Hawaii. So I did two years of that, and because I wanted to play basketball, I wanted to do sports, I transferred to Lowell High School, which had a more progressive basketball program that featured a game that was more towards smaller guys. The coach at that time, the varsity coach, was Stan Stewart, who I used to go to his basketball camp in Marin every year when I was growing up, too, as well. Other than that, you know, my dad was happy because then he didn't have to pay for my Catholic education. So I did eight years of grammar school, two years of high school, and then I finished up two years at a public high school called Lowell. You know, those last couple years of high school were important because, again, identity formation of more this exposure to Hawaii now when I was a junior, involvement in dance. So the last two years of my high school really set the tone for now what I was going to do in my collegiate career, which is very, you know, foundation-building for the rest of my life, too, as well.

CLINE:

You moved and it was a nicer house, but ultimately was an emptier house as well. What was that like for you? (1:29:01.7)

JACINTO:

You know, just me and my dad, okay, so family life transitioned because my mom had been now traveling because she got reassigned, so she was gone. So my high school years, my father was pretty

lonely, you know, and so there were dynamics between my parents that we had to deal with in terms of her not being around and just being me and my dad and my eldest sister, the one I used to fight a lot more with at that time. My brother was gone and my elder sister was gone, too, because they were out of the house, too, as well, so that was a very kind of transitional time from about 1975 to 1981. I only spent six years in that house, and then when I was eighteen, I left, and I never really came back to San Francisco. I was a resident. So the last six years we were in this period where my parents were—it was tough on their marriage because my mom was traveling, and the activity of adolescence and teenage-ism was kind of—so that kind of—you know, it helped me reinforce that I wanted to get out of there. I didn't want to be there. I wanted to just get away, so therefore, I didn't want to stay local. I didn't want to stay local. I didn't want to stay in San Francisco and live at home, so I think that's one of the reasons why, Alex, thinking back—and thank you for just uncovering these gems of rationale about how my life worked out the way it did. I wanted to get away, so said, "Let me try UCLA," you know, in terms of what I saw in the past. It was written in the cards, because if I didn't go to UCLA, I would have end up at (San Francisco) City College, community college of San Francisco, or maybe even San Francisco State, and had a much tremendously different life, because I would have stayed local. I think going away from home for me was the most important thing of my experience.

CLINE:

I think we'll pick up from that for our next session. Does that work for you? (1:30:56.6)

JACINTO:

Yes, yes, yes.

CLINE:

Okay, we'll start with your arrival at UCLA and this new chapter in your life.

JACINTO:

September of '81, right, right.

CLINE:

Okay?

JACINTO:

Thank you.

CLINE:

Thank you.

JACINTO:

Thank you, Alex. Great. You're excellent about sort of helping elicit these things, and I'm walking down through memory lane, so there's a lot of emotions that are running through me in terms of remembering. So it's cathartic, but it's also stimulating in realizing that all these things happened. So I really appreciate the interesting opportunity to do that, too, you know. I really appreciate being here with all of these things. (End of July 7, 2011 interview)

SESSION TWO (July 20, 2011)

CLINE:

My biggest challenge, knowing the date. (laughter) Today is July 20th, 2011. This is Alex

CLINE:

I'm here at my home in Culver City (California) interviewing Joel

0:00:22.0

JACINTO:

It is our second session. Good morning.

JACINTO:

Morning, Alex.

CLINE:

Nice to see you again.

JACINTO:

Thank you for having me here again too.

CLINE:

We're going to pick up where we left off last time, but I'm going to ask you a couple of follow-up questions to begin, one being you talked quite a bit about your experience going to Hawaii and connecting with your godfather and basketball coach, (Morris) Morrie Baker, and I wanted to ask you, once you were over there, you clearly were captivated, but I wondered once you—well, it's sort of a twofold question. What specifically, if anything, made you decide to actually study hula, and then how did you go about finding a way to do that? In other words, who was your teacher or teachers?

0:02:11.5

JACINTO:

Good question too. Well, the exposure to being in Hawaii came from Morrie Baker on the big island of Hawaii on the Kona side, on the dry side, and I was about seventeen at the time. I was a junior in high school and spent the summer with Morrie. So he brought me over there and we went on—other than the general, you know, captivation you mentioned about with Hawaiian culture, we went on a Sunset Cruise. Sunset Cruise was called the Captain Bean's Royal Polynesian Cruise, and it was a very famous tourist type of two-hour, quote, unquote, "booze cruise," if you will, where happiness happens in two hours out of the (Kailua) Kona Pier. Kailua Kona Pier is where the Ironman Triathlon starts, and it got its start around the same time. This was 1979, 1980. This was about 1980.

So I went on the cruise with Morrie. He took me on it. He wanted to, you know, expose it to me. And seeing the people dance up close, the dancers—and these were local people, local Hawaiians in probably their teens and twenties, and I was real captivated by them. I said, "Wow. I want to do that," and they got me up to dance and they thought I was a local boy. Local means obviously kama'aina, or someone from Hawaii, because I was brown-skinned, I was tanned, and culturally I wasn't. I was a mainland boy visiting, but I was—

CLINE:

But you could pass.

0:04:16.3

JACINTO:

—very open. Visually, again, visually. There's a visual, you know, skin-wise and visual-wise as opposed to cultural-wise, which is inside, and I knew I was a mainland boy, but I said, "Wow. This is wonderful stuff." Dancing on the table and making a party for these people, what a great thing. So I didn't know any dance steps, so I just kind of just moved around, felt kind of embarrassed and awkward, but I knew that this was something I wanted to do. So I went back to home, San Francisco, after that summer and sought out a very famous Polynesian dance company ensemble called Tiare Otea Polynesian Folk Ensemble, or Tiare Otea, that was it, run by a woman named Tiare Clifford from the island of Kauai, moved to San Francisco probably in the seventies, had a wonderful group, a just huge group. It was the premier Polynesian group ensemble in San Francisco in the seventies and eighties until her death, I think, in the nineties. I asked, I enrolled, showed up, I said, "Auntie T, I want to learn how to dance," and I felt so awkward because I gave her a sheet and I said, "I've got to learn these dances," because I had corresponded with the Captain Bean's Cruise, and I asked, "What'll it take for me to get a job on this?"

Then they sent me back a letter and said, "These are the typical dances a male host does on this cruise." When I look about that, I'm not embarrassed, but I really look at my journey in terms of, you know, giving a paper to a person, saying, "I've got to learn this culture." It was very much at the beginning of my immersion into any sort of cultural activity, and in a way, in retrospect, you don't learn culture that way. You don't learn it as a job, or you can, but I evolved so much more, transformed so much more than that. But by approaching it as an opportunity to work a summer job, she probably looked at me and said, "Oh, this boy." (laughs) You know? But she took me in nonetheless, and I spent about a year with

that group and learned a couple of dances, so I got very, very basics. I learned a little bit of hula auana, which is modern hula, and I was taught hula by a gentleman by the name of Mark Keali'I Ho'omalu.

CLINE:

Wow.

JACINTO:

Mark is a kumu hula, master of hula, and he's actually the voice of the movie Lilo and Stitch. If Xinwan's (

0:05:44.4

CLINE:

's daughter) ever watched Lilo and Stitch, you know, there's the Hawaiian rollercoaster ride, there's someone who's chanting, and that was my kuma, my hula teacher, at that time.

So from that exposure in probably 1980 to 1981 till I graduated, which was about a year, that's how I began my formal Hawaiian hula and Polynesian dance experience, and I took that—I started to dance. In 1981 I went back, said, "Hey, I know those dances." (laughter) So kind of strange about, "Okay, I know this much. Hire me," but they did because it was a job, it was a profession, it was tourism. So from that, I did that for about a year, almost two years working on that off and on, because I went back to UCLA. I was already enrolled in UCLA, so summers and winters on the big island, back to UCLA. It was very difficult for me to do that during the summers anymore, so I ended up staying on the mainland during summers. So, Alex, that is sort of how I got my digs in hula. I mentioned the last time that I was introduced to Hawaiian music by my brother-in-law, Arnold Baptiste, who gave me this album, right, Ho'Ala by the Cazimero Brothers. Incidentally, last Friday, since we met last, I have become a consultant and a kokua, which is a helper, to Robert Cazimero, one half of the Cazimero Brothers. So I coming full circle, and the gentleman that helped awaken me to Hawaiian music, I'm able to support and help him now in the field of nonprofit arts development.

CLINE:

Oh, wow.

JACINTO:

So it's really fulfilling and very fateful.

0:07:41.9

CLINE:

Then the other thing I wanted to know, since you mentioned high school, you said there was a Filipino students' organization at Lowell High (School), and you gave a little bit of a sense of the kind of people who are in it, but how big of a Filipino student population—

JACINTO:

Population at Lowell?

CLINE:

Yes.

JACINTO:

Pretty significant.

CLINE:

Really.

JACINTO:

Pretty significant. They were very active in ROTC (Reserve Officers' Training Program), junior ROTC, and the drill team, you know, because they were all about the same size, you know, these Filipinos, same phenotypes. There were a couple hundred, I'm sure, or at least one or two hundred. Of a graduating class of eight hundred, there was probably at least 10 to 15 percent that were Filipino. And the student organization, I don't remember what it was called—it was the Lowell Phil Am Club, right—probably had twenty-five to fifty active members that met on a regular basis and did activities, did basketball tournaments. So I was a premium because I was on the varsity basketball team with a friend of mine who was another Filipino, so we were the two Filipino athletes. So we did do that, although socially I was more Phil Am and they were kind of more immigrant, so I didn't hang out with them all the time. I knew them, they knew me, but my age set, the people I hung out with were sort of the athletes, because that's what I was doing, playing sports, and they did more social things.

0:09:02.1

CLINE:

How diverse was that group of people, the rest of the population, or just your friends, the athletes?

JACINTO:

In athletes, oh, very diverse, African American, Caucasian, you know, Latino, and stuff like that. Lowell's a progressive school, so it was very, very, very diverse, but, you know, at that time when you're eighteen, you're defined by what you do, and I was an athlete. It really happened after I graduated high school that identity becomes more and more of an issue.

CLINE:

Right. Well, that's, I guess, traditionally when those issues start to really take hold.

JACINTO:

Yes, yes.

CLINE:

So you had told us before that you really only applied to UCLA. They had the special program that made it possible for you to start as a student there. Describe, if you will, what this was like for you, maybe what your expectations were and what you began doing upon coming south to UCLA. For example, I wanted to know if you had any—people in Northern California often have certain ideas about Southern California. I mean, I know you had relatives down here.

0:10:58.00:12:58.1

JACINTO:

I did have my mother's sister, so I did have family, and she lived in what is now the east end of Koreatown, and I remember coming down. I had spent the summer in Hawaii and came back, you know, and I was still in the Hawaii mode, so I was presenting myself as sort of a hybrid of a mainland guy that spent a lot of time in Hawaii, because the summer of 1981 was a very, very critical summer for me because I worked full-time on the boat. I became very, very close to the locals in Kona. They were my friends that, to this day, I know, Alex, so again, that summer of when I was eighteen before I got to UCLA was very shaping for me, so a lot of things blossomed.

So when I got to UCLA, I didn't have very many friends, only had some relatives, but I wanted to reconnect with Hawaii. I wanted to keep that going because that's what I felt comfortable with. The people accepted me. So I sought out others who were from Hawaii, and I did make friends with some guys that went to high school, they graduated from high school, they were from Hawaii, and hung out with them. So I had a dual thing, hanging out with the Hawaii guys as well as wanting to, you know, to hook up with Filipinos. So that brought me to the Filipino student club at UCLA called Samahang Pilipino, Pilipino with a "P." It's a statement of ethnic identity that there is no "F" in the Filipino language, even though the national language is not called Filipino, back then there's no "F," so it was "P," so SIPA (Search to Involve Pilipino Americans), SIPA, the name of my organization. I wanted to meet other Filipinos, and so I went to the meeting, one of the first meetings, I found out about it, the student club. It was in Ackerman (Union) on third floor, and must have been September of 1981. I remember going, and there were a lot of people there, and we were all eighteen, nineteen, twenty, you know, young guys, and I was just checking everybody out, you know, sort of seeing who's the crowd. I was checking out all the females, you know, very respectfully, but my eyes fixated on this one young lady on the other side of the room, and she was wearing a white Esprit t-shirt, had her hair up, and she just had this, you know, bright, very pleasant look about her, and, you know, a strange but real thought came through my mind at that time. I thought to myself, "I wonder what it would be like to marry that girl." I kid you not, as god as my witness. I did like a mental internal double-take. I said, "What?" I said, "I wonder what it would be like to marry that girl."

Later I find out that that same girl sort of on the other side was looking at me, you know, not fixated on me, but looking at me and wondering, questioned—she thought I was Chinese—I do have Chinese blood, but she thought culturally I was a Chinese guy in a Filipino student organization. She's like, "What's that Chinese guy doing in this Filipino student organization?" So she was questioning who I was, my identity through my visual-ness, through my skin. Well, as fate would have it, you know, we

got to be friends through mutual friends, and very early on, within the month, Alex, Ave and I fell in love and connected. That was October 23rd of 1981, almost thirty years ago, and we have been inseparable in spirit and in love ever since for almost thirty years too.

CLINE:

Wow. Now, her family was from here or from—

JACINTO:

They were immigrants. They were immigrants. They came in about 1968 and they lived in Culver City, like the edges of Marina del Rey off of Centinela (Avenue), and she was one of five. Ave's one of five, and they were all born in the Philippines. They came as immigrants. She came when she was about two or three, so she has linguistic amnesia. She started speaking Filipino language, and then lost it here, but she understands. So that was so important, that one month. Going to that student organization in September of 1981, I look back, and everything in my life that I have, all the gifts, all the roles that I have, have emanated, have come from being involved in that student organization, and so it was a very fateful, very determining point, not even period, point, in my life about going to student organization.

0:15:09.8

CLINE:

Wow.

JACINTO:

So I met Ave. I developed an interest in Philippine dance because at that time we were preparing for a festival to be held in October or November at the Dickson Art (Center) quad, and it was an outdoor festival, but it was a student-run cultural performances that would be a precursor to the Pilipino Cultural Nights that were on campus. Very fateful, at the same time in the Dickson museum (Wight Art Gallery), or hall, art hall exhibit, there was an exhibit called "The People and Art of the Philippines."

CLINE:

Wow.

JACINTO:

It was probably one of the most significant visual art exhibits, artifacts, cultural artifacts, to come from the Philippines throughout the United States, and it was there when I was a freshman. I remember walking through and being kind of amazed, and yet still ignorant about, wow, all this is Filipino, incredible, but I didn't have the lens to appreciate it. It just was kind overwhelming, you know. There was a volume. There was a book, seminal book, and I have two copies of that I got on eBay because I went to hunt for it. But that period of seeing the artifacts, of dancing in my first festival, dancing the dance that's iconically Filipino, the Tinikling, and with Ave, it was really just, in those few months, just incredibly important, Alex.

0:18:03.3

CLINE:

Wow. Interesting. I'm trying to imagine. You come to this place, I mean, UCLA is an intimidating place. It's very big. It's very, very densely populated. I'm trying to imagine. For one thing, you had somewhere to go, which is already a great thing. You had this Filipino student organization. But it isn't necessarily the case that someone's going to in their first month at school decide to go to something like this. For one thing, how did you find out about it? And for another thing, you just must be a lot more outgoing than probably, say, I would have been in the same situation where I would have just kind of hidden, perhaps. I mean, you went for it. I guess this is what I'm saying. So what an amazing and fortuitous thing that you did, but how did you find out about it, and what was your feeling on being at UCLA, being in L.A.? You're away from a home. You've been away from home because you'd gone to Hawaii. What was that like for you?

0:19:17.6

JACINTO:

Kind of intimidating, in a way. You know what I mean? I spent eighteen years of my life in the city, in the confines of San Francisco, which is like a thumb, 7-by-7, so my universe was pretty—although I did travel here and there a little bit. I traveled to Mexico and went to the Philippines when I was a kid, too, Alex, but I never spent an extended amount of time other than Hawaii, so I've got to say that my Hawaii experience, being by myself with Morrie, my godfather, in Hawaii helped prepare me. So it was like, wow. I could do all this. I could meet all these people. You know, as the youngest in my family, the youngest tends to be the most outgoing because they're the most indulged, if you will, right, so I had that sort of thing about me. Then when I got to L.A., of course my family was there, but they lived far away, so I didn't look to them, you know, because I didn't grow up with my aunt. I loved her, my

mom's sister, and she's still alive, but I didn't grow up with them, too, so I sought the same feeling, the same camaraderie, the same relationships that I just had in Hawaii. That's why I went to hang out with the Hawaii guys, and they became my good friends.

Then there was this, again, this issue of wanting to make connections with who I am, and so I found out about Samahang Pilipino probably by going up Bruin Walk and them passing out flyers, or there was a mixer. I don't exactly remember, but I'm sure they were doing outreach, trying to catch Filipino freshman coming in, say, "Hey, join us," okay? So I think it was that combination of their outreach and me wanting to connect, because I wanted to connect. I didn't want to go, because I was kind of scared. I was intimidated, if you will. You know what I mean? It's like I don't know anybody, and this is big, you know, walked in the first—I don't remember what my class was. It might have been a freshman Psych 40 class, that there's hundreds in this section with you too. It's like, dang, it's intimidating. So I wanted to have friends.

CLINE:

How did you connect with the Hawaii guys, as you described?

JACINTO:

We would hang out.

CLINE:

How'd you find them?

JACINTO:

They were in the dorms. They were in my dorms, so there was a couple in Dykstra (Hall) a few floors up, and then we just started hanging out and, you know, just started—we would go out and drink, we would go to parties and stuff like that, we'd talk about Hawaii and play sports and things like that, pretty much social stuff. So I had, again, them, so I had a couple of different circles, if you will. The Hawaii guys weren't my only friends. It was really combination of three: the Hawaii guys, the Filipino Student Club, and then my dorm experience. The people around my dorm, you live with them, right. They're your roommates, and I had an older roommate who was into sort of folk music. He was in his early

twenties, but he was living with a freshman, me, so people used to call him “Gramps” because he was an older student, an older student at twenty-three or whatever. Because I checked on the box I like folk music, you know. They try to pair you. So the dorm experience was good for a year.

0:21:27.2

CLINE:

Wow.

JACINTO:

Many things happened. (laughter)

CLINE:

Ah, the dorm experience.

JACINTO:

The dorm, right.

CLINE:

What, if anything, had you indicated that you were going to concentrate on academically once you started at UCLA?

0:22:44.4

JACINTO:

Right. It was a rude awakening, though, you know what I mean? Because I graduated Lowell probably with about a 3.4 average, and that's probably less than I could have done. If I graduated from Riordan High School, I went, I probably would have got better grades, but Lowell academically was tougher. At UCLA the first quarter was like, you know, I was getting Bs and Cs and just trying to keep up because all these smart people. You can't make any mistakes, you know. The bell curve has just shifted to the right. So I was like, "Wow, man, I've got to study. That's what I'm here for." So it was very rude awakening in terms of academically, you know. I wasn't declared at the time. I didn't have no idea. I had pre-notions. Maybe I'd be premed or something like that. I had a medical inclination or something like that, but later I would enter the health profession through kinesiology, through the physical sciences like that too. But I was just trying to take G.E. (general education) classes.

Then the freshman year, the spring quarter of the freshman year, spring of 1982, there was a class that was being offered. It was a very, very important class in the Asian American Studies Center, and it was called the Filipino American Experience class, but I never knew about Filipino American history before then, hardly anything at all. Alex, I took that class, and it was cool because it was warmer and there people's a little bit more casual, but there were a lot of Filipinos in the class. It was one of those really foundational classes that really change and help establish your perspective on the world, and I took that class and I became Filipino Americanized, you know, by knowing history, by actively knowing history.

CLINE:

Who was teaching the class?

JACINTO:

His name is Felix Tuyay. Felix was from (University of California) San Diego, and he drove up once a week to teach these class because they didn't have anybody. Later what I find out, because I was EOP, Equal Opportunity Program, that meant I could avail of the services at Campbell Hall and AAP, Advanced Academic (Program) Placement, and tutoring and support. So I took advantage of the whole progressive outreach to Filipinos and other minorities at that time. Apparently, I would learn that this was one of the few classes that they had about Filipinos at all and they had to get an instructor from far away. So I did okay. I got, like, a B in the class, but I just learned perspective about the push-and-pull factors, the waves, the issue of the waves of immigration from the Philippines to America, the Hawaii experience, and then, again, all the Tydings-McDuffie (Act) and the Treaty of Paris, all the whole thing where Philippines and America had sort of those formal relations. I learned about neo-colonial, colonial identity, all those things. As an eighteen-year-old, as a nineteen-year-old, those are all new concepts, you know. So that I look as a punctuation in my development as well in having that now broad knowledge of our community.

0:25:23.6

CLINE:

Wow. Yes. Let's remind ourselves what was going on in the nation at that point. It was a more conservative turn of events.

JACINTO:

Reaganomics. Exactly, exactly, exactly.

CLINE:

How did you find the climate in terms of sort of the sociopolitical situation at UCLA when you were there?

JACINTO:

I tell you, I didn't have much of an awareness other than at that time you tend to divide yourselves in terms of "This is us now," and "This is you guys." "You guys" ended up being the fraternity system, the Greek system.

CLINE:

Right, which had gotten popular again at that point.

0:26:58.1

JACINTO:

Right, in the early eighties, and there was these issues of these ethnic parties that they used to have, these, you know, Poncho Villa Day and these parties, theme parties that were very, very divisive, okay, because being part of Campbell Hall, being part of the progressive part of the community, you end up interacting with MEChA (Movimiento Estudiantil Chican@ de Aztlan), with BSA, the Black Student Alliance, with the Asian Pacific Islander Coalition, so you get activated. You become student activists

because you want to know. You get on fire. You want to, you know, rally and run (unclear), and your ideals start to come through about what your vision of the world is, and so we used to fight the sororities. We used to picket them, you know, and they used to, you know, throw tortillas and things like that, and it was very confrontative at that time, you know. I don't think that Chancellor (Charles E.) Young really helped with those relations at the time. He sort of just sort of let it play out, but there'd be big battles, big battles.

So I found myself leaning towards a progressive part of the campus, okay, because this is what was supporting me. I found out, hey, I'm here because I checked that box, and they're helping me because I'm Filipino. I go, damn, if I didn't check that box, I might not have gone to UCLA. I might not have come down here. I might not have the life that I was living. Well, later did I say that, you know, but it's incredibly important. So I became involved in that whole Asian American Studies Center and Advanced Placement Program, AAP, and dealing with the progressive student organizations, or the Third World Coalition, if you will, I don't know, we called ourselves, students of color, you know, yes, yes.

CLINE:

How did you start to determine your area of academic concentration? You said you got into kinesiology.

0:28:48.1

JACINTO:

Yes, probably a couple years later on, after researching and figuring out what I want, you know, because you're into sports and you're into health and things like that, too, so I wanted to learn about the body. So I think it was about my junior year, so about halfway done, said, "Let me try this kinesiology. It seems really cool," because I realized I didn't have the intellectual and the capacity to commit myself to something like psychobiology, which was the premed, or biology or some other hard physical science major, because I was having too much fun with all these extracurricular activities, active in Samahang Pilipino.

So when I was a sophomore, I danced with the student organization at the festival, and we started performing in the spring of 1982 having just performances here out in the community, went to Oxnard, went to Santa Barbara, and we performed for other student organizations. So we traveled, and I said, "Wow." That's my first taste of performing in an outside venue as a student organization. I remember we went all the way to Santa Barbara, right, from UCLA. So I got my taste of performing more and said, "I like that. That's cool." So later that year I volunteered to become the dance troupe coordinator of my sophomore year, the next year, '82 to '83, Alex, and the name of the dance troupe of Samahang Pilipino was called Sayaw Ng Silangan, Dance of the East or Dance of the Heavens, and it was the performing arts component of Samahang Pilipino that had, you know, sort of a life of its own, because we practiced and we danced and we performed on campus and in the community. So I became the coordinator, but not knowing much, you know, only just have a lot of drive, a lot of energy. You know you want to do things. So that was another period where, gosh, I was faced with having to coordinate, to learn, to teach. It was like the blind leading the blind, though, right?

CLINE:

Wow.

JACINTO:

I had a little bit of background in hula, you know what I mean, and that's what people recognized before, but I didn't know much about Filipino culture or Filipino dance. So at that time as a student, what do you do? You study, you look at others, and there was so few resources in Philippine dance, Alex, at the time. There was no place that we could look to. There was no masters, or in Hawaii we call them kumu hula. There was very, very few resources, and so we ended up making stuff up. You know, you take what a senior student would teach you, and you just got to redo that and kind of just do things that you think are Filipino, but there's no basis for them, you know. So that was not a difficult, but it was a very—again, a formative period of my life because we were always looking to learn. We wanted to find about the cultural truth, and yet we didn't have access to it.

0:31:26.3

CLINE:

What was happening in the dance department at UCLA then? They obviously weren't doing anything Filipino—

JACINTO:

No.

CLINE:

—but there were other areas that they were interested in and teaching, sort of the dance ethnography.

JACINTO:

Right. At that time we had no formal relationship with the dance department, because we were a student organization, so our relationships were, like, Student Center for Programming and, oh, you know, Student Services Commission.

CLINE:

ASUCLA (Associated Students UCLA).

JACINTO:

Yeah, the student-based stuff. We weren't recognized by anybody else, and the fact that we practiced outside women's gym was interesting because that's the dance building.

CLINE:

So that's where it was, yeah.

JACINTO:

Right, but we did catch the eye of a woman who I became very, very close to. Her name is Judy Mitoma, and at the time Judy was getting ready to form WAC. WAC formed in 1985.

0:32:16.4

CLINE:

World Arts and Cultures, for people listening.

JACINTO:

Worlds Arts and Cultures was formed with the merging of the dance department and this new—and in hindsight, I was already down the path of kinesiology, you know. Maybe if WAC started earlier in my academic career, that I would have gone the WAC path, but I don't remember how we started a relationship with Judy. All I remember was that the woman had this wonderful warm smile. Gosh, I don't remember, you know, how we started to interact, but we just started to interact and she knew about us, and I would become very, very close to Judy in the later years of my collegiate career till I graduated, and thereon. We still have a relationship to this day. But again, we didn't have a formal relationship with the dance department. We were a student-run organization, so we were sort of left unto ourselves.

CLINE:

Right. Okay. So tell us a little bit about kinesiology and how that went, because at some point you're going to graduate from UCLA.

JACINTO:

Yes, gosh, I know, and I'm glad. I'm glad it happened, because I can say I graduated from UCLA.

CLINE:

Doing something.

0:34:30.3

JACINTO:

The kinesiology had to deal with the psychosocial and the physical aspects, physical and physiological aspects of human movement, so it's a major that folks that do physical therapy and nurses do a lot of, okay? The doctors, the people on the medical track, they do something else. They do more the hard, the micro sciences. So kinesiology was considered sort of—I call it a softer physical science. But I was very interested in how the body moved. I was very interested in anatomy, and later it would help me very

much because as a dancer, you have to understand your body, you have to understand how to train your body, how your body moves, how the mind-body connection works.

So I started taking classes in anatomy, and I really liked it a lot, too, because it was something I could wrap myself around, you know. We had to deal with cadaver arms and legs, and so that was kind of interesting, but that was a learning experience unto itself in Boelter Hall, you know. So, you know, muscles and tendons and things are all pretty much—they're physical. You could see them. You could touch them, you know. So I did pretty well in the kinesiology department and I learned a lot. To this day, all the things that I learned in terms of dance I applied in what I learned. Other than that, my electives were really around activity in the student organization, Alex. Because Ave and I were boyfriend and girlfriend, we spent a lot of time together, and I had a lot of extracurricular stuff, had a lot of friends, you know, so that really fulfilled me and it rounded out my thing. I wasn't a bookworm, you know. I did a lot of different things. I was always active in the student organization, you know.

CLINE:

How long did you live in the dorm?

0:36:14.1

JACINTO:

One year, one year in the dorm, and I got to get out of there. Then we went to Venice-Barry off of Venice (Boulevard) near Barrington (Avenue), or Barry, lived there for a couple years, moved out to Palms and lived in that area for the remainder till 1987, when I moved to Hawaii for a couple years. So from about 1984 to 1987 I was in West L.A. off campus, off campus.

I graduated in 1986, in December of 1986, so it took me five years and a quarter, and took me five years and a quarter because two times—and I apologize to them to this day—I never told my parents that I withdrew two times, but the world will know now, and when you withdraw, you pay your student fees and then you don't finish. You just get a withdrawal, right? I did that two times because I was so immersed in student activities, you know, and sort of what would be considered extracurricular. I feel bad about that now, knowing that I wasted money, my parents' money, you know, but it's just something that I did, you know, that happened to me. So I would have been done in four and two quarters, but it took me five and a quarter. I graduated in December of 1986 with a bachelor's of science in kinesiology, and I had a lot of coursework in psychology as well, but it was, you know, my B.S. in kinesiology. So I did it.

CLINE:

Wow.

JACINTO:

Did it.

CLINE:

Then when did you get married?

JACINTO:

We got married in August of 1990, but what happened from—

CLINE:

Oh, quite a few years after you got together.

0:39:08.2

JACINTO:

Right, right. So there's a period in my life where—I call it our premarital purgatory. (laughter) Pretty early on, Alex, Ave and I knew that we were made for each other, that god gave us each other, you know, so we were very, very blessed to realize that at eighteen. So we were pretty single-track. So when we graduated, I still had some dreams that I wanted to experience, and I asked Ave, I said, "You know, I want to go to grad school in Hawaii. I want to go to grad school." And I think the grad school was not an excuse, but the grad school was a way for me to go to Hawaii to continue dancing hula and maybe to dance Filipino dance, because I wanted to seek out the teachings of some masters in Hawaii, right? I wanted to experience Hawaiian hula in a formal halau setting, but I had it here on the mainland, but it's not the same, okay, and I wanted to learn more about Philippine dance. So grad school and learning more about dance, so I'm still committed, right?

So in September or August, I applied to graduate school at the University of Hawaii, and I apply in the master's of exercise physiology, okay, an M.S in exercise physiology, which I really found out right

away was very clinical, and I didn't like it because it's more lab work and more just, you know, muscle (unclear). It wasn't macro, which I was used to. But going back to the transition from, you know, being in L.A. from 1981 to basically 1987, I started dancing hula in the community as well. I need to share that with you. So I danced for probably three groups in the community, outside the campus and in the community. In 1981, also, I learned about the Hawaiian community because by some way, shape, or form, I got hooked up with people that were involved in one of the Hawaiian civic clubs, and they would bring me from UCLA to Carson, you know, to go sing in the choir when I was a freshman. They couldn't do that all the time, so I lost contact with them, but I realized, oh, there's a Hawaiian community here, too, as well.

CLINE:

Yeah, down in South Bay.

0:41:50.60:43:48.60:44:36.30:47:24.4

JACINTO:

Exactly. Exactly. So I would reconnect with them a couple years later. So in 1983, Ave and I ended up starting to dance for a haole gentleman, a Caucasian gentleman, by the name of Jack Kinnear, who founded the Otea Polynesian Folk Ensemble. So it was music and dance of the Pacific Islands, including Hawaii, okay, and it was a very diverse group. The majority of people were not of Pacific Islander descent. It was more diverse, culturally diverse, so it was great. So we did a couple of years with them, and with Jack, you know, we developed this idea that you don't need to be Polynesian or Pacific Islander to be a good student. You have to understand culture, though, and there's a continuum of how well people can learn and immerse themselves in the culture. So Jack was a role model to say, hey, you don't need to be Hawaiian or Tahitian or Samoan to perform, but there is a continuum in how well that you understand and how well you internalize, how well you bring it back to the audience in terms of how Hawaiian, how Pacific Islander you are, how you perform, okay? So that was very important.

We did that for about two years and we felt it was time to move on, so about 1985, I linked up with a Hawaiian woman from the big island. Her name is Clarice (Wahineali'i) Nuhi. Auntie Clarice was in Hawaii community, and she welcomed me to dance in her halau, (Hawaiian phrase), the Hula People of—(Hawaiian name) is her Hawaiian name, meaning "royal woman." So she was very Hawaiian, and I was very excited to dance for a Hawaiian, right, because I danced for a non-Hawaiian. So I spent a couple years with her. Meanwhile, Ave gets linked up with a woman by the name of Rolanda Valentin. She's from Honolulu. She's actually a dancer. She's Filipina, Filipina descent, but she studied hula and her parents ran a Philippine dance company in Hawaii that I would later dance with. It was very incestuous, very tight, woven like this thing here (referring to the wicker seat on the chair on which he is sitting). So Ave dances with her, starts in 1985 and dances. I have to say that Ave got involved in hula—she already had a love of things Hawaiian, of local culture. There were groups in the seventies called, like, Kalapana and Cecilio and Kapono that really defined the pop Hawaiian sound, okay, like Earth, Wind and Fire or something like that on the mainland. So we were listening to some of the same things at the same time, but she began to get involved in hula as early as 1981, because I used to live in Hawaii, so she wanted to be close to me that way, too, and god bless her, because she turned out to be a

wonderful hula dancer, you know. So we were very fortunate that we both had aptitude and did well as performers.

So Ave starts to dance with Rolanda, and we now get a very more targeted Hawaiian experience in our hula. So after two years with Auntie Clarice—and the thing with Auntie Clarice, and I will reveal this because it was very important, my time, a lot of my hula brothers, and "hula brothers" is a term for the males that you dance with, or hula sisters, it was pretty much males and females, but all the males were older and they were gay, and me as a young heterosexual, I was probably the only one that wasn't. I was the youngest. I felt out of place. I didn't feel threatened, but I just felt out of place. Later, you know, it would teach me issues about diversity, you know, but I said I wanted to dance with more guys my age.

So I left Auntie Clarice, but I didn't leave her the best way, because I didn't tell her, and I started dancing with Randy Chang, Randy Kaulana Chang, from the Chang family, were very prestigious, like a Hawaiian Samoan Von Trapp family. You know, they had, like, ten kids and they all sing, and they're based in Carson and very strong Mormon. So I started dancing with Randy about 1986, and Randy also was doing things with Rolanda, so again there was really some confluence there, where Ave's dancing with Rolanda, I'm dancing with Randy, we do stuff together. So we had a collaboration. But Auntie Clarice, you know, caught me at one of the Hawaiian festivals and she asked me, "You know, you haven't been around, Joel. What is your intent?" She even gave me a Hawaiian name. She gave me the name M____. M____ means sort of "sparkling eyes" or "happy eyes." You know, my eyes (unclear). Then he goes, "Auntie Clarice, I didn't tell you that I'm dancing with Randy now." She looked at me and she goes, "You know, Joel, you will realize that every halau is different, but you must pay respect to your teachers." So I didn't really tell her, and I learned a lesson early on that I needed to have more protocol, not just it was about what was important to me, you know, but that I had to have a deeper sense of respect of communication. You know, it hurt me. I felt bad and, you know, it shaped me. It would influence me in my future decisions. I continued with Randy. I continued with Randy until I left in August of 1987, Alex, so again, there's that whole hula exposure in relation to the Filipino side. And the students, what are we doing on campus from 1981 to 1986? We're birthing the genre of the Pilipino Cultural Night, the PCN, Alex, and if you know, at UCLA we developed a genre that was really a modern-day vaudeville type of student-based production. There's a lot of work that's referencing that, some great work by Theo Gonzalves out of University of Hawaii (UH), or he was at (University of California) Irvine at the time, and some other folks who have written about the significance and the phenomenon of the Pilipino Cultural Night, the PCN. It's a "P" again. We were there before it was termed a PCN. It was just student-based programming.

In 1983, sometimes it's considered sort of one of the starting points of that, it was the Ackerman Grand Ballroom, and it was, I think, the fall of 1983, where we did a production that included dance, that included skits or acts. The storyline was that it was sort of the story of the Philippines all the way up to contemporary modern day, so there was a travelogue, if you will, of Philippine and Filipino American experience. That was very, very important because if you look at the Filipino student-based community now, it is an institution and it literally involves thousands and thousands of students all over California. It's really a West Coast phenomenon, but there's so much student activity in this process, in this phenomenon that was the Pilipino Cultural Night, and at UCLA Ave and I and our group at UCLA were there in its inception, kind of, in the formation. So that was really great to see, but we were, you know, busy doing these Cultural Nights where we would perform at either—we did Ackerman Grand Ballroom. That was 1983. Then in 1986 we ended up being the first student organization to perform at Royce (Hall) in 1986. 1987, I think we're at Royce, and then for a few years we go to Wadsworth (Theater) after that, but I've already graduated. But again, in 1986 before I graduated, we become the first student organization to perform at Royce Hall. That was a big moment in terms of student-based production. Now if you look at the campus today, a lot of the student organizations are all doing these Cultural Nights.

0:49:17.3

CLINE:

Right. They all do them, yeah.

JACINTO:

Based on, I think, what we think is Samahang Pilipino's lead.

CLINE:

Yeah, the model is important.

0:51:06.3

JACINTO:

The model, if you will, because it social messaging, performance. It's basically student-initiated production, okay, so there's both product and process, (unclear). So I was very, very shaped and spent a lot of time organizing and planning those and being creative and seeking out people that could help us do different things. All the while, though, we didn't have many resources in terms of Filipino things. There were some people that we learned from. Actually, Ave and I and a few of our cohorts went to France and danced with a Philippine dance company that was based in Central Los Angeles called Silayan Dance Company run by a woman, bless her soul, Sonia Capadocia and her daughter Dulce (Capadocia). Dulce's still active in—she's a modern dancer, but Sonia recruited us and brought us to France for these dance festivals, south of France. So we learned a lot about, again, performing in a foreign country and, again, the lament of here we are, we're a student-based organization, we're students, basically, young people, some of us are not even Filipino, and we're representing the Philippines and yet we do not have a strong foundation of Filipino cultural knowledge ourselves. Many of us did not even know how to sing the national anthem, and here we are representing the les Philippines in the world stage, albeit it was a dance festival in Chateau Grombert (phonetic) in Marseilles in the south of France, but we were representing, we were fronting.

The dissonance, I think, that happens in that early age about you're doing this and yet this is a reality, those shaped me a lot to say I need to be more in alignment about what we're doing. So everything I can see now—and I love this process because it's helping me make connections myself—the dissonant points forced me and encouraged me to gain stronger alignment to what I was actually doing, so the knowledge and the identity would match more of our external thing. Okay, you're representing the

Philippines. How much do you understand about the Philippines? You're dancing hula? How much do you understand about Hawaiian culture? How much do you understand about Hawaiian language? Those types of things. So as I matured, as I got older, my decisions would lend me more to align my inside self with my external self.

CLINE:

I had a question going back to the hula training with Ave. She was studying with this woman Rolanda.

JACINTO:

Rolanda, yes.

CLINE:

Did she only teach women, or is there—

JACINTO:

She taught males at times, but for special occasions, but Randy taught more males. Randy's had males and females, but mainly males, so we matched together.

CLINE:

I was just wondering why you were with different teachers.

JACINTO:

Right, right, right, right, right. Because Rolanda was more female, yeah.

0:52:49.0

CLINE:

So now that you've been going through this whole sort of Filipino awakening, as it were, at UCLA during these years through the eighties, what did your family think of this?

JACINTO:

Well, other than their not knowing that I withdrew, I think I invited my mom—my dad didn't come down, you know. My dad was busy paying my bills, so he was like, "Are you done yet?" You know what I mean? So my dad took care of me, god bless his soul. My dad, you know, paid for my college education, and I love him for that, because again, if he didn't sacrifice for me, I wouldn't have been able to have the life. I invited my mother probably in 1985 down to a Cultural Night at Ackerman Grand Ballroom. Ave and I were the prince and princess, so we had a major role, and I think she was very pleased that I would get involved in Philippine culture. Being her youngest, being the American-born, having, again, all these, you know—you wouldn't expect that I would be the one. And my mom being a diplomat, you know, representing the Philippine government, obviously I'm pretty sure she was pleased that I did do this, because I was representing—I was into Philippine things. My brothers and sisters were much less active. None of them did these things hardly at all, you know, so I was really the only one. So my parents knew that I was taking a while to finish class, you know, but I was happy and I hadn't really had any problems. They didn't have any problems with me, just I was away from home. I was a college student, you know, and go back to see them a couple times a year, Alex. So it was pretty uneventful. You know what I mean? I didn't tell them, and I think they would have got much more agitated.

0:54:35.3

CLINE:

Sure.

JACINTO:

"You wasted what? You wasted $1,500 because you withdrew? Why did you withdraw?" "Because I'm active in all these things." "Oh!" So I saved us a lot of conflict. (laughs)

CLINE:

I understand.

JACINTO:

But I think my parents were generally supportive.

CLINE:

You said that ultimately you go and live in Hawaii for two years, and we're in this period that you've described as premarital purgatory. Why do you call it that?

JACINTO:

Yeah, because, well, I told Ave, I said, "I'm going to do this. I'm going to go to grad school, and then I'm going to come back." Okay, so I go there in 1987, and in 1987 I have to get a job, right, as well, because I'm at UH. So I end up searching for a job that I knew in Hawaii in the big island, and that's working on one of the Sunset Cruises. They have a lot of Sunset Cruises over there. It turns out I did interview and get a job with the Alii Kai catamaran. Alii Kai catamaran's a big catamaran. It's the largest covered catamaran in the world, and there was a company that had purchased the original Polynesian canoe that I had worked on before on the big island seven years. It was like, oh, my god. It was, like, fateful. (unclear) all these fateful things. Captain Bean's, they purchased the original boat of Captain Bean's, a smaller catamaran that held about 127 people, and it's incredible. So I got a chance to dance on that because I knew the business. I (unclear), so they hired me right away, although I had to do a lot more service and it was a bigger canoe, a bigger catamaran, and it catered more to Japanese, and my Japanese wasn't up to speed, so I had to learn a little bit more Japanese.

0:56:25.3

CLINE:

Wow.

JACINTO:

But I might an individual that I will punctuate this story by. I started watching, when I was, you know, 1981, 1982—Morrie Baker would tape these videos of this festival called the Merry Monarch Hula Festival. Happens on the big island of Hawaii every April, and the Merry Monarch Hula Festival is dedicated to King David Kalakaua, the last reigning monarch of Hawaii, who died in San Francisco. He was called the merry monarch because he was the Hawaiian monarch that was responsible for bringing the hula back to the Hawaiian people, so he very much was Hawaiianist. So this hula festival became very, very important because it's like the Olympics of hula, and groups from all over Hawaii would compete on this stage at the (Edith) Kanaka'ole Tennis Stadium in Hilo. So what started out to be a parks and recs festival became this worldwide phenomenon. So now almost fifty years later, Alex, it's broadcast on the Internet. Every year it occupies almost twenty hours of Hawaii broadcast time that's broadcast throughout the state. That's incredible. It's such a phenomenon. Hula is really the Hawaiian gift to the world. We'll talk more about hula as we go on. I started watching these videotapes, and in 1986 the competition featured this group called Waimapuna (Hula Halau). Waimapuna is a Hawaiian halau led by a very large Hawaiian guy named Darrell Lupenui, who was a very dynamic hula teacher. He was larger than life. He was, like, 600 pounds.

0:58:20.2

CLINE:

Wow.

1:00:24.0

JACINTO:

His band of Waimapuna (Hula Halau) did this ancient kaihiko. They competed in 1996. They won first place in the kaihiko in the ancient and the auana and the modern, but there was this—their number featured them doing this warrior dance of Molokai. Molokai is known for its warrior dances, and all they had was, like, little pouches and they had these spears, and they were all just, you know, like Hawaiian warriors, and it was probably the most incredible hula I had ever seen performed by males. The one guy in the front, I recognized him, too, because he was only one that didn't have a part. He was Alii Kai. He was the front guy. He was working on the boat, the Alii Kai. His name is Derek (unclear), and immediately I said, "I know you. You're the guy on the video," and he's looking at me, "Who this guy?" Because (unclear), I had no shame. I just wanted to make friends. You know what I mean? He's probably taken aback, say, "Hey." You know what I mean? But his sister was my boss, and I became very, very close to Derek (unclear) since that time, and that's over twenty years ago. His family basically adopted me. They (unclear) me as a mainland boy living in Hawaii, so for two years I was very, very close to Derek and his family. I was working on the Alii Kai catamaran. I was working also at a Hawaiian insurance company called HMSA (Hawaii Medical Service Association), which is Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Hawaii, going to school at UH in the areas of now not exercise physiology, but

public health and dancing Philippine dance with the Pearl of the Orient Dance Company, which is Rolanda's parents, and also dancing hula for a Hawaiian halau called the Gentlemen of (unclear) led by Frank "Palani" Kahala, who was a very avant-garde, very well-respected younger kumu hula.

So from 1987, August, to May of 1989 I would have, you know, just a wonderful time of learning, of experiencing, of being able to compete in Merry Monarch in 1988. So I competed with them. I joined the Gentlemen of (unclear) right when I got there in, like, September, and in April I was already competing with them, and we placed in this thing. It's on Facebook. I'll show you the link, I mean, dancing, if you want to see it. You're not on Facebook?

CLINE:

I have a Facebook page and I never, ever use it.

JACINTO:

Okay. One of these days I'll show it to you, Alex. But it was a great thrill for me to be able to dance on this stage, to dance for this halau, and I would also graduate from one level of hula to the next. So when you start hula, you're a haumana, which is you're a hula student, and the next stage is olapa (phonetic), which is an agile dancer, but we had a contemporary ritual where you would pass these series of tests and exercises and you would graduate, and I was able to do that before I left. But that process of graduating and studying hula and chants and book knowledge and taking tests and doing projects really helped me shape my approach to Philippine dance and to understanding culture so that the inside matches the outside, going back to that issue of there's strong alignment into what you physically do and what you know spiritually, what's inside of you. That's why I think this issue of culture became very, very important to me, the idea of culture, and I'll talk a little bit more about that later in terms of my own curriculum we developed in Kayamanan (Ng Lahi) too.

1:02:12.0

CLINE:

Right. So how did your relationship fare those two years?

JACINTO:

It was tough, you know. We argued a lot and stuff like that, you know, and she wanted me to come

home. I thought I was going to try to ask Ave, you know, "Would you want to live in Hawaii?" He goes, "No, you're coming home." (laughs) So after 1989 in May, I came back, and then immediately the next couple months I got a job working for this organization called Fitness Systems Incorporated, which was a corporate fitness outsourcing organization that ran fitness centers in some of the major corporations. So I got a job with Fitness Systems working at the fitness center at Hughes Aircraft (Corporation), which is now LMU (Loyola Marymount University). So I did that for about two years, all the while coming back. So that was June of 1989 till about July of 1991 that I was working at Hughes Aircraft, but also, Ave and I, we get married in 1990.

CLINE:

What was she doing after graduating from UCLA?

JACINTO:

Ave was just working. She was working for a psychologist who made those biofeedback cards with thumbprint, you know what I mean, and just biofeedback, and so she was doing administration, and, you know, she was very smart in marketing and could handle all those things.

CLINE:

What was her major at UCLA?

JACINTO:

Psychology. It was psychology. So Ave was working and just patiently waiting for me—not patiently waiting. I mean, you know, we knew we were together still, and I would come visit every few months like that, too, but it was time to settle down. We were twenty-seven when we got married, which is, you know, is about the right age. It's about time for us, too, so our marriage was a very blessed thing, and then we had, like, five hundred people at our wedding. We had students. We had the Hawaii people come. We had all these different things. It was a great gathering, if you will, of all our relations, so it was a wonderful blessing and one of the highlights of our lives.

1:04:23.1

CLINE:

When you said Hawaii people came, did they come from Hawaii?

JACINTO:

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Derek and his family came. His parents who had never come to the mainland before, and these are Hawaiian folks, and they come because they loved me, you know. I asked them to be our (unclear) and (unclear), our godparents, of the wedding, so they had a special place, a special role in witnessing our marriage, and to this day, you know, they still occupy that role. So that was August 4th, 1990, Alex, we get married.

CLINE:

So you have an anniversary coming up.

JACINTO:

Yeah, our twenty-first.

CLINE:

Wow. Where did you get married?

JACINTO:

At St. Augustine's (Catholic) Church.

CLINE:

I guessed.

JACINTO:

Yeah, local—

CLINE:

Since you're local here.

JACINTO:

Yeah, yeah. No, Ave's parents, they worship at St. Gerard's (Majella Roman Catholic Church) over there off of Culver (Boulevard) and Inglewood (Boulevard), but we just like that church better, so we go to that church. It's a little bit east. We're closer to St. Gerard's, but anyway, we like St. Augustine's. Then we had our reception at the Marriot, LAX Marriott, and our wedding went from ten in the morning to probably midnight because we had the ceremony, and then we a reception from the afternoon, and then we had an after-party where we had kanikapila, we had people dancing. It wasn't one day; it was a five-day, week celebration. We had people come in. We had parties. We had gatherings. It was just a wonderful—I still get chicken skin thinking about that, about that time too.

1:05:57.5

CLINE:

Was your father still alive at that point?

JACINTO:

Yeah, Jaime was, yeah, and so he had a great time. I think he was very proud. My father's very spartan. He was very spartan with me, because I think he came from a very large family, you know, that they didn't—and he said he was pretty quiet anyway, and so I think that he just, you know—he didn't communicate much.

CLINE:

Yeah, not the emotional type.

JACINTO:

Right. Right. I mean, he's pretty sociable, very, very sociable, I think, and very, very good host, you know what I mean, in terms of when he was on, when people were at his home, too, but, you know, with his children, you tend to take those—at that time that generation's very spartan in their discussions of emotions and things like that because of their own upbringing, too, as well. But he was very happy, he was very proud.

1:06:49.5

CLINE:

When did you start to learn about the history of the Filipino community here in Los Angeles?

1:09:03.0

JACINTO:

Okay, so taking that first class, 1982, and then I got involved in some projects where we would go out and visit historic Filipino town not designated back then, Alex, on Temple Street, and we got involved with a couple of events that were held at the Filipino American Community of Los Angeles, or FACLA, F-A-C-L-A, and it was one of the oldest organizations recognized in America that were Filipino. So we actually got to deal with other older Filipino, more the immigrant generation who were the pioneers, who were active. I learned about SIPA as probably a twenty-one-year-old student who began to volunteer tutoring students and teaching dance to some of the junior high students in Virgil Junior High (School), which is right off of Vermont (Avenue), so we began going into the community, off of campus and into the community, to visit and to learn. So it happened around that time, and just exposure to say these are the struggles, these are the issues, and we wanted to make connections. We wanted to be active as well. I would meet a gentleman by the name of Royal Morales, or Uncle Roy, and if you weren't

Filipino, you would call him Uncle Roy because he commanded that respect. He was like a cross between Yoda and Ho Chi Minh. He had this big long goatee, but he was a wise old sage. He wasn't old, but he just had this really long—this goatee. But Uncle Roy was a co-founder of SIPA, and he also began teaching the Filipino American Experience class at UCLA in about 1983 after I had taken it, but he became the educator. He became, you know, the face of Filipino American activism, if you will, very important, although people would later tell me—and I believe this to be true—when we were hiring for the SIPA executive director that I was going out for in July, August of 1981, I wasn't his first choice, and he knew me as a student activist, but I wasn't a social worker, and his orientation was as a social worker.

So I think he wanted someone that had a little bit more community background or service background, but I realized that I think they hired me because, one, is I started my own nonprofit. So after we got married in August, Alex, we founded Kayamanan Ng Lahi in November, but it was based on a trip that we had taken to the Philippines in May before we got married, and I don't know if you want me to go on then, but that's another chapter.

CLINE:

Let me just clarify one thing, though. When you were hired at SIPA, what year was that?

JACINTO:

It was 1991.

CLINE:

Okay, so '81 and—

JACINTO:

So ten years, here in L.A., two years in Hawaii, come back. I'm coming back to L.A.

CLINE:

Right. And you got married in ’90, and then ’91 you started SIPA.

JACINTO:

Right. Right. Right. Right. Right. The way that I started at SIPA was, again, this idea—this might be a good break. Sylvester Mendoza, one of my clients at Hughes Aircraft, was in human resources. He was on the board of SIPA. He joined the board of SIPA because he was corporate relations and stuff like that, and there was some allegations that there was some discrimination things going on at Hughes Aircraft, so they invited Sylvester to come on down. Sylvester, he was from San Francisco and he went to the same high school as I went to, so we became very close friends, and he knew that the fitness center, our fitness business, was going to lose a contract because of corporate downsizing because he knew that Meg Thornton, the previous executive director at SIPA, who’s been at UCLA—

1:10:53.3

CLINE:

Oh, yeah, I know (unclear).

JACINTO:

—in Asian American Studies Center—

CLINE:

Yeah, I’ve met her, sure.

JACINTO:

—right—for the last—we switched. Right? Meg’s not from L.A.; she’s from San Diego, but she was the

executive director for three years before me. So she goes and starts to work for the School and Community Projects unit of the Asian American Studies Center and Sylvester supports me to be the next SIPA executive director based on the fact that I think he saw that I had potential to be a front guy for SIPA. The fact that I had started my own nonprofit, I think, bid well with everybody because they say, "Hey, he has a nonprofit orientation," but I didn't have a social work background, didn't have a community-organizing background, because I had an activist background. I think people were shocked that SIPA would hire a dancer. You know?

CLINE:

Yeah.

JACINTO:

Because it was a youth-serving organization, and back then the moniker of SIPA, it was at-risk youth, at-risk youth, because that was the vernacular that we're using to describe who we served. So at that time, you know, people equated SIPA with sort of like, yeah, but no. It's like, it's needed there, but we don't really pay attention to SIPA because SIPA's bad kids, you know. So SIPA deals with that part of our community that we don't really want to talk about, kids that were involved in gangs, kids that were at-risk, kids in the criminal justice system, and the tough issues of life. So we had an image problem. We had a PR problem when I started.

1:12:39.0

CLINE:

Wow. When did SIPA start?

JACINTO:

SIPA was founded in 1972.

CLINE:

Wow.

JACINTO:

It started in 1972, and it was an organization that was really the name of a two-day conference, a search to get people involved in youth activities, and it happened at Camp Oak Grove in San Bernardino. So what started out as a two-day conference, the concept stuck and people wanted to keep this thing going, and it folded in. There were existing programs and services that were dealing with the Filipino community and job training, you know, in the late sixties, Filipino youth services, things that were helping, you know, doing counseling already, but that didn't have the name of SIPA, they were just called Filipino Youth Services. So it kind of melded into one, and SIPA was incorporated in 1972 till about 1980. In 1980, Reaganomics and the conservative right eliminated all the War on Poverty and all these things, so SIPA lost its funding, and it was put on the shelf for about five years. So it still had the nonprofit status, but didn't have any resources, no services, right?

CLINE:

Right.

JACINTO:

In the early eighties a cross-section of the community said, hey, man, we still needed services, so they revive SIPA by getting it to be a member organization of United Way in 1985, Alex. We were the only Filipino organization that was a member organization of United Way when United Way had core organizations. So we were able to revive ourselves in 1985, okay, again, serving at-risk youth and working in the community. So I came in six years after that in 1991, and so I've been around almost half of SIPA's life cycle, and it's just been a tremendous, a tremendous, a tremendous opportunity to serve. It's been the most challenging, but it's been the most rewarding in my life next to my family.

1:14:54.0

CLINE:

Wow. Interesting.

JACINTO:

So everything that I do in my life today has a reference to my culture, to my community, and through my identity, not in an insular way, but in the way that I can share and represent that and negotiate that within, intra, and inter, with the mainstream. So being at the Skirball Cultural Center for Family Day for me, for our group, Kayamanan Ng Lahi, is very, very important because it's an opportunity to educate, to entertain, and to enlighten people, audiences, as to what is Filipino, why is it good, why is it nice, and how can we engage people in that. So I'm so happy that you were there to experience what we do as a cultural organization.

CLINE:

My pleasure, for sure. So the big things coming up now, then, are the founding of Kayamanan Ng Lahi and a trip to the Philippines, it sounds like.

JACINTO:

Right. Right. Right. Let's use 1990 as now, because from '81 to '90 is really the UCLA experience, UCLA and Hawaii. Eighty-one to '86 is the UCLA. Eighty-seven to '89 is Hawaii, and then 1990 begins a whole—

1:16:29.3

CLINE:

You get married, and now we're starting a new chapter.

JACINTO:

It's a big year. It's a big year.

CLINE:

So let's take that up in the next session. Does that work for you?

JACINTO:

Yeah, yeah.

CLINE:

Okay, and you can get to where you need to go.

JACINTO:

Thank you, Alex. Again, I really appreciate the process of thinking back, so that it helps me to make connections that have just, you know, been in there. So I really appreciate this process as well.

CLINE:

Well, I said this, I think, last time, but connection seems to be the thing that keeps coming up when I hear your story. There's so many amazing connections and just things that—it's like just these spirals that keep cycling around, and it's really (unclear).

JACINTO:

Yeah, and some of them are purposeful and some of them are fateful, right? Some of them are fateful, so this idea of the cosmic alignment of things and the way that the universe allows these things to happen is, for me, at least, is so overwhelming.

CLINE:

Thank you.

JACINTO:

Thank you. (End of July 20, 2011 interview)

SESSION THREE (July 27, 2011)

CLINE:

Today is July 27th, 2011. This is Alex

CLINE:

I'm once again interviewing Joel

0:00:21.5

JACINTO:

at my home studio in Culver City (California). This is our third interview session. Good morning.

JACINTO:

Morning, Alex.

CLINE:

Thanks for coming over again.

JACINTO:

I feel real comfortable here, too, because I got four little kids in my living room running amok, and that's a Filipino word, if you will.

CLINE:

Oh, yeah?

JACINTO:

Amok. Run amok is the Filipino contribution—

CLINE:

Really.

JACINTO:

—to the English language.

CLINE:

Wow.

JACINTO:

As well as boondock, boondocks.

CLINE:

Oh, yeah, the boondocks.

JACINTO:

It's Filipino.

CLINE:

Really.

JACINTO:

Kid you not.

0:00:54.3

CLINE:

See, I knew I was learning things, but I didn't realize I'd be learning these amazing linguistic details. I

had no idea. That's cool.

JACINTO:

That's value-added, okay. But thanks for having me.

CLINE:

Yeah, it's very quiet here right now. Last time we left off with basically your entrance into the 1990s, so in 1990 you got married. In '91 you started at SIPA (Search to Involve Pilipino Americans), and it sounded like you were about to lead us into a tale that I'm thinking narrows the gap that you were feeling between what you knew about Philippine dance and what you wanted to know about Philippine dance. It sounded like it was becoming, over time, a real longing or even an aspiration, if you will, something that was really important to you and maybe a little frustrating.

JACINTO:

Oh, yeah, definitely, all those things, all those things.

CLINE:

You said you wind up going to the Philippines, and I guess we're going to hear about that today.

JACINTO:

Well, the setup is probably about 1986, a friend of mine from UCLA—I remember his name. It was Dennis Gorospe. Dennis gave me this VHS tape, if you remember what VHS tape was, and it contained three shows of a performance group from the Philippines that was performing at the Canada World Expo 1986, in 1986.

CLINE:

Right. In Vancouver.

JACINTO:

In Vancouver.

CLINE:

Yeah, I played up there.

JACINTO:

All right, Alex. So I viewed this video. He said, "Joel, here, here's a tape of a relative." It turned out to be a distant relative of his who had this group. So I watched this. It was almost three shows, because they had three different shows. This is 1986. We're still at UCLA, almost done, you know, at the tail end of our collegiate career, and we had been, you know, longing to learn the "truth," quote, unquote, not just about Philippine dance, about Philippine culture, because it wasn't just about the dancing itself, the physical. You know, we were really longing for identity, for cultural identity, for cultural context, to understand the ritual, to understand the things that make these dances Filipino. So I watch these and I turn it on. And our main exposure to Philippine dance before this was basically the Bayanihan (the Philippine National Folk Dance Company), the state-supported dance group, what is termed dance diplomacy, right?

0:03:35.2

CLINE:

Right, right.

JACINTO:

The state-supported group that does the revue of all, very flashy, very theatre, you know, almost stylized and balletic, you know, in some ways, and then some other local dance troupes. So it was a big gap, didn't have anything, a third reference. Then when I saw this group perform, something told me inside—there was a gut feeling that, wow, this is different. This seems more Filipino. Yeah, it seems more Filipino. It doesn't seem as contrived, as stylized, as theatricalized. It was still. It still was in the realm of folkloric, but it felt little bit more, quote, unquote, "closer to the village." It just attracted me. I had an instant attraction to it, and so I became fascinated with that tape and watched it again and again and again. So the name of the gentleman whose group it was is Ramon Obusan Folkloric Group, R-O-F-G, or ROFG, for short. Turns out that—a little background—Ramon was a dancer and a researcher with Bayanihan in the seventies, early seventies, during pretty much the heyday of Bayanihan in terms of its world tours. So he was a researcher. He was an anthropologist.

0:05:03.6

CLINE:

So when would that have been, its heyday when it was touring?

JACINTO:

Seventy, '71, '72, early seventies.

CLINE:

So that's when this is happening, and apparently from countries all over, they're all doing it.

JACINTO:

(Igor) Moiseyev Ballet, the (Almalia Hernandez and Ballet) Folkorico (de Mexico), all those type of things, dance diplomacy, really. (unclear) writes pretty eloquently about that. And the Philippines, they were at the start in '58. Actually, Bayanihan started in '58 even before Almalia Hernandez and Ballet Folklorico, so it's kind of common knowledge that Philippines almost helped start the genre of the state-supported dance group or dance diplomacy. So Ramon was there and he wanted to start his own group after this. He said he wanted to give it a different flavor, I think. He wanted to be, quote, unquote, "more

authentic," and we can deconstruct that later on, but he just wanted to put his own stamp on things, so he formed his own group, which is very different than the state-supported group, which is a collective, right? "Bayanihan" means collective. The Ramon Obusan, it was focused on him and his life's work, so it was very ego-centered. Good or bad, it was ego-centered, Ramon Obusan Folkloric Group, not anything generally Filipino. So when I watched that, Alex, I wanted to learn that style of dance. I was really entranced by it. So 1986 I go off to Hawaii, and then another thing happened to me in terms of fate. I had a friend from Hawaii, he was an artist, his name was Brian Ibaan. He was a watercolorist, and I met him at UCLA, but he was from Hawaii, so we made that connection. In the beginning of 1990 he comes back and says, "Hey, Joel, I just came from the Philippines and I met this group," and he took the pictures. It was the Ramon Obusan Folkloric Group. I said, "You found the group I had been watching for a few years."

0:07:06.8

CLINE:

Yeah, wow.

0:08:55.6

JACINTO:

He met the guy. He met Ramon, and Ramon was very open with him in terms of allowing him to come along, take pictures, and he was artist, because he painted. So I wrote Ramon a letter in probably March of 1990 and I poured my heart out to him. I poured my heart out to him. I shared my aspirations, my frustrations, and my longingness, as you say, to just learn more. He wrote back. He wrote back, and I still have that letter somewhere, and he goes, "Joel, pack your bags. Come on down," because Ramon was so open with his knowledge. Unlike the state support, which really has protocol and a lot of, you know, layers of entrance and access, Ramon has his home near the airport in a certain part of the city of Pasay City near the airport of Manila International (Airport). In May of 1990 before we got married, Ave and I decided to take a trip to the Philippines to buy things for our wedding, barong Tagalogs, the shirts that the guys will wear, so get some things, do some wedding business, and to meet Ramon Obusan. So we do that, and we spent almost three weeks there, and it was an incredibly life-changing trip in many ways for me because I met Ramon. He blessed me—he invested a lot of time when I was there and he saw the fire in me and he just poured fuel over it by sharing with me his ideals, his approach.

At the end of the time that I left in June he gifted me with cultural material, or material cultured from the Philippines, costumes and instruments, to start a group, you know. Alex, we always know we wanted to have a group, but the time with Ramon in May of 1990 said that we could do it, we could start a group, because we had him as a major resource. He said, "I can serve you as a resource for you." So that sort of said, wow, we can do this. So we get home—and, of course, it started my—he died in 2006, so it was a sixteen-year relationship, a very close relationship that I'll talk about. Then we get married in August, and then we start our group in November of 1990. Remember, I don't know if I talked about this, but Kayamanan was founded by four individuals, (Leonilo) "Boy" (Angos) and Barbara (Ele). Boy Angos and Barbara Ele were from the Bayanihan side. Actually, Boy Angos called me—okay, here's the story of Kayamanan. I don't know if I said it. I get a call after our wedding from a gentleman who I met a

couple years before. His name was Boy Angos, and Boy was the musical coordinator of Bayanihan. He was a percussionist and instrumentalist, but his father was the first rondalla maestro in 1958, (Juanito) "Nitoy" Gonzalez, a very famous musician and composer in the Philippines, and I met Papa Nitoy by playing at UCLA. He used to play for some of our gigs at UCLA, but here he was having another life as a musician in America, but he had this world-class, you know, experience. So Boy, his son, knew of our student activism, and Boy was not done yet playing music. He longed to play music as well, and so he called me in probably September or October of 1990 and basically said, "Hey, Joel, you want to start a group?"

0:11:17.2

CLINE:

Where was he?

JACINTO:

He was in North Hollywood. He was living in North Hollywood.

CLINE:

Interesting.

0:13:05.2

JACINTO:

So he had located here, and he had a wife and he had a young, young daughter. His wife, Barbara, was also a soloist and also came through Bayanihan. So Boy and Barbara came from that state-supported, you know, world travelers. Both of them had traveled the world, okay? Remember we had all these materials, and so the confluence of us having this materials, having the support of Ramon Obusan, and then it was almost like an idol of mine, because I used to listen to—before I knew Ramon, I would listen to the recordings of Bayanihan on albums, right, and try to recreate the rhythms of the percussion, of the indigenous instrumentation, because we had lack of instruction, lack of access to instruments as well as instruction. So we'd just pound it out, just kind of listen into how do you do that, you know, and it was more like rhythmic mode. There's no technique. There's no cultural context behind those things. That's how in the dark we were. So when Boy called me, it was like another cultural mentor or cultural icon was calling, said, "Wow, what confluence all this has," in the span of from, you know, from meeting Ramon in May to getting a call from Boy in September, you know. So things happened really, really

quick. So we decided to do it. We take a leap of faith and said, “Okay, let’s try to form a group,” with Boy and myself were the principals, but my partner in crime and the better half of me was Ave.

So Boy and Barbara from the Philippines, Ave and Joel, although Ave was born in the Philippines, came over here at a young age, so basically Fil-Am and me being Fil-Am. So you have this couples, Filipino and Fil-Am, right, Filipino American, getting together to start this group Kayamanan Ng Lahi, which means “treasures of our people,” and the thing there about it is it is not the worldly treasures, it’s not the material culture, per se, that is the treasures; it’s really our culture in general, the intangible.

CLINE:

Where did the decision come from to call it that? Whose idea was it?

JACINTO:

Ah, okay. It came from me. I had a dream, and a lot of things come to you in dreams. I had been reading a book about Philippine jewelry and Philippine wealth—“kayamanan” means wealth or treasures or riches—and it was a big coffee table book, and I got it when I was in the Philippines, and I think that word “kayamanan” stuck in me. So I came up with Kayamanan, and then my aunt in San Francisco said, “Joel, you know, you should add Ng Lahi,” treasures of our race or treasures of our people, so that’s how it got to be Kayamanan Ng Lahi. Boy wanted something little bit shorter like (Philippine phrase). (Philippine word) also means, like, treasures, but we kept it Kayamanan, and the name has stuck. So our initials are KNL, Kayamanan Ng Lahi, so that’s how we refer, because it’s Kayamanan Ng Lahi is, like five syllables too. So yeah, so Boy and Barbara, and at the first it was like a lesson in cultural détente, because Boy and Barbara had their formula and what was successful on the world stage, and Ave and I were the opportunists who were based here, who did things already as student activists and didn’t have the same orientation as them. We didn’t have the same background. We were culturally different, very, very different, and that was a challenge in of itself.

0:15:17.8

CLINE:

I’ll bet.

JACINTO:

Yeah.

CLINE:

How much did your depth of experience in your encounter in the Hawaiian culture help make the détente a little smoother?

JACINTO:

Yeah, it did to a certain degree, you know, because I had the orientation, again, of knowledge being passed down from generation to generation. I had that orientation, and that's what gravitated to me in the beginning of sort of handling the education, the program, if you will, Alex, okay, the program, how we do things, how we research, how we acquire knowledge. I mean, that's my thing. That's my role. Boy was immediately the musical and the technical coordinator about, you know, the presentation and some of the artistry and especially the music. Barbara, his wife, although she's a dancer, was kind of quiet in the beginning because we had another choreographer working with her, so she was mainly a dancer, but in the next couple of years she really blossomed into taking the role as the dance director and choreographer who I would work with closely. So the fourth wheel, Ave, Ave's always about business, always about the administrative, handling the managing aspect. So we all had four different roles after, you know, the initial three or four years that worked really, really well.

CLINE:

But you were also all performing then.

0:17:10.9

JACINTO:

And we were also performing, yeah, yeah, so, you know, you're inside, you're doing your lugging, you know. It was everything, you know. When you start a group like that—and twenty years later I realize how much of our lives we devoted to just birthing this folk arts organization, as we call it. It's a nonprofit, but we're a folk arts organization—of the Sunday rehearsals, you know.

We started off at UCLA in the amphitheater, in the Fowler Museum Amphitheater. Actually, we had our first one over at a Filipino bookstore off of Wilshire (Boulevard) in Beverly Hills. That was the first one, and then we relocated to UCLA, and for the course of the next twenty years, we would be practicing in

YMCAs and YWCAs in and around West Los Angeles, Santa Monica, and Venice. Then in 2006 we made a very strategic move to come to Historic Filipinotown and to, you know, basically fulfill the opportunity we had with SIPA, where I work as executive director. But Kayamanan really represents the diversity of the Filipino community as it is because we're heterogeneous. We come from different orientations. We have different cultural experiences, you know. So it was really a microcosm of the community, you know.

CLINE:

Now, there are these four people and you're starting out. How did you go about putting together your program and looking for venues? You kind of defined what people's roles were. I'm thinking that either very quickly or eventually there were more than four people involved in this, so how did that evolve?

0:19:18.4

JACINTO:

You know, the intent with Kayamanan in the beginning when Boy had called me was that he knew I came from UCLA and that was our base of support, that was our base of our participation, so naturally we recruited from our friends at UCLA, the people that we taught with and danced with, and the collegiate level became our first batch, and that was true, because we came with this, you know, this following, this participation. So we were close to the Westside because we lived in Culver City, you know. We probably started out with about twenty to twenty-five people who would rehearse with us on a weekly basis.

The repertoire was pretty much a replica of Bayanihan's work, and then a couple years later when we had our first major performance, we started our own concept of creating Philippine dance, contemporary Philippine dance. It was mostly the Western Christian influence because that's what, as Westernized Filipinos, we had, I think, more apt and more inclination to do. So Barbara and I created these dances based off the musical compositions of Nitoy Gonzalez, and we did our first major performance. It was called Tertulia, and "tertulia" was the colonial term for a soiree, an afternoon soiree, where arts and music were an integral part of it, small, parlor-like, but we blew it up into a production at the Hyatt (Hotel), one of the Hyatts downtown. I think it was the Hyatt on Seventh (Avenue) and—I forget the actual—

0:20:32.3

CLINE:

Near the 110 Freeway.

0:21:07.9

JACINTO:

Right, right. So we did that, and that was our first big production. So again, you have a Bayanihan repertoire and then you have this orientation of Ramon Obusan, so over the years, I think, I don't remember, but it was pretty close within the first five years did we start to include the repertoire of Ramon Obusan, who actually Boy had a relationship when he was in Bayanihan. So there was some dynamics of, okay, now we're trying to insert another artistic—and we were pretty much all open to it, you know what I mean, but there was dynamics there.

I have to say, we had a choreographer who was working with us initially at the beginning. Her name was (unclear), and (unclear) was a good friend of Boy's and Barbara's and had come from the Bayanihan, too, as well, but she wasn't really a founder. I think over the course of the probably two years, that she basically transitioned out as our choreographer and Barbara sort of blossomed into taking that role. She didn't take that role initially. Barbara was kind of quiet. She was a little bit younger. She was probably two years or three years younger than us, not that much, you know, but she really blossomed in the first five years of our existence too. Okay, so important performances in the first couple of years. We really got a lot of support from people like Judy Mitoma at UCLA, CARS (Community Arts Resources), Aaron Paley, and the (International) Festival of Masks.

CLINE:

Oh, yeah. Right.

JACINTO:

Right? That was really big. I think the Festival of Masks really helped put Kayamanan on the world stage map of Los Angeles because the International Festival of Masks was an important cultural tradition, multiethnic, diversity, right, using masks as the idiom. Michael Alexander at Grand Performances picked us up early on in our first five years to start performing at Spiral Court in California (Plaza), the Water Court Plaza and everything like that, so we had a lot of play there. On the community side, the Festival of Philippine Arts and Culture, or FPAC, was a newly formed festival tradition. It started after the '92 riots as a collaboration between the (Los Angeles) City (Department of) Cultural Affairs and the Filipino community, and I happened to be the community liaison because they were working with the nonprofit SIPA. So again, all these things in my life had intertwined, so therefore we get a lot of play by being one of the anchor groups and cofounders of that festival as well. So, early on we were able to make our entrée to the world dance scene in Los Angeles because of also there was a lack of representation.

0:23:28.9

CLINE:

Yeah, exactly.

JACINTO:

Now, before us came, there were other Philippine groups that were still active, most notably folks like Fil(ipino)-Am(erican) Family Cultural Group led by a dear lady, Betty Sison Friese, who passed away in 2002, and that was really a cultural icon. They performed a lot for the Irwin Parnes world dance revues at the Dorothy Chandler (Pavilion). Irwin Parnes was a pretty famous impresario who handled those. So there had been other groups that had come before us in the community. So our context for Kayamanan—because we had to go out there and sort of pay our respects to Tita Betty because we had performed with her as well, but when we told her, "Tita Betty, this is not something to compete with you. This is something to really use as an educational outlet and the continuation for UCLA," and there was dynamics in that. Even though we said that to her, I think she felt that we were not a threat, but we were—she's like, "Why do you have to start a group? Why don't you just join my group already?" But we had a different orientation, and the orientation was that we would have not an activist, but a very specific approach to Philippine dance and music.

0:24:55.8

CLINE:

There's a word that I'm trying to come up with, but it's okay. I'm interested if you can articulate what that difference is.

0:27:26.4

JACINTO:

Well, the difference is that Tita Betty and preceding groups basically followed the revue, the idea of this suites, the idealized stereotypical Philippine iconic stereotypes of the primitive tribal person, the exotic southerner, the happy-go-lucky countryside person, peasant, you know what I mean, the sophisticated Spanish mestizo. All those stereotypes, because they are put forth in the performing arts, are very powerful. We didn't want to destroy those; we wanted to evolve those. We wanted to go a little bit deeper, so maybe we wanted to, ourselves, jump into the emic approach. So early on I began to try to figure out how I could bring a stronger framework, a stronger approach, a stronger understanding to what we were doing, Alex, and it would drive me to go back to school in 1995 in anthropology, and not just cultural anthropology; applied anthropology at California State (University) Long Beach. So from 1995 basically to 1999 I did the graduate coursework. I didn't finish, and I regret not being finished, because we were having some family issues and, you know, relationship issues that really just was really difficult, and I was working at SIPA, and I would do grad school at night and the additional work at

SIPA, so it was really hard on our marriage, but I got all the knowledge and I got what I came for. So I came out of four years of applied anthropology graduate coursework with a framework of culture based on a cultural anthropological model that we would use to build and to formalize the program framework of Kayamanan Ng Lahi, and we're really, really proud of that because it's applied, it makes sense, and it's based on theory, but there's the idea of it's applicable and it's helped us. We're testimony, because we have been using (unclear), and that cultural model is basically the ideological, the behavioral, and the material dimensions of culture.

So we approach our cultural productions and our cultural processes with the issues that we first have to understand, we have to train, and we have to have the materials in order to—that's sort of the package. I developed this equation, "I plus B plus M equals P," "I" for ideological, "B" for behavioral, "M" for material." All that goes in, equals the "P," the production, the presentation, the performance. So what you saw at Skirball, this "informance" or this "edutainment," was a process that's our framework at play where we try to have educational, entertaining, and enlightening performances that are based on strong ideological content. So we're not just dancing and not explaining, but we're sharing with you cultural norms, cultural ideals, ideals, so that the process of production is a process of engagement where we're drawing you in, we're helping transform you as an audience member and as a performer in the span of half an hour to an hour, you know. So that was a big thing for me, and that was my responsibility for the organization, to bring in, to develop this program that we have used, you know, since that time, since 1995, and continue to use it as a basis for our educational and our training and our performance model.

CLINE:

Wow. Through things like the Festival of Masks or whatever, how much awareness of and/or exposure or experience with some people from different cultural, different traditions—how much interaction did you have with people during maybe similar things from different traditions?

JACINTO:

So, you know, being part of the world dance scene, we get to know who's who, stuff like that, so we developed relationships with—I got to say also in 1994 we began to be part of the Dance Kaleidoscope—

CLINE:

Oh, yeah.

JACINTO:

—with Don Hewitt.

0:15:09.8

CLINE:

At the (John Anson) Ford (Amphitheater).

JACINTO:

Right. At the Ford and at the Luckman (Fine Arts Complex) and everything like that. So we joined that league of Dance Kaleidoscope, and we see everybody that's doing it, (unclear) Brasil, Linda Yudin, Gema Sandoval, with Danza Floricanto, with Sophiline Cheam Shapiro, and Japanese, but all the hula, of course. We're still maintaining my relationships with all the hula. We're still performing, Ave and I, at least. So we have the Hawaiians still. We have all these relationships that we're just drawing and just understanding and referencing where everybody's at. "What types of shows do you have?"

CLINE:

Right. That's what I was wondering.

0:31:38.5

JACINTO:

So everything shapes us. All our experiences shape us, and we really sort of are eclectic in taking these things. What is clear is over time, what draws us, especially what draws me, is the groups that have a strong narrative, because to share culture is a very open-ended conversation. If you're not able to get an answer, you're just going one way, and so the narrative for us was a way of drawing in the audience by having them think of their own narratives, so I immediately became attracted to all the groups that had really strong narratives. It's hard sometimes in world dance to draw good narratives. It's not the revue type; it's anti-revue, because anti-revue is just like the dances themselves tell a story, but that's a very, for me, again, a superficial story. There's other deeper things. So we looked for different narratives and we began to start to perform using a thematic approach to dance, meaning that we would sort of break down the barriers and do things outside of the box, take dancers from different regions and put them

together because they had the same theme.

So we tried to deconstruct and reconstruct Philippine culture using themes that, for one instance—and we got this, again, from Ramon. He really helped inspire these different things, dances that people do throughout the lifecycle. So you take a human lifecycle and you take dances and you highlight the lifecycle through these different dances so people can see the narrative of dances when you're young to dances as you're growing up to dances that males and females do separately to learn their genders in their life to dances of courtship to dances of marriage and to village celebration and death, and that goes back around. Those things, to me, they captured me, and, you know, I think that helps convey messages because it's a frame that people understand. It's a human narrative as opposed to just a Filipino narrative. We're just sharing with you what happens in the Philippines. So again, we get influenced by all these other dance groups because we're a part of it now, we're a player, and that was what we really enjoyed as well.

CLINE:

Were there some that really you found to be particularly influential that you can name?

0:33:26.0

JACINTO:

Gema Sandoval, her Day of the Dead, her Chicano series where she's doing Mexican folkloric dance, but from a Chicano perspective, like Si Se Puede. She did dances about Cesar Chavez, and these are folklorico style. She did a collaboration with Loretta Livingston about modern dance and using Mexican music, and we would later work with Gema on a historical project linking the Philippines and Mexico.

I began also to take the legends of Hawaii, because that's what hula is, obviously, accounts oral history and of legends, and there was a gentleman up in the Bay Area, his name is Patrick Mukuakane, and he had been doing really great work in terms of he did a series about Hawaii and effect of the missionaries coming, you know, and did these modern dance interpretations that were really—some say were sacrilegious, but they were very powerful because they were very much narrative-based. So those types of groups really engaged me, and sort of tried to weave the same things into what we were doing as well, yeah.

CLINE:

Wow. Yeah, you walked into my next question, which is if you were able to somehow draw on the hula side of your, in this case, adopted cultural context to interact with the material you were dancing with, Kayamanan.

0:35:52.1

JACINTO:

Oh, yeah. Alex, that's a very important part because I think the respect and the integrity of understanding—and hula, hula is based on an understanding and an appreciation and a closeness to the (unclear), to the land, but also to the spoken word and the power of the spoken word. In order to be not just a basic hula dancer or performer, you need to understand language, so just understanding Hawaiian language—and I have a basic understanding of Hawaiian. I know verbs and nouns. When a Hawaiian song comes on, I can understand what it's saying, generally, you know, because I have that basic knowledge. But that primary responsibility, that primary acknowledgement, that primary study of languages, you know, these are things I translated over to Philippine culture, says we can't do this dance because we don't understand enough of it or we don't have the material culture to represent it well or we don't know the music. It helped me develop a lens of critical analysis, of self-reflection, and, I believe, of cultural integrity.

So my hula background really shaped not only the program aspect of it, the knowledge and the types of knowledge that you have, like to our students, to our members, you have to have this knowledge, and I think it's some at the beginning, because the dynamics of the group are that a lot of people came because they were friends of ours, right, and some were more heavily in the culture, some were not. But I'm pretty sure that in the beginning I tended to sometimes be overbearing and a little bit harsh on people, like, "Oh, here goes Joel again with his culture," and everything like that, because they did not have the same orientation, you know, and they weren't used to it, and no other organization really had this level of cultural responsibility and cultural initiative, Alex. So I'm sure it created some dynamics with the organization. You know, they weren't limiting, you know. It still gave us life. It still defined us, but, you know, that was really, I think, my role for the organization, to help give it our cultural soul.

CLINE:

How much do you think you were able to open the eyes or minds and perhaps inspire some of the people who were performing with it to appreciate and get closer to connecting with that than they had before? How much do you think that may have happened?

0:38:22.00:39:58.4

JACINTO:

I think that's probably the biggest delta of the transformation in our group, that, by and large, everybody who comes through our group and stays significant amount of time reports and shares that, you know. There's two aspects of the group that why people stay and why people thrive, and some people have been with us twenty years, and the average tenure is eight or nine years, Alex. One is of the culture, of the culture of the organization. Three things. The culture of the organization, which is one of nurturing, one of social camaraderie, because one of the things why we started Kayamanan is, well, we wanted an

outlet for people to find community. It's not just about the culture we represent, but our culture, us as people giving something. So the culture of the organization, the culture that we channel and are able to spread out, so all the education. People have been transformed by, "Hey, I become a better Filipino. I understand more about myself and more about my heritage through Kayamanan."

I think the third thing would be the culture of interacting with our community and outside of our community, so the culture of performance, the culture of transaction, you know, where we're not able just to do this inside our group, but we're able to go around. We're able to do these mainstream things. We're able to go to Acapulco (unclear) to represent the Philippines to Acapulco and those types of—they're mainstream, because they're outside of our community, so not only inside our community. Inside our community we mainly do weddings and rituals of celebration, if you will, but outside it's when we get a chance to do things like the (unclear) or the Skirball. So what you witness was a very life-giving performance to our organization. Why? Because we're making connections. We're making connections. We're able to touch people. We're able to see that transformation, that glimmer in their eye. I had a gentleman from Nicaragua, and he came and he goes—he was speaking to me in Spanish. I speak Spanish, so he was speaking to me (unclear), "(Spanish phrase)," I've never seen this type of cultural performance in Los Angeles. So for him, he felt compelled to tell me it's like not just a good show, but, like, I never seen that before, "(Spanish phrase)," you know.

So those types of things are really, really important because our culture is very democratic, or we feel that it's our commodity. We can trade and represent, you know. On the world stage everybody's equal, right, and we just happen to have a lot of cultural commodity, so we use that to bring our community notoriety, which is important because there's an issue of Filipinos in America, Alex, flying under the radar. What are we known for? We're known for Imelda (Marcos). We're known for shoes. We're known for Ferdinand Marcos. We're known for these stereotypes that don't really tell the whole picture. So part of it is messaging, you know.

CLINE:

Well, I think the big confusion is what that picture is, because if the Philippines are even known to be what we might call the kind of archetypal colonial model, thereby it's incredibly layered, it's incredibly diverse, and in a very nuanced and potentially very confusing way, I think, to people outside that point of reference. So I'm not sure people really even know what it means to be Filipino.

JACINTO:

Right. Exactly. You're right.

CLINE:

So what do you do? How do you present it, then?

0:42:01.8

JACINTO:

You can start by what we do in terms of culturally who we are. What are some tidbits? In fifty minutes you can only do so much, but you can do a lot. So if they understand, oh, Filipinos are Southeast Asians, they have all these layers of influence, they have this Western influence and they have this indigenous thing here going on, oh, and Filipinos are close to the environment. They tend to create their dances about the animals in the environment.

Okay, so you're learning these different things, and it creates a picture, an essential picture, if you will, a foundational picture of who the Filipino is from a very cultural standpoint, that music and dance are very much an important part of our lives. Hopefully all these things can come through in a fifty-minute performance. Maybe not. You could ask yourself how much—and you're an insider, in a way, you're in the know, but for the average person who comes to our show who sat through one of our shows at the Skirball, what did they learn? What was transformed? Oh, they learned a rhythm. They learned that Filipino culture is participatory, so you're not just watching; you participate, too, as well. Oh, that's how Filipinos work in the fields, little things. I mean, they're little things. No, as trivial as it may seem, you know, I think that it steps up a person's knowledge from one level to the next, and that's important. We take that responsibility—and that's what I think defines our performances, as audience engagement types of things, because we take that approach. It's not about, okay, watch us. Here's a show. But we really consider the audience to say how do we make you a part of it, because that is very Filipino, and if anything else, if people walk out saying, "You know, Filipinos are very inviting, they're very sharing," well, shit, then we're good.

0:43:52.3

CLINE:

This is so funny because as soon as you stopped, I was going to say my impression was that probably the average person came away with the following feeling. The Filipino experience is very inviting and very uplifting, so you walk out feeling better than you did when you came in.

JACINTO:

Right. And that is to the core, to the core, Alex. Being a Filipino American or even a Filipino, we don't actively—we're like in a fishbowl. You're Filipino, who cares? I'm Filipino. I know, I know. You're innate, you know. It's all implicit in with you. In an American landscape and where we're here now we are challenged, and we have the opportunity now to look at our culture, embrace it, and to be able to talk about it, to represent, to manifest itself, to talk about it explicitly so that it's not just a cultural thing

because we're all the same. We're not all the same. We have to share it and help understand. So the challenge for Kayamanan is taking something that is internal within us and innate and implicit and making it explicit. So the idea of there's a central core theme that really guides, I think, a Filipino spirituality and culture is the idea that in everybody there is a creative living being, and the idea of kapwa, k-a-p-w-a, is this idea of shared humanity. How more basic can you get? That in everything there is this life-giving force, and the whole idea about life is to be able to make connections with that creative life force and other beings recognizing it so you all become one. So the idea of Filipinos sort of going inwards to say we are all humanity is a very fundamental driving thing. I don't care how many layers of influence you got, Chinese, Spanish, American, if you have something of Filipino blood in you, that is there, and bringing that part of the collective unconsciousness to the surface is really, I think, the key, because that's a good thing. Shared humanity and valuing everybody, that's a pretty relevant theme these days, right, so it helps the Filipino become a world citizen to be malleable enough to be able to deal with this and that. No, oh, that's not like us. You know what I mean? We're very obviously inviting. We're very easy to acquire new ideas on top of our own and mix those with our own. So that's a very important part of this stage twenty years into the game, being more purposeful in relaying these cultural themes and ideas.

0:46:37.1

CLINE:

How much were you able to plug into some of the extent avenues for getting work out there in the community, things like Performing Tree or Music Center on Tour (MCOT)?

JACINTO:

Yeah, good question. Those things we had been less successful with because of the limitation of work. None of us, we're all full-time. I mean, that's just the thing, so, Alex, we always wanted to and we had the perfect setup for Music Center on Tour, Performing Tree. I don't think Performing Tree is still around, are they?

CLINE:

No.

JACINTO:

No, so MCOT, Music Center on Tour, is there, and we talked to them a number of times. You know, to make the leap to say, okay, we're going to be available for, you know, three hours and school assemblies—I even developed a repertoire and everything like that and a script, so we were all ready to go, it's just the time, the operationalization, like that too. But what we were able to do is, you know, we get known in terms of if we perform in a wedding, inevitably we'll get referrals by word of mouth. So we've done in twenty years probably close to three, four hundred weddings in the Filipino community.

0:47:37.4

CLINE:

Wow.

JACINTO:

Then, you know, in the mainstream our names are out there, so we're out there performing.

CLINE:

How many gigs do you tend to do per year outside the wedding circuit?

JACINTO:

Together with the weddings, we probably do anywhere from twenty-five to fifty. We did more in the first ten years because, you know, we didn't have families. We turn down a lot more because it's, again, quality time, and we have to be very sensitive to our performance so that they want to do it, you know. But outside of weddings, we probably have anywhere from a dozen to fifteen performances out there in the public in some way, shape, and form.

CLINE:

You mentioned how when you went back to school it was hard on your marriage. How do you make time for all this?

JACINTO:

Yeah, yeah, good question, Alex. Well, first of all, you know, Ave and I consider Kayamanan as our first baby because we helped give birth to it, too, as well, but like any other family, we wanted our own, and so we embarked on our own journey of having children starting from when we got married all the way up until 1999 when Kai

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JACINTO:

was born. So we basically went through the world of sort of prayer and science combined, you know, faith and science.

So I was very blessed, actually went to the Philippines and participated in a fertility festival called (Philippine phrase), the Dance of Obando. Obando's a town north of Manila in Bulacan province that is where childless couples come to dance and pray for children or women pray for a male and males pray for a female to different saints, so it's very iconic, very, you know, very religious-vow-type, and I went in 1999, and it was in May. Because of, I think, our faith and my faith, that we asked god for a child, and Kai came in December. Then the year next I went back as my religious vow and my bainata. Bainata is "religious vow," the Filipinos' (unclear). Again, for the Catholics, it's a very strong Catholic tradition. Went back and we had another baby five years later, so I don't have to go back anymore, but the idea that stuck with me is this idea of religious vow or a vow, whether it be—others call it, you know—monks take a vow of silence, a vow of piety, a vow of poverty, a vow, and a vow is something very powerful because it's your total commitment. So, Alex, I think that I realized that Kayamanan and our work is our vow for the gifts that have been given to us, right, for all the investments, all the universe, and god has given us all these blessings. It's our responsibility, it's our vow, it's our intent to pass those on to future generations because we're at the point we're realizing that, hey, the Philippine culture in America—we're not going back to the Philippines. Our children and the generations after us are going to be totally Filipino American and then some, probably, over the course of generations, and it's our responsibility. In other communities like the Native Hawaiian and Native American they always consider the actions in your life and where you are in the milieu seven generations before you, your ancestors, and seven generations after you, and with that type of, you know, perspective, it makes things little bit more clear about what your responsibility is. All you have to do—not all you have to do, but you just got to pass it on to the next one, not only the knowledge, but also the responsibility, just pass it on. That's why for our twentieth anniversary last November or theme was "Salin Lahi," which is generations for passing it on from generation to generation, because now our kids are performing with us, and Barbara and Boy's their daughter had been performing with us a while. We've had generations of kids come, but for me and Ave, it's just, you know, twenty years now. That's the short end of a generation, but we're coming to be a generation, so the issue of how will Kayamanan Ng Lahi survive past its founders.

There was a death of a founder of a group in San Diego just two days ago, Lolita Carter, who founded Samahan Dance Company, and they're going to be dealing with that issue right now, because we realized that other groups have died because they were founder-based, and that's not our intent. I think

Kayamanan, our intent is that we have a program that's so important, that's so integral and so relevant and so appropriate that it's got to be cared for and passed from one generation to the next, so that's the type of program we have of one of documentation, one of using technology, one of being very purposeful, is really important.

CLINE:

Do you keep an archive?

JACINTO:

Yeah, we keep written archives and visual archives, audio archives, although that needs to be, you know—if you mean they're on CD, on DVD, okay, they're there, but they're not all labeled. I have some level of documentation, of indexing, and of—what would you call it—of cataloguing, but it's at a very infantile stage, and I think as I progress, I will devote more time and effort to that and engage others to help me, because what we have in Kayamanan is probably the most extensive research and archival and source material in the United States of any Philippine dance group in the United States.

0:54:38.9

CLINE:

How much, if any, inroads are possible, or that you witnessed have been possible, to be made between the type of people that you serve through SIPA and cultural organizations like Kayamanan as perhaps alternative avenues for people who are, to use the term used last time, at risk, for example? You hear sometimes about cultural organizations providing an outlet for people who didn't have a healthy outlet, perhaps, in their own community? How much connection have you seen in that regard?

JACINTO:

Oh, yeah, I think tremendous, tremendous, not only Kayamanan, but as a community at large. Realize that who are the major participants in these Philippine dance performances? It tends to be children, youth, and young adults, you know.

CLINE:

Yeah, dance tends to be kind of often, anyway, sort of age-limiting.

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JACINTO:

Right. Although we're trying to change that, being in the late forties, to say, hey, man, the best dancers are the mature dancers. They may not move the best and they may not amplify everything, but they got the most soul because they got the most history, right? So I'm trying to live that life. (laughs) In the context of the village or our first voice, life, you don't stop dancing because, oh, someone's wondering I don't look as I good as I used to. You know what I mean? So we're trying to encourage our dancers, say, "No, you dance throughout life."

But at SIPA in particular, when I was brought in—and again, I was brought in because I started a nonprofit a year before, and so they saw in me obviously this fire, this opportunity to be the front guy, but also that I had a commitment to nonprofit work or mission-driven work, okay. I brought in the culture with me. Of course, I brought in the resources in Kayamanan and some of the same things, so I used to work with our kids. I used to teach our kids at SIPA, and they were at risk. They were knuckleheads, you know, the batches that I taught when I first started the first five years, and I taught them ritual dances. I and our senior leadership taught them dances really of ritual because we wanted to give them not just movement and happy, happy stuff, but ritual so that they could get an idea about ideas of use of symbols and use of special performances that punctuate your life, you know what I mean, give them a little bit more depth. To this day, some of the kids who are now young adults who are now married look back and report to me, "Joel, man, those dances you taught, man, that was so important," because we gave them self-esteem. It gave them an identity. It gave something to latch onto, say, this is part of who I am, and when you're able to give that to a young person who has no mirror, if you will, has no cultural reference—it was different than their parents, right. They don't share the same culture as their parents, and you give them something that could relate them not only to their parents, but to their culture, to the homeland, you're giving them almost, like, an anchor to latch and say here's a tether. No matter where you go, this is who you are, this is where you come from, and that's very empowering.

So we have at SIPA literally used culture to bring all these hundreds and hundreds of kids throughout the years, you know, some more than others, and whether it is promoting a sense of idea of community, because you're in a community-based setting, or issues of kuya and ate, which are terms for "older brother" and "older sister," you know, terms of respect, those are all things that help kids develop this idea of this is who I am, I'm a part of this. Even if they're not, you have Latino Mexican calling kuya, ate, using terms not reserved, but intended to call your older brother or sister, but they're using those, so it's very eclectic like that too. So, good question. We do, we intertwine that. I brought that because of my background to SIPA, and Kayamanan—and we go back to 2006 to say, "Hey, man, we've been around for a while. We should consider bringing our program closer to the center of our community," which was on Temple Street at SIPA, Alex, so that's when we started to run our program out of SIPA.

CLINE:

Creating a bit of a commuter situation for—

JACINTO:

Well, for us, but, you know, others, you know—because we all come from all over L.A., you know, L.A. city and beyond, and people will travel, you know, to be with us because they love the organization, they love the group.

CLINE:

Right. Yeah. How much interaction do you have, then, with other Filipino-based performing groups (unclear)?

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JACINTO:

You know, there were a couple that started in the nineties or early nineties. From 1990 to 1995 there was a proliferation of Philippine dance groups, probably three or four in addition to us, so we were, like, five, and we all see them around, you know. It's sort of this issue of tribalism, you know. You're not us, so you're the other, but the idea is at a strategic level what we're all doing is incredible work, because we're doing this to put forth this love of culture. I realize that we need to have all these different dance groups because L.A. County is so broad, you know. You can't service all the people. You have to have regional groups. We tend to be, you know, centrally located, as well as Westside because that's where Ave and I are living. Other groups are Glendale. Other groups are the (San Fernando) Valley, you know. So there were a couple of groups that were at the community-based level, you know, that had a level of capacity that was—how should I say—mainstream-ready. I don't know what that means, but it had a certain level of artistic achievement where, you know, it was programmed in the mainstream as well, just a couple, probably not more than two or three.

The other phenomenon throughout the years, we talked about this idea of dance at the student-collegiate level, and Kayamanan, because of our orientation, always went back and were asked to go back to teach at the collegiate level. So technical assistance and consultation is one way by which we've been able to sow seeds, so for twenty years we've been working with all these different—not all these different, but different student-based organizations who would come to us to learn repertoire, to learn our dances, and so that is where we provide services to our community as well. These are the eighteen to twenty-five, that demographics of young adults who are in college and who are using their student experiences to further their cultural identity, you know.

So there's a phenomenon, Alex, that's known as the Pilipino Cultural Night, or PCN, okay, and in the eighties Ave and I were at the birth of the genre at UCLA and other colleges and we've seen it become an important vehicle for identity development within that age group. So we've tried to really organize and help them understand culture as well, because there's not just culture. There's skits. There's themes. It's like a vaudeville show, you know. There's modern dance, and they do kind of visual stuff as well. You know what I mean? But at the heart of it it's the Pilipino Cultural Night, and it's not really so Pilipino. It's Pilipino American or Filipino American, really, because that's the context of what this is, but we try to help keep the "P" in there.

CLINE:

So how did starting Kayamanan increase your awareness of an involvement in the activities of other Philippine performing arts groups in the area? How close are some of these groups to one another?

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JACINTO:

We have cordial relationships, you know. Sometimes we'd do stuff with them, you know. As community folks, we all have relationships, you know, so it was very fluid, in a way, you know, in terms of sometimes we would have members come from one group to another, you know, but it was always about—and it was microcosms of the community in terms of conflict and resolving conflict, because there's this issue in the Philippines and other communities where we don't resolve conflict well, so what we'll do is we'll start our own group. You know what I mean? So you have the inability or that sort of dynamics about not being able to get along or not being able to work it.

In Kayamanan, I think we have been very, very noted for being able to take diverse points of view and working it out. So again, Boy and Barbara from the Philippine side and Ave and I, and so we're like—and now Boy has stepped out as musical technical director. He's a consultant, but he's really handling the music with another group, and he still comes and performs with us, so we're still led by us through Barbara as dance director and choreographer, myself, program director, and so Barbara and I are like the co-artistic directors, and then Ave as our business, so we're the triad. So Barbara and I, and with Ave's sort of overall management, take care of the organization, and we've stuck together. We go back and forth. Sometimes we don't totally agree, but we learn to compromise. We learn to say, "Hey, man, that's your expertise. I could do it as well, but you know what? Just do it," because it's this idea of working in the collective and cooperatively and teamwork as opposed to, like, I want to work it all by myself. You know what I mean? In other groups it works that way, but in ours it's just too much. It was too much to ask of any one person.

CLINE:

When this blossoming during the nineties happened of these Filipino performing arts groups and you started to see a bit of a proliferation in dance groups and things, what are some of the developments that you've seen come out of the community that are perhaps new and different since that time?

JACINTO:

The dance groups have shrunk. A number of those groups that were started in the early nineties are not as active anymore. That's alarming.

CLINE:

How much of that is an age-based phenomenon?

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JACINTO:

Not so much age-based. I think it deals with a number of issues, including infrastructure of the organization, of attrition, because what happens is as you focus on kids, once they get to high school, there's difficult break in high school, and high school students are less around because they got so much more competing things. So you have them from the time they're up to, like, twelve, thirteen, and then you lose them for high school, and then you gain them back for college, and then hopefully on. So the groups that are really youth-based that don't have the other end of the spectrum tend to go through cycles where they lose their performers, okay, so attrition, age-based. Programmatic activity. If the group is not active all the time and you're not able to engage and keep people rehearsing for what, you know what I mean, then, again, people tend to fall out.

So that is alarming, and I don't look at that something as very, very positive, you know, like, because we don't want to, nor do we intend, to monopolize the Philippine dance scene in the Southland, but we're probably one of a handful of, you know—a couple of groups that are performing for shows. So there's a lot of demand for a group like ours because people want us to service a community, you know, and we have to respond to that demand. So that means driving all over, you know. But what has happened in the community is that it's very, very difficult to start groups now because of the idea of longevity, of how do you sustain basically a volunteer-driven arts organization, Alex. You have to understand about Filipinos. None of the members pay dues. We have an administrative fee at Kayamanan. You know what a person pays for Kayamanan for a quarter, which is basically about ten to twelve weeks? Thirty-five dollars. That's more of an administrative fee, you know, and they don't pay for any of their costumes or anything like that. We handle that through grants and through contract and revenue income and generation.

So, by and large, none of our dance groups in the community charge a fee, and maybe that's, you know,

something, an issue that we need to take a look at in terms of other services. If you take your kid to a ballet or another class, you would pay $50 a month for one class a week. You know what I mean? So what we charge, 35, other people sometimes charge $150, $200.

CLINE:

Wow.

JACINTO:

Yeah, it comes out to like $3 a class, and on average, you're going to pay $10 a class for a dance class. You know what I mean? So there's tremendous value in it, but for Kayamanan, that's not a limiting factor. What keeps people coming back is what they learn and, again, those three things, the drivers, the culture of the organization, the culture of the country or who we are, and then the culture of performance.

CLINE:

What about other performing arts forms or medium? I'm thinking of particularly coming out of the Filipino American experience as the generations start progressing. We have more young people coming through the American cultural filter. What kind of developments do you see coming from that experience?

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JACINTO:

Very acutely dance, dance and music, so as a pop culture, Filipinos are always exposed to that, too, and take to that readily, Filipino, Filipino American youth. So the hip-hop and the contemporary pop culture is huge, and so there's a portion of these PCNs that feature modern dance. It's usually hip-hop-based, and it's huge. If you look at the commercial world right now, America's Best Dance Crew, So You Think You Can Dance?, it's populated by Filipino winners and people that have done well, Dancing with the Stars, Cheryl Burke. You know what I mean? So there's that issue of Filipinos are good dancers, you know. The world found out. Well, we already knew.

So Filipino American students are taking all their experiences and weaving it into their Cultural Nights because they're appropriating this as their culture as well. There's a lot of Filipino rappers. There's a lot

of Filipino dancers, you know, out there, in general, Alex, and so we're trying to monitor that and realize that that's part of the contemporary thing. So we're trying to weave that in some way, shape, or form into our performances. We have numbers where, you know, they're part of our dance performances and concerts, but they're modern-dance-based, you know what I mean, because Filipinos are doing it. It's part of culture, because our little kids are doing it. We're passing it on from generation to generation, and that's obviously the idea of cultures, learned and shared behavior that's passed down from generation to generation. It's more of a contemporary cultural expression, but it's cultural, nonetheless, when it's passed down from generation to generation, you know. So dance, especially, because it's very participatory, it's very accessible. You know what I mean? You can have 10,000 people dancing, and student numbers, you know, they have hundreds of students participating in these Cultural Nights on individual campuses, and that's a lot of human resources. That's a lot of initiative when you're able to get people together to rehearse intensively for that amount of time. So we're monitoring that, and we want to bring that in, because the idea of Kayamanan is a Filipino American endeavor. You know, if you talk about this issue of are we a pure Filipino, no, we're not. We have to be real. Some of our members have never been to the Philippines. Some of our children, you know, this is the only Filipino thing they've ever done, and so we have to be really transparent about where we lie in the continuum, and it's being true to ourselves and it's being true to who we are.

So on the world dance stage, you know, Kayamanan is very much a folk arts organization. It's based on folk arts, but it's very much in the Filipino American context, so therefore, we don't replicate things that are done in the Philippines. We don't follow the Philippine trajectory, because that's a different mindset. That's a different market, if you will. They say when you dance in Philippine groups, you're basically dancing for the economics for it, that you either want to get a job going to America or to do other things. It's not so much for the love of culture, because you're already Filipino. You know what I mean? That's not a study, but that's a thesis or a hypothesis that I have, that the motives for dancing in the Philippines is different than the locus of motivation for Filipino Americans, and I believe it's different.

CLINE:

These are the kind of issue I think I want to take up in our last session, a lot of issues of identity and what it means, especially for you personally, and all the different layers that you've been able to experience and draw on to define who Joel

JACINTO:

is. Related to this, I wanted to ask you a really kind of nuts-and-bolts question. How many languages do you speak?

JACINTO:

Spanish as a second language, because I studied it a long time in school. Tagalog is jack. It's half-half. I understand it and I can form small sentences like that, so that would be my third language. My fourth one that I understand enough and can speak a little bit of is Hawaiian, through the mele, through songs. So that's it. That's not a lot.

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CLINE:

I imagine your pidgin is also quite developed.

JACINTO:

Yeah, my vernacular—pidgin, yeah. If I talk with someone from Hawaii, then it comes out. So I'm a code-switcher. I am a code-switcher. I am a code switcher, and I believe that that is a skill that you need in order to make connections, so I find myself as not a cultural chameleon, but as a code-switcher. So if I'm with my folks from Hawaii and there's a friend and I want to make connections, I'm going to code-switch. I'm going to go immediately into pidgin because it's the language you're most successful, and I do this a lot. Sometimes I make mistakes. If I'm in a store and someplace and clearly the person is Hispanic or Latino, I'm going to speak Spanish to them just because I want to make connections with them. I want to speak their language. I want them to know, you know what I mean, whereas Tagalog, an elder person, then I'll speak. If it's a younger person, then, you know—so it's this whole idea about how we communicate and using different languages, begin to make connections.

CLINE:

How much of the language connection do you see being maintained among the younger generation in the community?

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JACINTO:

Oh, it's very dismal if you didn't grow up with the language. A very small percentage of our Fil-Ams are able to speak Tagalog or any Filipino language just through learning it—if they're a recent immigrant, of course they have much more, because they were born and raised or they had much more exposure, Alex. But language is an issue in our community because there are not enough—you have second- and third-generation Filipino families who haven't been able to give language to their children,

so the language is lost, and the parents' generation didn't have it either. My parents were immigrants, and so obviously I had a little bit because my parents spoke Tagalog to each other and to us, but now my generation that didn't grow up as native speakers and have this issue with the generations down the line.

So as a community, we're trying to deal with this issue of linguistic amnesia, you know. How do we bring it back? I don't think we're going to be able to bring it back to have everybody become proficient speakers, but it's more of the heritage learning where language is a part of heritage and identity learning, so it becomes more holistic than intensive language instruction. As long as my kids understand concepts of kapwa, of respecto, and certain nouns, then, again, that's a part of a picture that they'll have. We would love to have Tagalog taught as Spanish as a language, so we have to do the advocacy there as well, and that's a big issue. In San Diego they've done a much better job about teaching Filipino in different levels at the high schools and the colleges in San Diego, and in L.A., (demonstrates). So the venue that has the most Filipinos outside of the Philippines has a dearth of access to Filipino language instruction, which is shitty, because, you know, the politics of advocacy and the allocation of resources, it's just really tough, you know, but that's part of our work at SIPA. So we've had our own attempts at language heritage learning, and we've been very successful, but again, we're trying to build a sustainable model where it's based on fee for service, because for language, it's different than dance, you know. You have to pay instructors that are very skilled, not that dancers are not, but that have the capacity to teach. So we had ones for a number of different cycles at SIPA, but we kept getting that request all the time, and we could say, "We wish we could fill it." We're still intent on it because it is a market need, if you will, speaking from that standpoint.

1:17:27.6

CLINE:

You mentioned last time that you were on a Sunset Cruise dancing for mostly Japanese tourists.

JACINTO:

Yeah, yeah, Alii Kai, yeah.

CLINE:

You didn't know much of your—

JACINTO:

No, I didn't learn that much Japanese.

CLINE:

You didn't learn much Japanese.

JACINTO:

No, because I only worked there two years, and I worked there part-time, so it wasn't my major profession, although my colleagues who were female and males, that was their livelihood, you bet they learned Japanese enough to converse. My dear friend Derek Nui Heiva was an interpreter, so he knew Japanese enough to be a primary speaker. So he married a Japanese girl, too, and he has that duality about him, too, as well, and that's why he's been able to teach hula in Japan where, again, I mentioned it's the largest market in hula in the world outside of Hawaii.

CLINE:

Wow. There you go.

1:18:26.2

JACINTO:

Yeah, yeah, so you have a lot of hula instructors that are going there too. So, Alex, I think this was really good for me this year, to talk about, again, the dynamics of the nineties and the communities, and then the next time—

CLINE:

We'll finish up next time talking more about where Kayamanan's at now, where you're at now, and basically I'd like to get a picture of how you think of who you are with all these various dreams all coming together to form Joel

JACINTO:

Okay?

JACINTO:

Great.

CLINE:

Layers. We'll look at the layers.

JACINTO:

Layers, strands, weavings, yeah.

CLINE:

Okay?

JACINTO:

Very good. Thank you, Alex.

CLINE:

Thank you. (End of July 27, 2011 interview)

SESSION FOUR (August 12,2011)

CLINE:

Today is August 12th, 2011. This is Alex

CLINE:

interviewing Joel

JACINTO:

once again at my home studio in Culver City (California). This is our fourth session. This is going to do it for us.

0:00:27.7

JACINTO:

laughs) I know. I'm always just completely disappointed when these interviews end, but it's great we have today. Thank you for coming by.

JACINTO:

Thank you, Alex.

CLINE:

We talked a lot last time about Kayamanan Ng Lahi and its artistic direction, its position in the Filipino American community here in Los Angeles, as well as how it relates to other world dance groups in the area. There's a little bit more I want to cover about that, and then I want to also get into some more kind of just personal areas, identity, cultural, artistic, personal, etc. First of all, one of the things I wanted to ask you about is you mentioned how in Kayamanan Ng Lahi there's a lot of commitment that people either bring to it or that gets nurtured and then perhaps blossoms during people's tenure in the company because of the culture of the company and the connection to the culture, in this case Filipino culture, and the performance culture. So what I wanted to ask you first off is if there is ever an attraction by people who are not Filipino to work with the company, and, if so, who are those people?

JACINTO:

Yeah. Wow. Great question. You're reading between the lines. (laughter) Let me just say that is a phenomenon that has existed in Kayamanan since our inception. In the early nineties we welcomed a Chinese American gentleman who stayed with us for five years till he went to graduate school. Currently we have an Irish American, pretty much very light-skinned, brown hair, from Brooklyn by way of Arizona. Her name is Colleen (phonetic) and she is a staff member. She is over and above not just a performer, but a staff member. She danced the Philippine dance at Arizona, experienced—it goes back to non-Filipinos interactions with Filipinos, okay, so I think this phenomenon is not unique to Kayamanan Ng Lahi, but rather it's a reflection, a manifestation of Filipinos' general acceptance, recognition of the creative life force in other beings, Alex. So I'll go back to a very fundamental Filipino concept of that of—

0:03:08.1

CLINE:

Is it kapwa?

JACINTO:

—kapwa. I mean, you recognize your shared humanity, so it doesn't matter if you're Filipino or not. You have this creative life force, and so therefore were, I think, very open, very much willing to share and to just make connections with people too. So people who are interested, that's basically the prerequisite. You're not interested, you're not interested. But Garrett (phonetic) was as a Chinese American. Colleen has been as a Filipino American. So I just had a Mexican American boyfriend of a sister of a member who sat in a workshop, a music workshop, taught in Philippine, ensemble music,

communal music, and through the course of that interaction, he wants to come back, said, "Joel, I want to play music with you guys. Tell me if there's a next step." So I think our ability to recognize that, to welcome, to engage, and to share is definitely what makes us attractive to people, makes us accessible. We're not insular and we're not regimented, so to speak, little bit more organic and fluid.

0:05:05.9

CLINE:

Right. Well, one of the things we talked about last time were some of the qualities that seem to be the kinds of feelings that people come away with upon seeing a performance of Kayamanan, and we came up with a few words. The word that I was thinking of that I did not express last time was inclusiveness, which is, I think, exactly what you're describing, and that also made me wonder about in terms of what Kayamanan is doing now, how much, if any, effort is made to, in a sense, reach out beyond the Filipino community to find participants, or do you even ever sort of do outreach or recruitment, as it were?

0:06:21.3

JACINTO:

Yeah, that's another great question, because we talk about how do we sustain the organization over the course of a longer period, and what is our operational procedure about recruitment, and we're always open. We accept students on a quarterly basis, so they have to come at the beginning of January or the beginning of April, the beginning of July or the beginning of October, and we basically want—in order to bring in new people, we have to orientate them well. We have to welcome them, give them the program, so that happens through people just saying, "I have friends." Someone sees us in a performance, so they write us on email. We have a lot that are college students or graduates who have seen us throughout the years, that they're now old enough and they can drive themselves or they have the time now to spend. They'll come on their own and then they'll join us, so that we have multiple ways, although we don't do actual recruitment per se. I don't go out and I don't recruit at the students. It's more of by virtue of who we are and what we do, people will come, and we always—I mean, we make ourselves accessible on the website saying, "Hey, if you want to join, here's how you do it."

So we make it easy, but we don't structure it so much, but we do have a structure for the orientation, and the orientation is something that I think is unique to Kayamanan Ng Lahi out of all the Philippine dance companies that I've seen, and I'm pretty sure, because we give them about a two-session, three-hour orientation about the organization, about our mission, about our program, and then we give them an additional lecture—and I do this—about our framework of culture, and we share with that. It's a toolkit. It's a framework that they could use for whatever because it's based on cultural anthropology too. So we get people from all over the place, you know, and especially from those that we provide technical assistance and training, because that's one of our programmatic services. We consult, we support student-based organizations in their Cultural Nights, so we're a prime resource, Alex. So we'll catch people to, "Hey, I want to come and learn," because they enjoy learning with us. So it happens a lot.

CLINE:

Then how much, if at all, do you ever recruit based on perhaps a need, like we need somebody who is a really adept athletic male dancer or something like that? I'm thinking that perhaps the extremely already accomplished dancer-type person might also come with a certain different attitude that may not fit in, but still sometimes if people have needs or goals, how do you go about a way to realize those things?

0:08:44.70:10:33.2

JACINTO:

That's a very good question, because we just went through a situation, and I'll be very transparent because this is a great story because it deals with a UCLA student, a younger dancer that had been very active, very wonderful dancer. His name is Peter Paul de Guzman. He's actually a WAC student that I wrote a letter of recommendation before he got to UCLA in the late nineties and was a dancer with many other organizations, and we've seen him blossom to be such a great dancer with many companies. We saw him, you know, performing, guest performing with others, and he had specialized in a southern dance form called palalai, and there's not too many male practitioners in that that are good practitioners, because he went to the Philippines and studied.

So by some way, someone in the group invited him to perform for our twentieth anniversary last November, and he accepted, and that was a very nice thing. It wasn't so much we want you to dance because you're a good dancer as it was because we're very inviting, and people that work with us in our network—and he had collaborated with us on other shows through other groups, so he wasn't like an outsider; he was an outsider, insider. We said, "Come in. We've seen you do this with others. Come and participate with us." So it turns out that he just got too busy and he had other commitments and he couldn't. So, Alex, our thing is because we're so democratic and participatory, we don't really say that we need the special role, so therefore we're going to go out and get this special role. It's basically whoever you got is whoever you got, too, so we haven't had to do that. That's not really the way we do things, because of the dynamics of people that you invite that just didn't come through your ranks have maybe a different artistic vision, socially they haven't meshed, so we really like people to do things, to collaborate with us, and when you collaborate, you're still you, you're not us. Then through that process of collaboration and working together, then people see, because I think in our own Filipino community if you're outside of Kayamanan, people don't know us very well, so they may have stereotypes, perceptions of our group that are not totally correct, especially from other Filipino performing arts groups. So the only way to find out about it's just to experience us, so that generally works out well. When people work with us, they want to work with us.

CLINE:

You mentioned last time how in the first half of the nineties there was a kind of a proliferation of Filipino dance groups in the area. Considering how difficult it was for you to fulfill your aspiration to learn the type of material, the repertoire that you learned, with the kind of depth that you obviously longed to be able to have, these other groups that kind of sprung up during that time in the area,

regarding them, where did those people learn the tradition that they were demonstrating?

JACINTO:

Well, I'll speak to L.A. In L.A. there was a group called Silayan Philippine Dance Company that had existed before us, and it's probably one of the oldest, one of the two longest-running groups that passed from an educator, Sonia Capadocia, to her daughter, Dulce, and Dulce is a modern dancer as well. So Dulce has kept her group alive, albeit small, not as active, and more contemporary dance, more modern dance than Philippine folk-based. Then another one, the Fil-Am Family Cultural Group founded by a woman Betty, Tita Betty.

CLINE:

Right. You mentioned (unclear).

0:12:59.9

JACINTO:

We all came through her at some—not we all, but many young people, and after her passing in 2002, that group has since become defunct. So the proliferation in the nineties which I mentioned, which was right around the first five years, there was probably four or five groups, community-based, that proliferated, and I think that some of the leaders come from ex-Bayanihan members and some of them were offshoots of Tita Betty's group and other leaders. Because it takes so much time because it's all volunteer, it really takes a tremendous commitment, and sometimes it's easy to start, but, you know, that Filipino term "ningas kugon," which is kugon grass on top of a roof will burn very quickly, but it'll burn out, was a metaphor for Filipinos sometimes starting projects, putting a lot of effort, but then in the long run, it's not sustainable or it just dies out.

So out of the groups that started—and I'm going to be very transparent and very honest and very objective about things too—out of probably the four groups that started in the early nineties, Kayamanan has probably been the only one to survive, even twenty years later, or close to twenty years later, Alex. So that tells you of all the challenges, the obstacles of sustaining a program, sustaining a vision, developing and sustaining it. It's easy to develop and attract, but it's very much more involved in living it over the long term. So they're not basically around, those three other groups. Cultura Philippine Folk Arts is still active to a certain degree. (unclear) is another group that is not as active, and (unclear) is a group that was and that is not even around anymore too. So gives you a little bit of indication. It's tough.

0:15:10.8

CLINE:

Yeah, well, this is one of the things I wanted to talk about today, so since you've opened the door, I'll walk through. Clearly one of the things I think that it'd be safe to say about you is that you have a lot of passion for what you do. Clearly that must help. On the other hand, the environment for opportunity here in Los Angeles in terms of performing, in terms of being able to sustain something even beyond the artistic, but just on the nuts-and-bolts practical, number of performance, keeping people interested because they're active, how have you seen the performance opportunity environment change since the beginnings of Kayamanan when apparently there was a little bit more of an initial energy kind of situation happening, you know, and also, when you answer, keeping in mind what you were already talking about, which is how you sustain something for that long and stay committed to it and keep that passion, that fire stoked.

0:16:32.70:19:09.0

JACINTO:

Well, that's another excellent question. You know, I'll refer back to the geographic landscape. We're here in the biggest basin in the most biggest metropolitan area around, so my perception of this, my understanding, is that there's a large market. There is a huge market because of our geographic dispersion. There's always been, you know, in terms of world dance, you know, in the mainstream—I'll first talk about the mainstream—always opportunity for Filipinos to participate in the mainstream. The other organization that's had a lot of success mainstream was—in the past it was Silayan, and then more recently Cultura Philippine Folk Arts, and Kayamanan had both participated in the Dance Kaleidoscope types of things, and they were very active in other mainstream events, too, as well, especially around Glendale as a locale because they were based in Glendale. So if you look at this issue almost—and I'm trying to make an analogy of, like, islands, Cultura really took care of the Glendale side. Kayamanan, we had the Central Los Angeles and the Westside because of our presence of where we were located, but, you know, there was always opportunities for our organizations to be able to perform in the mainstream.

Alex, I think the issue was what was our access and what was our relationships that got us to be able to do that, because part of our challenge is sometimes we're very insular and we don't look outwardly. We perform amongst ourselves, you know, sort of at the regional level or community level, and yet we don't know or have access or are not able to make that jump from being a Filipino group to being also a mainstream group as well, and that has been less of a success for our organization. But I will say that I don't think it's a good thing that there are less groups now active, because it reveals the challenges and it reveals the fact that we're not building, sustaining our cultural organizations, and I'm very alarmed on this because I'm not just talking about Kayamanan, because Kayamanan cannot serve all of L.A. County. If you look at L.A. County as really our service area, we can only do because we are finite in our space and our time. But that's why it's very, very important, and I want to understand more about why there are not groups flourishing throughout L.A. County that have a sustainable program, okay. This is one of the reasons why we started this Philippine dance gathering workshops, Alex, was we wanted to share resources so we could swap stories and understand what makes things sustainable, what element, what programmatic elements, what organizational elements are necessary to be able to sustain yourself over the past one generation. Because there's a woman now, a founder of Samahan Philippine Dance Company in San Diego, that just passed away. Her name is Dr. Lolita Carter. We need to follow Samahan now to understand what their trajectory is and how they survived past the founding generation,

the next generation. We know that Cultura, after their founding organization, they have a little bit of a break, or there's a break in service. After Tita Betty died in 2002, there's not a death, but basically there's dispersion of the organization. So we really have to look past that generational, the founding part, to do that.

My thoughts on that is that it really is an issue that we have to look at in the community, because ideally I think we should have a number of, four or five, community-based groups throughout the Los Angeles County area that are able to service their area. It doesn't make sense for us to take fifteen of our members and to spend six hours traveling to the East San Gabriel Valley or Anaheim Hills performing, and then coming back for the economic issue of the deal, of the business transaction. It still is a service and we're happy to do that, but in terms of these times when you're competing for people's time and attention, that we just can't say, "Spend six hours and you'll have a nice time." Intrinsically that's a large part of it, but that can't be all of it, and so I'm very concerned with how we run our organizations as Philippine dance entities here in America.

0:21:05.6

CLINE:

Speaking of—you mentioned the economics. That's, unfortunately, perhaps always an issue. How much, if any, has external factors like the economy, the changing of people in positions of authority or decision-making over organizations that potentially hire groups like Kayamanan, their coming and going, the climate for just general cultural activity flourishing or diminishing here in L.A. County, how much of an impact do those sorts of factors have on your organization?

0:23:17.10:24:29.5

JACINTO:

Yeah, good question. So from an external, internal resources, you know, in terms of—and access and performance opportunities, you talked about that, too, as well. We see the external environment again contracting with California Arts Council (CAC), and when the California Arts Council sort of took a dive in the early 2000, that really hit a lot of multicultural entry groups, MCE groups, if you will, sort of the world dance, the folk and traditional arts field, along with other small arts organizations. So we did take a hit at that level, but it wasn't a significant hit because basically in Kayamanan we're pretty much self-sustaining. We don't rely on grants and contracts and performances to keep ourselves going. We're sort of self-sustainable, as long as we're able to perform, and the biggest thing, the biggest not moneymaker, but the largest contracted service that we have in Kayamanan is wedding performances. So as long as we do weddings for our own community, we're okay. If we wanted to do larger projects—and so therefore now we talk about our initiative, and we've been blessed, Alex, to—one is to have the organizational credibility that is able to attract resources from the local level, which is at the city level; the county level, Los Angeles County Arts Commission; to the state level, CAC; to private foundations, including the Fund for Folk Culture and now ACTA, Alliance for California Traditional Arts; all the way up to the NEA (National Endowment for the Arts). So we've gotten funding for all these different levels to do our certain projects, and we never really did operating core support, you know, but we always thought that the strongest things was to do—let's do a specific project. So we've done probably more than ten distinct projects that we've gotten funding for, and I think, you know, out of especially

Los Angeles, we've been the most successful at grantsmanship and accessing public sources, but we're not so dependent on those public sources that the removal or the cutbacks or the dynamics are going to severely impact us, because we're project-based and we have a very sustainable core.

Our core is just we train our members on Sunday. They perform. We pay them a little. If they come up, we give them a little bit of gas money and we try to feed them, so if nothing else, "You paid for my way and you fed me, and the rest is my experience in being with you all." So they benefit on those two sides. That's all we can offer them, and we have to keep it that way, so that if we try to pay them much more, we couldn't sustain that, right? So we can't make them dependent on that, and if we didn't pay them anything, it's just like, "Oh, god, I don't even get gas money. I'm losing money here coming out too." But the experience is priceless, and if you interview our performers, you know, for a Saturday night performance at a wedding, just to be there as part of a community is a very powerful, transformational thing, because I think of the impact that we make on the audience, and the performers are transformed in that as well. It's not the audience members and the dancers just dancing, ah, you know, it's like a one-way thing; it's a two-way thing. So there's impact on both. So in summary, we have been okay, you know. We don't really go for corporate grants, although we've gotten support here and there, but it just adds to the pot. So we're pretty much lean and mean. (laughter)

CLINE:

You mentioned the programmatic aspect of this. How do you keep your repertoire fresh and evolving not just for the audience who may see you multiple times, but for the performers so that they continue to grow and stay interested?

0:27:08.30:28:31.4

JACINTO:

Yeah, yeah, that's a great question, too, in terms of our program. I think the analogy I like to say is there's a term called a baul. Baul in Spanish and in Tagalog is a "trunk," and it's usually where you put your heirloom things, your jewelry, your best pillows, at a time when the bourgeoisie, they would put their (Spanish word), all their Spanish-influenced jewelry and big manton de manilas, and everything goes into that baul because that's where you keep your—if anything goes, you got to—if there's a flood, you take that baul and you're gone, you're okay. So we're fortunate to be inheritors of a tremendous baul that has a body of knowledge that is humongous. So we've inherited dances that we haven't even done yet, Alex, and we're twenty—because of the Philippine cultural landscape is just all these cultural communities. The dance culture is not one dance culture. There's so many. We're not lacking of repertoire. What we are trying to do is to continue introducing that traditional repertoire in a very rigorous way so that the ideological, the training, and the material culture are all—you know, there's a good package around that. So we still continue to do research so that when we teach it to the members, there's this really transformational thing about we're giving them something very, very culturally—there's a lot of cultural integrity. There's a lot of—we call it (unclear). There's a lot of substance to the dance, so that they're internalizing it. They're transformed by what it—because when we teach a dance, a ritual, we use that cultural model, and the two other questions that we ask them to say, so what makes this dance a ritual, Filipino, and what's important about it? Why study it? So we try to give them some

relevance, and then they could internalize that dance. It's like, "Ah, this dance means this to me." Then it becomes much more powerful. So that we have a lot of, too, and so we try not to shoot our wad, so to speak, and just give them everything and, you know, just pound them with new dances, new dances, because then they don't appreciate the dances that they do.

We have standard ones that we do that are iconically Filipino, and then there's this other thing of Kayamanan artistically, trying to create our place in this evolution of Philippine dance in America, and no longer is it Philippine dance or just Philippine dance, Alex, that Kayamanan, our mission has really evolved to preserve, present, and promote the riches and diversity of Philippine culture through dance and music. Over the course of time, there's a little marker, a postscript that should be added: "in America." In America, which is different than a mission that we would probably have in the Philippines, because we're very much different than groups in the Philippines. So this whole idea of how we function in America and what artistically do we bring to the equation is something that we have started from the start, that we have created contemporary Philippine dances with Barbara, myself, and now the other core staff have created or choreographed contemporary Philippine dance forms, because in order for Philippine dance to be relevant to us, we have to be a part of it. We just can't be doing things in the Philippines. From a traditional folk dance standpoint, those things—we will continue to perform those as those are given to us and as those are updated and on a generational basis because even in the Philippines there's culture change.

Here in America the other part of that Filipino American side, the continuum—if you'll remember, we have a continuum—we have to be contributing, otherwise there's no imprimatur, there's no ownership, there's no sense of this is ours, in a way. So we're trying to balance that and represent it in the culture that we are a part of and also presenting the culture that we are making ourselves as Filipino Americans. So parts of our shows always feature contemporary stuff, and I think that that's another gimmick. Not a gimmick in a bad way, but another feature, another value-add. So when you go to Kayamanan Ng Lahi, you're not going to see the same show. You're not going to see the standard state-supported group. And for Jennifer Fisher and Lewis Segal to compare us to the Bayanihan—and just to say that, of course, we can't achieve their spectacle, but we've given the audiences an alternative, is the greatest validation we could ever—because it speaks to you've achieved what you tried to do, not to mirror, not to be a Bayanihan Junior or a Ballet Folklorico Junior, but to be yourselves. That, for me, was the epiphany. It started in the 2000 when people started comparing us to the national state-supported group, tremendously liberating, Alex, tremendously, and validating, saying we're on the right track, because the mainstream recognizes it.

CLINE:

Right. Wow. Therefore, I guess, the way I hear that is what you're doing, it was far beyond just being sort of a museum sort of presentation, yeah, so it's alive.

JACINTO:

Yeah, it has to grow.

0:30:25.3

CLINE:

It's not in a glass case.

JACINTO:

Correct, and we see that, and part of that and the orientation is, again, I go back to my layers. This might open up another door, but seeing hula and being—kahiko is ancient hula. You do it by the chant, your ole and your mele, and you do it one way. It's kahiko and it's ancient. That's what ancient means. "Kahiko" means ancient. Then you have your auana and your dances that are with European instruments, and "auana" means to wander, and so therefore you could do whatever you want, basically. It really helped me develop another continuum between the things that come from the village and that we have to understand in a village context, and the Hawaiians are going through the same things. In order for hula and Hawaiian music and Hawaiian culture to be contemporary to them, they have to be a part of it, they have to create. When I was dancing with Frank "Palani" Kahala, he created, he composed chants in the kahiko style, but they were very contemporary. So as long as you understand what you're doing, then you need to contribute to the body. Otherwise you're just doing other people's stuff. You don't have your own artistic body.

0:32:39.4

CLINE:

But, say, sort of starting with you personally and then moving even sort of farther outside as it extends to people around you, sometimes no matter how positive an experience something is and how much for maybe a fairly extended period people really get something out of it, it still becomes hard to, especially for some people, perhaps, maybe not for you—I don't know, you can tell me—really stay inspired about it, really stay committed, and certainly there's a lot in American culture to distract and to compete for attention, not to mention just all the various practical demands of life that we've already kind of touched on. But starting with yourself personally, and then if you can—I don't know if you can, but if you can speak to how it maybe affects others, how do you keep that sort of fire lit?

0:35:20.00:36:30.6

JACINTO:

That's a good question, Alex. So we're going back to sort of the future, present state of the organization and the future, too, and Ave and I liken—as a director and a co-founder, right, we liken Kayamanan to being our first child, right, because you really give birth to it and it is your responsibility. The buck stops

with you. So for the four of us, now the three of us, Barbara, myself, and Ave, we have that sense that Kayamanan's still our child, but now it's a twenty-year-old child, and as the child grows, you give it more responsibility. You've nurtured it and you've instilled in it all your cultural, your familial values and everything like that, and you now want to now see and give it space. So twenty years later, Ave and I and Barbara not have pulled back, but we've tried to balance our lives more, because we gave so much of it early in our lives, too, and we have children and we have our careers and so, so we have a little bit more balance and we've given a little bit more leeway to invite others, the children, so to speak, and these are the core staff and performers. There's about eight, I believe, that are with us that do anything from administration to the material culture to teach dance with us as volunteers under our direction in collaboration with us. So even at that staff level, some people come and go, but we're flexible enough so that we can all cover for each other. But this issue is if you're asking what are the challenges, you know, and what do we see, for me, Ave, and Barbs, we're going to continue, but we're going to be more purposeful now of nurturing leadership, of trying to wrap ourselves around the program and around that to contain it and to do something artificially in terms of talk, document, and write things down so that we can pass it. For me as an educator, as an applied anthropologist, my whole thing is that how do we bridge this issue from one generation to the next, and the way that I know about it now is to create this tangible body of knowledge that's not aural-based—it's very different—but that is documented. There are actually documents. There are audio files. There's video files that we are trying to assemble in order to be able to pass it on, and not only the repertoire, not only the arts, but the organizational stuff, too, as well. So we're starting to think about that too.

We're transitioning, you know, twenty years later, and we're trying to now see not just so much our staff that's probably four or five years or ten years younger than us, but even where we can we start to invest in training the next generation twenty years, because we have some people in their early twenties that we now want to attract to say, "Hey, you could be a dancer." Really with the senior folks like that, too, they come and go, but they're pretty consistent in terms of—unless they get married. Marriage is a major life transition that really takes people away for a few years, maybe, but we still have some people that got married and have children, and then the mothers come back, right, and because we have males and females both, we have a diverse membership base—it's not all females, Alex. We've been very blessed to have a large male population, because, again, it's always harder to get males to dance than females, and good males like that too.

So in terms of where we're going with that, I think that we're trying to put more time and effort into supporting and just putting our hands around the culture of doing things, the policies and procedures, if you will, although as ethereal as it is, so that people can be guided about how we should go about doing things. Some things are really tough. It's like negotiation. How do you put on paper how to represent your organization in the mainstream? A lot of it at that level, culturally, you shadow me when I'm performing. What I talk about, sometimes there's a dance or there's a performance role that only you could do. For me in my organization, that role for me has evolved and just to being a performer, a dancer, a musician to being the engager. So I've sort of naturally been doing that, but more purposefully, because we've seen that it becomes a more integral part of who we are. So the more I'm trying to expose other people to say, hey, we're not just performing, but we have to engage, we have to participate. That's our culture. That's our style of a Kayamanan Ng Lahi performance. If we don't do that, then we have lost our cultural roots, and we shouldn't and can't ever lose that sort of cultural value. So, you know, we're doing okay twenty years later, because we're looking for our twenty-fifth, and we still have a steady stream of folks, Alex. So I think the future for Kayamanan Ng Lahi is positive. We're not on the wane. What we are is we're at a rising point to see—and we haven't even peaked yet, but as an organization, what we have to be concerned with is how we pass information and knowledge. It's about the infrastructure, because it's all still contained with the founders, pretty much, you know, and we have to be able to address that in the future.

0:38:36.6

CLINE:

Do you consider sort of an apprentice sort of approach ever, or is it less personal, more collective than that?

JACINTO:

Part of it is collective, because we share the things with everybody. You know what I mean? Then in terms of our positions—and Ave's trying to find an apprentice or someone to take over more of the business, administrative side, right, because of our raising our boys. With me, I work with Bugsy (phonetic). Bugsy is my assistant program—but there's not a lot of people that are as obsessed. (laughter) I'm trying to find another anthro guy or woman to really work with me to say, hey, if you talk about what is really Kayamanan's treasure, it's the culture that we represent, which has produced the culture that we, ourselves, produce, right? So therefore, that body of knowledge that using the anthropological model, although we give it to everybody, we need people to continue giving in that life. So, Alex, I am starting to look out and see who could I tap to say, "You're going to work more closely with me," because I truly believe that our cultural program is really the core of our organization, and everything else radiates out from that.

CLINE:

You used the term "obsessed," and I guess what I've been wanting to get at is for you, how do you stay fired up, inspired, connected, committed? How much oscillation have you experienced in your commitment to this? I guess I'm wondering if there have been periods where you're just, like, you know, sick of it or you're just like you're losing interest, you're burning out, or not. You are a person. There's a lot of other things that take up our time and energy.

0:41:20.00:42:49.5

JACINTO:

Right, right. That's a wonderful question because it really brings it back full circle with us. I mentioned in an earlier part that Filipino value of bainata, or vow, and it comes from, you know, the Spanish religious vow. Every year you do a fiesta for the patron saint, right, because that's your religious vow. The patron saint bestows. As I matured, I've really taken and internalized that issue of vow to understand the Kayamanan as sort of our first child and of our realizing that Kayamanan is our responsibility in our place in the cycle of life, that it's woven into me.

I don't look at Kayamanan or our culture, for me, at least, and my family, something that we do (unclear), and then we let it go, that if you look at a sipa ball, a sipa is a woven tan rattan ball, sepak takraw, the really ones that they use in Southeast Asia, it's woven of all these different strands, and no matter what, you can't extract that strand out of you, because it's a part of it. Otherwise, the ball unravels and you're not whole. For me, Alex, there's superficial times where you pull back because you're really busy or your life happens, and therefore you don't do as much, but Kayamanan's a central part of our lives because it is a vow, because it's given us so much as a couple, as a family, and therefore we really internalize that, so therefore we have to give it back. So it's a very much integral part. I've been blessed because the situation that I have, all the circumstances of working in the Filipino community has allowed me to function in that way too. So god has given me a great opportunity, said, "Joel, I'm going to give you a great way to do it. I'm not going to give you a desk job or a technical or something that cubbyholes you and it doesn't allow you to be an organic well-rounded person working in the Filipino community and externally."

So really I have this ideal professional life, professional, personal, cultural life, that's all interconnected, because when I'm doing (unclear) and I'm working with the Hawaiians or whatever, I'm being a Filipino, and I work, whether it's social services, there's a lot of cultural identity. So I just tend to think my life has really come, and it's just all interconnected, and that's a central theme of me in my life that I try to bring to the organization, that of magkaugnay. "Ugnay" means to be interconnected, and I think that's an opportunity we all have. So into the future I'm just going to continue, given my set of circumstances, to play it out as far and as long as I can, you know, so that I can share that with as many people as I can, because what my gig is I go out and I like to work with the students to give them my framework, you know, to give them a twenty-year jump on the thing so that they have the benefit of others trying to figure things out and sharing with them tools that they could use just to make culture a better part of their lives. So I think that's going to be more and more, and as I continue to work more with students at the collegiate level, I'll find people that I could work with and are willing to maybe want to work with me more in depth. I start with UCLA because that's our home, that's our base, but I work personally with students from half a dozen different schools and individuals, as well, too. So, you know, I'm not, like, I'm ready to retire. It's really just part of my life, and not just my personal life, but my professional life, my entire life.

0:45:04.0

CLINE:

You mentioned working with students. I was just wondering if there are any other practices or strategies, if you will, that you use to nourish this inspiration and your sense of connection that work for you, how you nourish that sense of vow?

0:47:30.4

JACINTO:

Yeah, that is a hard one. That is a hard one because that takes a lot of contact or that takes a lot of very purposeful thing, but the other ones that we do that could lead to that, because that's a very deep thing. But I'm very encouraged because I see other younger groups, particularly in the Bay Area. So L.A.,

we're waning. They're thriving in the Bay Area in a smaller area. As, like, the San Francisco Bay Area, they have probably five or six groups that are in that rising stage, so I see a lot of younger leadership, and one of the reasons that we founded this Philippine dance gathering and workshops model of gathering was to be reflexive and to talk and to move past the stage, to move past the transactional, to be more reflexive and analytical about what was the process of this amongst ourselves and by ourselves, because then we could talk about burnout, we could talk about organizational stuff. We're not just talking about performance. We're not talking about artistic achievement; we're talking about ourselves. So, Alex, I see us continuing to do things around working with leadership, you know, instead of just the masses. My compadre, my colleague (unclear), we are the co-founders of the Philippine dance gathering and workshops. We just talked a couple of days ago about how a strategic move for us would be sort of not just trying to do everything in terms of all the dances and trying to build the network by doing the foot-soldiering, but the focus on the leadership, because the leadership is the most strategic of trying to see what issues they have and how to—not to indoctrinate them to anything, but just to find what are the issues, how do we keep ourselves going, how do we support ourselves at the leadership level, because other people don't have such an ideal situation as I do. Some people maybe need more money. They need to earn because this is something that they need to do. You know what I mean? So there are other people in different situations. So I think we're going to continue with that gathering and that consultative process in our community and sharing, right?

CLINE:

But I'm just curious to know, just for you personally, say, you know, Joel is sitting somewhere alone and not engaged in doing anything other than reflecting maybe on the sense of that vow, that sense of vow. Is there some way that you find works for you to remind you to reconnect you, to nourish that sense of vow that's purely your personal sort of strategy or technique? I didn't want to use those kinds of words, but what works for you? I mean, it could be anything. I'm just curious.

JACINTO:

What works for me is still learning, you know, because I'm a Fil-Am. There's so much culture here, right, Alex? Anytime that I get a chance to learn from first voice, that's where you get replenished. So when I work with people like (Danongan) "Danny" Kalanduyan who is a master artist, you know, there's that primacy of you're hearing it from the first voice. You're catching it. That's what always give me life, as opposed to learning a dance from another group that's a one-off. So what replenishes me, what helps keep me close, helps keep me excited is really being either in the field or people from the field, and there's not that much chance to do that. There's not a lot of opportunity because here in America you have to go to the Philippines, and I used to go to the Philippines a lot more to do field work and everything like that.

0:49:24.1

CLINE:

Which was my next question.

0:51:42.5

JACINTO:

Right. I haven't gone since 2004, and so it's different now because the kids were really young, they were babies, and now they're older, so now it has to take the time. I have to take them now. I have to expose them to our home country, and I want to do it, but I feel that I've had the opportunity a lot. I have to give opportunity for others to experience the same things, you know, intensive training, field work in the Philippines, because when you're able to do that, you're transformed, you know, you're not just a dancer learning from books or learning from videotapes. You actually have experienced it. Your body, your mind, your heart have experienced being in the field. You know, that's huge. But for me, Alex, what really nurtures me is developing tools. I don't know if that sounds weird, you know what I mean, but thinking about how do we share this. How do we understand this and how do we share this are two central questions that really give me life, because it gives me purpose to be able to understand something, to package it in the way where we could give it to others, but also that third part is that how do we transform those participants and the people that we give it to in such a way that they are enriched by what they are learning in a deep way, in a meaningful way. How does it add to their cultural IQ? That's weird, but, hey, some Fil-Ams, some Filipinos have a very low cultural IQ because of the fact that they're not able to explicitly identify. They're fishes. They're in the fishbowl, but we're in an artificial situation where we have to develop the IQ so that they can, in turn, share it, they can communicate it, they can understand it themselves to say—because we're here in America, and that's why I always talk about America being our place as opposed to the Philippines where you just do it because you're there. It reinforces who you are. Here in America we're creating this situation where we have to create our situation for ourselves, you know, so it's a little different.

CLINE:

Fortunately, you've perfectly set up my next question, which is how much interest do you see in the youngest of Filipino American generations coming up now coming up, as we've mentioned before, in a very different culture, even a different culture from their Filipino American parents?

JACINTO:

Right, right. That is a very salient question, given what's going on today, given media, given technology, given this barrage of just stimuli.

CLINE:

Social networking.

0:54:01.5

JACINTO:

All this input, all this input. The situation that we're facing is that all the stuff is external coming in. As an organization, what I have to do and what my family and everything like that is ask question that—or to give them a process that helps them discover who they are from the inside, so it gives them sort of that umbilical cord that they have that's real, like who you are, your identity, your cultural heritage, albeit Filipino, it's wide, so that in building up themselves internally, they would be able to negotiate all this external stuff. But what I see pretty much—and this is just passively—is that there's still interest, that kids, in general, if you engage them on opportunity, if you give them an opportunity to learn about themselves, they'll do it. They're happy, because I think you don't really get that burning sensation to self-discover to you're kind of in college, you're maturing. The other time you're happy to have it if it's given to you, but if you don't, you're fine with it, right, because you're sort of dependent on your parents to be able to do that. So I'm looking at the parents. I'm looking at the schools, and the schools aren't going to do it. There's no one externally other than maybe a community-based setting like a dance troupe or your parents to support that child in it.

So therefore, bringing in children to our group, we still have it, but we don't have enough going on in there, and so I think that the parents, especially the parents of children who they themselves are Fil-Am, are very receptive, given that there was a program that they could bring their kid to, Alex, and that's the challenge for Kayamanan, because to have children are a tremendous amount. What do we charge? We charge $35 for eight weeks. That's $3 a class, you know. We have to maybe take a look at that thing, but again, we don't pay the instructors anything, anyway, so that's not the issue here, is the economics of it too. But how do we structure a program that really brings in kids a little bit more earlier too? But when you say "youngest," what do you mean in terms of ages?

CLINE:

Yeah, that's what I'm talking about. I'm talking about preteen. I mean, you're answering my question, but how much opportunity is there for them to—

JACINTO:

Yeah, there's not a lot of opportunity. There's not a lot of opportunity. There's a gap between the need and the ability to fulfill that market, because geographically is one issue as well as program. So as a community, we are—and I'm trying to talk with others about that, about how do we get kids, you know. They don't need a whole dance company per se. Maybe they just need little exposure things that they could do, because again, the commitment there is a lot different than as you're eighteen and above or even high school, where you're there for a lot longer, you're more purposeful and everything like that too.

0:56:00.8

CLINE:

Right. When you've got the Pilipino Cultural Nights, which seem to be serving that.

0:57:43.9

JACINTO:

Exactly. It's during that age, the collegiate and beyond, Alex, that I think is our sowing fields, even more so than the children, because we don't have to access to them because of geographic and because of just some limitations of our time. Ours tends to be high school and really college, college, because then they can start to drive themselves. Even in high school, they're not driving. They're not driving themselves. It's their parents. So they're dependent on their parents, which really is a severe limitation because then their parents have to be there as well, almost, too, as well. So the future of Philippine culture and Philippine dance in America is bright because there are these vehicles where it can happen, that it's still an issue in our community, that people, by and large, want—there's not self-hatred or that colonial mentality, if you will, if you come from an immigrant saying, "(unclear)." You know what I mean? So we're shedding that post-colonial, you know, shroud of self-hatred to more of wanting to understand, you know. So like the Fil-Am or the Filipinos in America are wanting to virtually go back to the Philippines, which is the crossing of the ship of the Filipinos in the Philippines wanting to virtually become acculturated, become Americanized because they equate that with success. So maybe therein we lie in the middle, but it's going back and forth like the galleon trade that has to happen. You have to go there and you have to come back. You have to go there and come back continually to make your life as complete.

CLINE:

Interesting. This is really your story. What you're describing is your story, your own story. You mentioned—I didn't get the name of it, but the ball made of many strands.

JACINTO:

It's a sipa ball, sepak takraw. Sepak takraw is the Southeast Asian foot soccer, foot volleyball, and it happens to be—sipa, s-i-p-a, happens to be the Filipino term for "to kick" or hacky sack or foot volleyball. That is the name of my organization. So the icon is a woven rattan ball made up of certain strips, number seventeen strips to form perfect pentagons and perfect triangles, and it's a mathematical equation. But that analogy, I think, serves well for Filipinos, in general, because we're made up of all these different strands. We're not a pure culture. We're not a pure race. We have all these cultural influences, and yet, you know, all those create who we are.

CLINE:

Right. But I see that as also, therefore, the perfect metaphor for who you are—

JACINTO:

Yeah, oh, definitely.

CLINE:

—because you have so many different strands integrally making up who you are, whether that's the Philippine dance and music component or the hula component or the American who grew up in San Francisco and went to UCLA component or, you know, the basketball-playing component, you know, the family man, the person who has approached what he does in terms of a vow, in all these things that are characteristic of who you are, some of them on the surface seemingly perhaps somewhat diverse—

0:59:41.9

JACINTO:

Disjointed.

CLINE:

—in the sense of being disjointed, but, in fact, seem to weave together in this very seamless and perfect sort of sphere like this ball. How do you think of yourself, other than a sipa? How do you think of yourself in this cultural landscape here being a Southern California Filipino American or whatever?

1:02:17.01:04:50.1

JACINTO:

Yeah, yeah, yeah, well, you know, that's good. And thank you for asking me that, Alex, too. I think at a certain level—and I've been doing work around issues of life purpose, you know. As you get into your middle age, so to speak, you know, you start to think about that more and more. On a very fundamental, you know, being a Catholic Christian, the spirituality in terms of my faith has become more important to me in terms of what I've been given, the gifts and sort of the plan and that whole thing, and so I'm very much tied into my life purpose from a spiritual, about that energy, the positiveness, the life that I've been given, so the life that I lead and the gift that I give back to god for all the things that he's given me. So that's sort of the foundation. How that manifests itself in my mundane physical world is really the opportunities to do my own thing, to exist as a father, as a professional, and all the things that are sort of disparate, but to work that whole scene, to live that whole scene—not to work it. That's a bad a word. But just to function with these values that are these cultural values. So it's like the divine and the cultural. It's like godly and worldly, trying to put those together to say, hey, I'm human. I come from a place, I have all this stuff, and the journey, myself, trying to tap into the best so that I can sort of internalize it and put that out wherever I'm at, whether I'm talking to a staff member at SIPA where I'm dealing with another mainstream people that are not paying attention to us or at home with the boys, which I do less of, you know. All those opportunities to live a blessed and a cultural life is, you know, I think, sort of that life purpose for me now.

So that means that I will continue for the rest of my life in this journey, this cultural journey, with Kayamanan. I don't think I'm going to retire from it. You don't retire from your culture. (laughs) Okay, I'm done being a Filipino, so I'm not going to do that anymore, right? Because again, we've situated Kayamanan as a way of life, as a religious vow, which you don't stop when you're sixty-five. You do it for the rest of your life, and that's what I want to try to share and get out there in our community about our cultural being being a part of our matrix, that you don't take off at night at home and you stop doing after a certain while. I see myself continuing to be an engager, a facilitator, a cultural broker, a cultural advocate not just for Filipinos, but for all things culture, especially the ones that I know of, you know, Native Hawaiian and, to a certain degree, Pacific Islander, because it's the rhetoric in which we—it's a political box in which we operate in, although I think it's very bizarre, you know, because, you know, East Asian is so different than Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander, except it's all lumped into one. It's like, y'all are a box. So again, I'm very blessed to have this opportunity to live this certain type, where my work and my culture, my life are all sort of intertwined, and I think the key for that is to continually give back the blessings. If I'm able to do that, then I'm just sort of keeping the good stuff going, and I'm just going kind of keep that—like communal music. You've got to keep playing your part. If you play your part, you take your part on that gong line or whatever, then it's missing something, and I'm not (unclear). It's one individual, but I realize that I'm in a place of access. I'm in a strategic place for myself, my family, my organization, and my community, so I realize that responsibility and that opportunity, and I want to hopefully continue to receive the energy and the blessings to be able to play that, to keep dancing, to keep playing music, you know, doing all that good stuff.

CLINE:

In terms of the Filipino American contribution to the culture of not just this country, but let's localize it and say this area here, the area in which Kayamanan Ng Lahi is a performing arts group serving the community, which includes all the community, everyone, from the inside, how do you view the larger contribution to the larger community? How would you define it or characterize that?

JACINTO:

Well, I would do that two ways. One is in terms of our contribution to our own community, right? And I think we've done a lot to help the understanding, appreciation of who we are as a community, as a culture, you know, when we go out, whether it's weddings and that whole thing too. So I think we've done a tremendous job about that. I also think that we've helped really put the Philippines and the Filipino American community on the map of L.A. through our work with the mainstream, you know, in the performance venues, in the relationships, in the access that we have, because again, when I'm at the (John Anson) Ford Amphitheater at the Ford Foundation being an advisory board, I'm there performing as well, being inclusive, being participatory. So the cultural values even can extend to at that level as well, so I think that I'm going to utilize all those opportunities to continue, and that we're just going to have—it looks like we should have more and more opportunities to do what we're doing. I don't think that we're going to have less opportunities, if you will. Did I answer your question?

1:07:14.2

CLINE:

That works. And what about in the larger community? One of the things we keep hitting on is how the perception of what "Filipino" means outside the Filipino community is confused. How do you think that's going to get improved?

1:09:15.61:11:03.0

JACINTO:

Yeah, well, that's a problem because there's a lack of knowledge and sensitivity to the Filipino, Filipino American experience, and who Filipinos are, in general, right, because educational-wise it's not going to be in the media. We're not going to have the media be able to educate, and it's not going to happen in educational system, right, because in K-12 Filipinos are not around. We're absent. We're absent on the physical landscape, pretty much. If you look at it, if you really look at it, the Filipino presence in the mainstream is just—we're undefined. We're interstitial. We're intercultural. So, you know, other than

icons that you have, like half Filipinos like Tia Carrere—she's full—and Rob Schneider and Marta Coscos (phonetic), you know, these are Filipino people, but you say, oh, (unclear) Filipino, but you don't understand anything of them. Our ability to do that when we perform in mainstream is a major way, and so therefore we realize that, and so we have to seize that opportunity. In March of 2012, Kayamanan Ng Lahi will be performing for the (J. Paul) Getty Museum at Sounds of L.A., okay, so we're gearing up for that because that's a tremendous opportunity we have to reach a mainstream audience that, in the context of Sounds of L.A., okay, music played by people, by cultural communities or whatever in Los Angeles, okay. So how can we infuse that performance with great entertainment, great cultural and artistic value, as well as great educational value and great enlightenment potential? So we're thinking on all those different levels as we develop the repertoire that we're going to do, and I have no doubt we're going to be successful like we were successful in the Skirball to engage the audiences. I think we're going to be able to do that in that as well. So we look for those opportunities and we seize them.

That's all you can do, is, like, you know, you try to make a mark when you can, because you don't have a lot of opportunity to do that, but, hey, there's not a lot going on in the Filipino community, you know, mainstream. So I'm not tooting my own horn, but I'm a suspect and I'm called upon a lot of times, whether it be as a board member for Arts for L.A. or just someone to help out in the community as a TA person, that I'm going to seize it. I'm going to try to see how much I can extract, whether it's one conversation or one meeting or one project, Alex. Robert Muller, the Secretary General of United Nations, had this thing about advocacy, and he said that you have to use every conversation you have, every letter that you write, every chance to affirm your vision of the world, and that you have to radiate that. You have to just continually put it out there so that your energy is out there so you affect others, you uplift others. So I really subscribe to that. He called it network, and, you know, networking has its superficial level, but I think networking—but when he talked about affirm your vision of the world and you have to radiate, you are the center of the universe, you know, it's very powerful. I came across that saying in the early nineties when I was younger, to really use every conversation you have, every chance, every interaction to affirm your vision of the world. I think it was incredible in terms of that opportunity.

CLINE:

How much do you see the Filipino American communities' situation in this regard being the same or different from some of the other so-called ethnic communities in the area in terms of presenting, in this case, their traditional arts, whether they be Balinese, Thai, Vietnamese, Guatemalan, whatever? What is perhaps unique or not unique about the Filipino American situation with regard to that?

1:14:03.6

JACINTO:

Right. That's a good question. I think in terms of the whole world dance—and not just Asian Pacific Islander; just world dance—because we have such an interesting history and we have so many different streams, I think we're good material, you know, so therefore, if we have a good matrix, a good foundation of stuff, we have this ability to make connections with pretty much every part of the world,

right? So if we're able to do that, then we're successful. The tendency has been, "This is the Philippines. Look at us," and that's it, "Okay, appreciate us." But there's no been engagement to say, well, what do we share together? What are those bridges? I think that that's, you know, again, more participatory, more engaging, more participatory, if you will, when we're able to do that. So I think we have not an edge up, but we just have this great opportunity. If you compare that to other cultures that are presenting, they just don't have that, and that's not bad or good. It's just it is what it is. So I really look that the opportunity for Filipino culture in America is really bright, and yet we as a community, as a practitioners, have to be able to be present. We have to develop ourselves so that we can be worthy, because there's this issue of what level are you. You're looked at in terms of your quality of presentation, and I tend to think in the community enough we're not as progressive in our participation. We tend to rely just on what's done in the past, what worked for the state-supported group, but what worked for them is not going to work for this situation. That was fifty years ago. We're talking about a whole multicultural society, and it's not dance diplomacy anymore; it's a different type of dialogue, you know, like this is the Philippines. This one is more like this is our community here. This is what we came from, so it's an evolved type of thing, and the more contemporary we could be, at the same time with the conviction and the integrity of culture.

So again, it's living in the village and living on the stage. How do you wrap that all into one and put it out there? That's why I respect so much people like Patrick Makuakane from San Francisco in taking traditional hula and really making it contemporary where people can just get into it. Those are the people that I dig with compelling narratives. You know, that's what makes me tick, if you will. That floats my boat. (laughs)

1:15:29.3

CLINE:

Here in this Western culture we tend to put virtually all art forms into a context that appears to be separated from the rest of life. It's on the stage. It's in the theater. It's in the museum. It's in, you know, the concert hall, whatever it is. Organizations like yours which are coming from a culture where there is not this distinction, tend to run into an interesting challenge with regard to how to treat that particular issue, and I think that's what you're talking about now. I'm just inviting you to, if there's any more you want to say about that particular aspect of presenting what you do to the larger community, if there's anything that you'd like to add.

JACINTO:

Well, you know, that's an important point, too, because you really make a good point, Alex, about this issue of art versus culture. I'm on the board for Arts for L.A., but I asked them to—we need to break down the issue of art and for people that come, and that there's no term for art, that it's all part of our culture. Then you have to get that, because then you're not recognizing a large portion of our community. In Kayamanan what we're doing, obviously we're performing, and a lot of times what we have less is doing, is culture for ourselves, and that's a challenge, okay, because as a performing arts groups as well, you know, that's what you think you do. You perform and then you don't perform. So I'm helping trying to use the organization as an analogy of life to say our culture is happening. Our

culture's happening within this organization, so that we're always performing. We're not always performing, but we're always being cultural. So I think that is something that I've been trying to do more purposeful with Kayamanan folks to help them understand as they're teaching, that's being cultural, and that's important. The way we teach, the way we pass on information, the way we nurture each other is very cultural. It's very essential, and it's not just on the stage that we have to pay attention to the process of how we do things as well. I don't know if that makes sense.

CLINE:

Yeah, it does make sense.

JACINTO:

But that will keep the cycle going. That will keep the cycle going.

1:17:37.8

CLINE:

In terms of the importance of the culture and of the cultural identity, you mentioned, for example, that you've had, you know, a Chinese guy and, you know, an Irish or Irish American woman performing with you. In terms of presenting the culture and keeping the culture vital and connected, how important or not is it for people representing the culture, in this case in the form of dance and music, to be Filipino?

JACINTO:

No. It's, like, no. That's a non-issue. That's a non-issue because—yeah, no. I'm very much a worldly person, too, as well. I've been Filipino American dancing hula, you know what I mean, as well, too. So I think the boundaries of culture are—there's a difference between ethnicity and culture. So if we're talking about ethnicity, I'll never be Hawaiian. I don't have Hawaiian blood, although Filipinos are the ancestors of the Hawaiians, and everybody came from Formosa, from Taiwan, so we're all made in Taiwan, actually, to a certain degree. Alex, that has never been an issue and I know it probably never will be, especially for us, so therefore it just leads itself to when you can get a group of non-Filipinos to replicate a simple communal rhythm, it's not so much they're doing something Filipino, but they're being cultural. They're creating kinship. They're doing things very transformational like that too. So, yeah, we'll teach anybody that will come through the door and try to relate it to who they are, too, as

well. That's the thing.

CLINE:

As this also relates to your experience with hula, sort of related to that, as somewhat of an insider, but not totally an insider, and all these interesting distinctions that ultimately just seem completely artificial and transparent, how much of this aspect of what you're doing is a big part of the American piece of the puzzle?

JACINTO:

Yeah, well, it depends on how you define "American."

1:19:23.1

CLINE:

Exacly.

JACINTO:

Our part of America, especially L.A., where it's multicultural and it's that, I think is more progressive, right, that anybody can do anything, that you could be—to learn flamenco, you don't have to be Spanish, to learn tango, you don't—I mean, that's the progressive environment that we live in in L.A. I won't say that's the case for the rest of America. That's for damn sure. I'm scared of the rest of America. You know what I mean? I wouldn't want to live anywhere else just because the intolerance and just because of just, you know, the history, entrenchedness of our culture and ideology in the vast majority of America, you know. So I'm happy I live here in L.A. I don't think I'd live anywhere else besides California and West Coast and in multicultural areas like that too. So, you know, in L.A. it's so progressive, and I think it's so nurturing. You know, it's the best place for us to grow and thrive because of the tolerance, because of the acceptance, because we have the most amount of people. You know, L.A. is the center for the largest populations outside of countries for many, many communities like that, you know, and that just lends itself to it, too, yeah.

1:21:16.7

CLINE:

In terms of the furthering of your own culture and of the Filipino culture here in America, we talked, for example, about how language is not being continued education-wise in a concerted way, in the way that maybe would be helpful to the community. In terms of your own family, I mean, you have two sons. How are you raising your sons with relation to their connection to your culture outside of Kayamanan, since I know one of your boys already is performing?

JACINTO:

Right. Oh, both of them do. So the performance side—and again, through Kayamanan, they learn Filipino cultural values. It's not as purposeful and explicit, just they're experiencing it. So the idea of kuya and ate, terms to understand—so I call you kuya, which means older brother, but I call my own brother (unclear), he calls Kai kuya, which is the term for older brother. He doesn't call him his first name. I'll call you by your title of your place. So they're learning familiar relationships by kuya and ate, so they're learning about this idea of extended family. So that's important for them to do. But you asked a specific point about language, and that's what Ave and I are trying to introduce more, is language, is vocabulary, because they get a lot of it through our cultural lives with our families, especially Ave's family, which is close, very close Filipino family. We just are ramping it up more with them in terms of their active knowledge, and for them, it's got to be active knowledge. It just can't be passive. It just can't be, okay, do this and understand it, but why do you call it? What does kuya mean, and why do you call him kuya? Because they come from a point where they haven't lived it. They're not exposed at all. They have to understand this culture and not just live it, because in order to pass it on—because the rest of their lives don't include that, and so I'm not catching it great, but it's more like active knowledge, that everything that they do that we have, they have to understand it from a third-person, so we do this because—

CLINE:

Yeah, they need some explanation.

1:23:52.7

JACINTO:

Yeah, yeah, yeah, so that it clicks more, because they're doing that with everything else, but they're learning, and so we need to make our own. So language, we're now introducing Tagalog flashcards, and their pronunciation's all whacked out and everything, and that they can't do this, you know, but they're starting to, and so we'll continue with that as much as we can teach them language. Or they're singing songs, okay? They're singing songs (unclear), and so they're learning language that way, too, as well,

and they have just a great—I forgot about children's ability to just replicate and remember ditties and tunes. It's been so long. But they're doing it. They're singing songs that we did in our twentieth, you know, anniversary, and they're just, boom, and they got, but note-wise, but then language-wise they don't understand the whole context of the words too.

So I think that for our family, that will continue more and more, and the question of what they will do with Kayamanan in the end twenty years down the line is still remains, hopefully that they will. You can only do what you can do, so I've been purposeful not to force it upon them, but to incentivize them, to reward them for doing, just like I'll reward other people, too, with praise, with encouragement, and by giving them the opportunity to learn more and more, right? So my little boys, for being with Kayamanan, they got a chance to perform at Staples Center. They got a chance to perform at Dodger Stadium.

CLINE:

Wow.

JACINTO:

For them, those are the (unclear), like, "Wow, we were playing with the—I'm on the jumbotron."

1:24:39.5

CLINE:

Yeah. Right. No kidding.

JACINTO:

Those are great experiences in the mainstream thing, not just as a Filipino, but, you know, so those add to their self-esteem. Those add to their appreciation of, "Wow, if I do this, when I'm being Filipino, I can experience (unclear)." It's a positive thing. So we as an organization have to really give them those opportunities so it just reinforces that being Filipino's a good thing as opposed to other tougher things.

CLINE:

Right. Or something that just makes you different from your peers.

JACINTO:

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

CLINE:

Is there anything we have not talked about that you feel you would like to get into the record now before we conclude the interview?

1:26:59.1

JACINTO:

No, I think we've done—in looking back for the how many hours, the eight hours or something like that, that we spent like that, too, I think we've done a really good job, Alex, about listening to me, leading me, being a partner on this journey back, because I haven't done this to this level. Been interviewed a lot, but not this in-depth, so I really appreciate you being a partner with me on this journey back in time and bringing it forward. I don't know if it's a closing statement, but just sort of a statement to sort of maybe summarize is that I feel that I'm still learning and evolving and I always will be, because I'm basically—I've always been seen as a sponge that, yeah, Joel always wants to—he wants to learn. He wants to understand, and I think that that's what drives me, is really to understand things, values, understand people so that I can better relate to them. So in the end, I'm just trying to live that idea of kapwa and make connections with people, because I want to see that in other people. I want to other people to want to know about me. I want other people to know about people they didn't know about, and I think that that is the energy that this world needs more of, one of tolerance, one of acceptance, one of mutual respect.

Because I work at all these different levels, I see where politics and resources and the economy really divide and create all these strata and create all these inequities, create all these situations of oppression and of social injustice, and I can only do what I can do, but I'm going to do that damn near to the best of my ability with as much passion, with as much energy as I can. So whether that's in the corporate boardroom or on a stage, I'm going to try to perform, utilizing the best of my cultural attributes and things that I've learned in my life that I've received, gifts I received from other cultures, in order to create and affirm the vision of the world that I want to see and that we deserve.

CLINE:

Wow. Well, I do want to ask one really nuts-and-bolts question, and it actually comes right out of what you said, and it's just because I'd forgotten to ask it, which I think could be important, especially in continuing what you're doing. How do you stay in physical shape?

1:29:06.8

JACINTO:

I don't dance as much as I did, and I've gone up and down in my physical—I mainly deal with issues of stress because of the mental issues that I've been dealing with in the last few years of my life too. But in the last few years I've tried to eat better, you know, in terms of—because food is a medicine, and I realize that more and more. It's strange because at UCLA I was into kinesiology, but that's the physiological aspect. It doesn't talk about nutrition as much, and nutrition—and I look at you and I know just by being around you, I know you're a very holistic, very healthy person, Alex, and so you understand that food and what we take in our bodies is medicine and heals us. So I've tried to learn more about nutrition. Exercise I do. I mean, you know, I'll exercise here and there. I'll lift weights and things like that too.

I don't do that enough, and I constantly struggle with that because of the amount of time that I spend, but I'm trying to prioritize that more, but also, I think, the outlook of my relationships and my home life is peaceful and filled with love, and if that's good, then your mind and your body tends to follow like that too. So Ave has been a good partner for me, so physically we have a good life together, you know, spiritually, sexually, physically, emotionally, like that, so that helps support. So people say, "Yeah, Joel, you look pretty young." I say, "I'm forty-eight," but I was twenty-seven when I started this, and so I spent the better—almost my entire working career, and I've gone up and down, but I think in the last five years when I was able to take a Durfee Foundation fellowship, Alex, it really helped me gain more perspective about taking care of myself, about how good a shape could I get myself into for the long haul, for the marathon too. So nuts-and-bolts-wise is very much of attention to diet, and then with exercise can be more and more. So I went back to studying Filipino martial arts, and for me, something new again. At this stage I'm rewiring my brain to do work in all these different—and it's tremendously uplifting, and I'm so excited about being able to learn another Filipino art form, but in a Filipino American context, again. This guy Dan Inosanto used to be Bruce Lee's student, but he's very Filipino American, okay, so he's very much like me, so I relate to how he's interpreted our culture, and I'm having a real good time there as well, yeah.

1:31:01.8

CLINE:

Great. Well, it's been absolutely wonderful to talk to you. Seems to always be the case, and it's so sad when these interviews end.

JACINTO:

Well, it's not, because our relationship, I hope and trust, will continue.

CLINE:

Absolutely.

JACINTO:

And that we are joined and we're colleagues and friends, and so wherever we go throughout life, I'll know—we know Pip Abrigo, all those different things that we do, and I will call on you, Alex, and I will remember you and keep you in my network of people that I've come across and shared some wonderful time and hope that you will do the same, too, as well.

CLINE:

I intend to, and I appreciate that a lot, and thank you. On behalf of the Center for Oral History Research at the UCLA Library, the department and your alma mater, we greatly appreciate this time you've taken. Thank you very much for you contribution to this series.

JACINTO:

I got to say that when Ave said, "Hey, this guy Alex

CLINE:

from UCLA's calling," and I said, "UCLA?" So we didn't know each, but when obviously UCLA, our alma mater, is calling, that pulls at your heartstrings, said, you got to do it. I know you chased me for a long time, but I'm honored to be included in our alma mater because, again, UCLA is the birthplace of everything that I have for my life today, too, and I wanted to be able to support the archives and the oral history project in whatever way in getting the voice and the experience of whatever topic that I could be of service. So you let me know if I could share with you people that you got, as well, too.

1:31:01.8

CLINE:

Okay, you got it.

JACINTO:

Go Bruins. laughter)

CLINE:

Thank you. (End of August 12, 2011 interview)