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**Transcript**

**I am interviewing person B today. Tell me about your life in China and then that transition. Why did your family decided to move to America? Was initial goal just to move to America temporarily or did your family want to move here permanently?**

**Person B:** My mom told me that she wanted to come to America because she doesn't want to ask a man for money. That's interesting but is something serious too. Because men are the ones first come to America and they start to work in America and get some money and send it back to China. My mom was telling well some men sometimes doesn't even say any money back home, some men send some money home, so it really depends on the man. Basically you ask for men for money when you are poor in our family situation so she say, “I also want to come to America to work for myself and instead of asking for men for money.” So, she decided to come, after that she get my help my brother and then she applied us to come here to America. I came here when I was 14. Well for me, I don't see myself like doing anything really big in America and just come to America because my mom brings me over. I want to see my mom too because you know in China, your parents are the only one you can rely on. To be honest, even though I live with grandma, she just wants to make sure I live but other things, you cannot talk to her about. I'm happy I'm come to come and live with my mom.

**Why did your mom decide to immigrate to America? How does she know that there would be opportunities in America?**

**Person B:**  I guess this is a trend because this is like awe live in countryside, so a lot of people just pass on when you have this thing going on, one project going, “Oh, this person earns a lot of money,” it start to spread. By the time when my mom comes to America, there's already a lot of people, a good amount of Chinese people come to America and already there's some females and mostly male. I guess it just a pass on, telling people how you get fortune, not a lot of money to American people maybe but in China it was a big exchange in terms of money.

**When you arrived in America, what was life like? What was your first impression of America? Did you miss China? Where you homesick at all? What did it mean to adjust to life here?**

**Person B:** I really like this question. You know why? Because I love America a lot more than China. So, here's a thing, in America I first arrive in the airport. My mom’s friend or my used to be friends in China, like elementary classmate, they picked me up because we’re in the countryside, we know each other really well. They pick me up, they drop me off, and then I come to see my mom then my daddy. My auntie, she had a house in Chinatown, so they picked me up and bring me over to her house. In the morning, when I get up and walk on the street, “Oh there's a lot of Chinese people. There's no difference, I don’t really see any different between China and here. It’s just street difference, how come I don't see American people?” I was curious because I'm also excited to see people. Was the life different? I don't see a life difference, maybe there are a little but, in the beginning, I really don't look realize and it really helped me follow [adjust] to America.

In China, when mom wasn't there, I remember when I was a second grade when the kids do something really not nice to me and my mom stepped out for me and talk to that person. After she came to America, I was in about 5th grade or 6th grade, some kids do that again. It's not the same kids, but just a stress that you had in school, but you have no one to talk to. So, I was really happy that my mom brings me over to America.

I really see a big difference in education between American and Chinese because teacher will hit you. Even though there's no stupid question in China, but when you stood up and you don't answer correctly, teacher will give you the eye look, it's really hurt. In. America, it [the educational system] really encourages so it's different between the educational program in America and in China. I really want my kids to stay America and get educated here. The teachers, compared to China, they are more responsible, I would say. Maybe some are not but in any case, in comparison, they are much more respectful than when you are in China. Maybe a bigger city in China is different but the countryside where I was from is really comparable [drastically different] to America.

**What was your parents like occupation when they first moved to China? What were their prospects, what was considered success for them?**

**Person B:** I don't think there's a success [concrete goal] but our goal, Chinese family usually they want their family to stay together. Finally, when we came, my mom decided to have something that makes us stay together. After she work a restaurant for a while, she finally decides maybe it's time for her to open a restaurant. Because my uncle is looking for restaurant, just having a look too at other locations because my uncle also works for the restaurant for a while before he finally has his own. It’s just convenience that he can look for another location for us and he did. That’s when we open a restaurant with the family together. We don't expect to earn a lot of money, but mainly the important thing is to have to keep a family together.

**Is there a certain reason why they decided to open a restaurant? Who are the customers? When it came to these business decisions, how much of it was advice from other people who own restaurants?**

**Person B:** Mainly from my uncle, we don't have experience about opening a restaurant, it's just a try. Because my auntie had a restaurant close by, probably uncles looking somewhere close by [her] to get advice she because she know the neighbor quite a lot. That's when he looks up in the neighborhood and find out. Well, honestly, my uncle didn't know the place, he look is Bedstuy. Bedstuy during the time, 10 or 20 years old, is the worst place in Brooklyn because when I go to high school my friends said, “Oh you live in Bedstuy.” They were surprised.

I guess opening a restaurant is really something that can bring your family together.

My uncle used to have a buffet restaurant where he chipped some of his money in, but he doesn't earn really good and it's I guess a stressful for him. So, he decided to get advice to leave. Just have your own [restaurant] even though it's not a big business, but you're more comfortable. You have more control on your side about how you manage the store over a managerial pool in buffet-style [restaurants].

**Your parent’s restaurant was in Bedstuy, the customers were probably not Chinese either, right? Do you know at all like why are your parents decided to open a restaurant that was like not in a Chinese neighborhood? How do that affect the menu, the food that were served?**

**Person B:** Each restaurant they depend on locations and the customers, what they like the most. Since my auntie has experience among this neighborhood so we pretty much just copy her version. Before uncle opened a restaurant, my auntie helps out and give advice to him about how to and things. Because he already has chef when he was in China, so for him, it was a pretty easy flow. Then he opened my restaurant [her parent’s restaurant] while he's still looking for a better one for himself. He teach my mom, he also teach me. He said kids are really good helpers. If you hire a full-time staff, you not going to earn money, but if you have the kids help, you can save some. So, that's the deal, kids can help out in the restaurants.

**What do you think of the neighborhood that you lived in, Bedstuy? When you first moved there you were living in a Chinese neighborhood. What is your view of these different neighborhoods New York City, the relation between different groups?**

**Person B:** When I came to Bedstuy, I don't speak a lot of English, my mom either so it will be difficult in communicating with customers. I there are some difficulties to be honest. If I first came to America to live in Bedstuy, it will be the worst experience because first you don't speak that language second you couldn't understand the culture. It will be hard and not all of them, each community will be some bad guys and good guys, not to say only Bedstuy. You will face some challenges, some people like you, welcome you some people dislike you; they're not going to show any welcome signs. It's a challenging for us to live in Bedstuy but then when you get used to it, I say after I lived here longer, it was a different story. I speak English more, I communicate more, that was later on, but beginning was difficult.

**Do you and your family still live in Bedstuy?**

**Person B:** We don't live there anymore, we now move to Crown Heights. Crown Heights is no different to be honest. Well, Crown Heights neighborhood is maybe a little bit better or maybe because my English improved, so the communication got better. The way, their style of culture, I understand a lot better that's why they're different.

**What was the reason for that move from Bedstuy to Crown Heights? Did you and your family partake in community activities? Do you feel integrated in that community in Bedstuy and now in Crown Heights?**

**Person B:** It was my mom who own the restaurant Bedstuy, and she close down due to slow business because there's new wave coming in. They may not like the style of Chinese restaurant. I was growing up, my sister growing up too, we couldn't help her. My sister has a job in in the hospital now and I work in restaurant in Crown Heights. My brother is graduating, well he's in college now, so it's just that kids growing up so no helpers. We don't make profits, so she closed down the restaurant.

Crown Heights is also a black community. I do feel like now I walk around the neighborhood, and I am kind of more integrated to the community. After my have my kids, you grow up too. When you talk to people more, you grow up more. I work in California for a few years before coming back to Crown Heights and decide open a restaurant after having my kids because I really want my family to come together. That's the idea that is also pass down [from my parents] to me. I bring my kids walk around the neighbor and you know talk to people a little bit.

**What was the reason for moving to California for a few years, then move back and raise your family here? What was the reasoning behind that? And then, could you tell me a little more about the decision to open a business here in Crown Heights?**

**Person B:** It was me who personally go to California, my family didn't move there. I was helping out; I was looking for job. I guess I'm the first second immigrant family [second generation] in America. It's hard to find a job, to be honest, because my English wasn't confident too. I was looking for something to work on and then my mom told me about someone in California, my relative, he had a chain store that he needs to take care and is looking for people to help, so I just came over to help out and to see if there's anything I can work [be useful] there for. I stayed there for years and then after I had my kids, actually I was getting pregnant, I haven't had it yet, I got pregnant, and I came back to New York because I miss New York a lot.

This is your [my] hometown after growing up, the first time I feel like homesick because I come to America, I don't feel homesick [for] China, to be honest. I don't know why, I guess that's too young, huh? First time I feel like homesick, I decide to come back to New York to do something. My auntie had a store [restaurant] to sale. So, I say,” I’ve worked there before, that I familiar with the neighborhood as well. This is probably something I can start with. Let’s see what's going on.”

**Do you see differences between the restaurant that your parents owned at Bedstuy and in this restaurant? What were the decisions behind the menu you have, these dishes? How similar is this restaurant that you that you operate now compared to your relatives’ restaurants?**

**Person B:** They’re the same style, the same style. When I open a restaurant, to be honest I almost forgot [how to work in one] because when you’re kids, what you're doing this helping out in a restaurant. I don't do a lot even though it looks like I work there but I don’t work full-time. It’s really after school help, [when I would] help out a few hours. It’s same style of work.

**How important would you say having these restaurants is to the Chinese communities that you know? How important is it to operate these Chinese American To-go restaurants? You also mentioned other types of restaurants, such as buffets chain. Do you know if** **Chinese immigrants also operate different types of businesses other than Chinese Americans To-go restaurants?**

**Person B:** I think there are a few different styles but I'm I cannot think of anything off the top of my head. Basically, what I know is takeout restaurant, dining, and a buffet. That's pretty much all, some of them very rare but some of them buying the branding one. I'm not sure if it's Dunkin Donut but something related to this, they chip in some money for that. The family restaurant basically helps me bring my kids go to school here. **It's a way for us to live together and make support for each other**. There's a version, to be honest. There's a version in restaurant [a method to make a living]. When I talk to my aunt, when I talk to my uncle, they keep telling me, “Oh, we open a restaurant, save some money to get the house, to make a living for yourself.”

Chinese people's dreams are about owning a house, so you just save some money and get a house. My uncle used to tell me this guy, the other location in Chinese restaurant, because talk, there's like community. They talked a lot about restaurants, people who work in restaurants that they talk together. So, this guy who had a restaurant, he only had a little bit of money, not a lot of money, but he opened a restaurant. He doesn't earn a lot of money but he' keep saving, he’s saving [his earnings]. He doesn't spend most of his money, he saved the money and finally he got a chance to buy the house. It was an encouraging story to me, when my uncle told me that because still, he is able to get a house. I was happy for that too; this can be my goal. It doesn't have to be a lot of money, but eventually you will get a house because my dream is also to have a house.

When I came to America, on the airplane, I don't know where I see this is about American dream. Maybe on the [tv] screen on the airplane or somewhere, but it's just my impression of this American dream is still there. I also want to have my house of my own too, so it encourages me to do that.

**What do you think becoming American or being American means to you? What does it mean for your kids?**

**Person B:** For my kids, I just want them to live comfortably. Not worry too much about money, just have a job enjoying what they do, that's all.

**What is the day-to-day operations [in restaurants]? What would you say is the retirement age for restaurant workers and restaurant owners? Is it like the American [average], 65 [years old]? Is that the retirement age?**

**Person B:** I would say the retirement age will be different, varies from person to person. The last generation or the last two generation, those older people, I'm not saying they [are the generation that] come to America but that generation in general, the older man, I know that even though they reach, 65 they still work. I notice someone in the restaurant industry. they still work at 70 something because working helps you. It's like an exercising moving your muscles too. When you stopped work because restaurant is heavy work, once you stop work, your body will start to [catch up]. When you come back to it, your body could be short too. Chinese people are afraid that, in our community, they're afraid that they don't have enough money, so they just keep working, keep working. Some people can't work to up to 77 years old so I would say it depends on the person. For myself, personally, I'm not sure.

My focus right now is actually with my kids because I want to make sure they grow out healthy. Unlike the way [I grew up], because I experienced so much with my childhood in China, my mom wasn't there, it wasn't a good childhood experience. So, I want them to have a good child experience. Right now, I'm kind of helping out in a restaurant part-time but not whole-time. My mom is covering for me during the times when I’m with my kids.

**Would you say that restaurant work is a lot more difficult than the average like American nine-to-five like, 40-hour work week?**

**Person B:** Oh yeah, restaurant stay open 12 hours [ a day]. Right now, I cut my restaurant business hours too. Because I need to take a break for myself. It's [the labor can be] really hurtful, especially for me. I was having shoulder pain all the way [the whole time], in the restaurant. Until recently, I work helping out part-time a little bit, so my shoulder doesn't wasn't in pain. Before, when I was helping my mom's restaurant as a kid [growing up], even a few hours but it's a lot of work your shoulder gets a lot of pain. After I've opened my own restaurant, my shoulder pain [came back] and I was pregnant and working in the restaurant. When you stop [working], you suddenly feel like your pain but when you move, the flow, you still have a pain, but I guess a lot better.

**How long have you worked in the restaurant business? How long do you predict you will continue to work in your family’s restaurant?**

**Person B:** I came here when I was 14. I already start helping out in my auntie’s restaurant after school, for a few hours, for one or two hours [each day or week]. Then, after my mom opened her restaurant, I already got ideas about how to work in a restaurant the same way after school and maybe summertime. I go to California and then open my own restaurant [after coming back]. Now, I'm 33 or almost 34. I'm not sure how long do I see myself [doing this] because depends if my kids grow up a little more, I may have to help on the restaurant. I'm the type of person also afraid it doesn't have enough money, so I'm not sure. At this age, I cannot predict how long I'll be working in the restaurant industry.

**Do you see you or any member of your family moving outside of New York City? Or do you plan to live in New York City, even if let's say your family no longer like owns this restaurant?**

**Person B:** I will be homesick if I stay away from New York, so I'll be staying in New York. I don't see other people will be stay away [moving away] from New York, unless it is really necessary because there's a big community in New York. There's an 8th Ave in Brooklyn, Flushing, Manhattan, [they] all have Chinatown. A lot of people gathering here, I don't see a lot of people stay away from [the city]. The only person I may think is stay away is if they property somewhere, it's much cheaper than right now. In Philadelphia, for working class people, they save money and then get a house. There, it is much easier and houses bigger.

**o You and your family like living Crown Heights now because your family has a restaurant here. How long do you see you or your family continuing to live in Crown Heights if this restaurant like no longer operates? Are there certain like neighborhoods in New York City that you would prefer to live in, that you think are maybe more vibrant and that you think might be more suitable for your family?**

**Person B:** Our family already have like a you know some property in this neighborhood, so I don't see myself maybe moving away. For the next 10 years, I would say, or five years, I'll still in be Crown Heights. But nobody knows what's what happening in the future.

**You mentioned owning property is crucial to this American dream. Would you say that is also the case for a lot of your friends and relatives? Is that also how they see success?**

**Person B:** People in this community been talking about owning properties or [how to] have a better life America. So, buying houses one of the ways to show that you are being a little bit successful in America.

**I know there are Chinese associations that some Chinese immigrants use as resource if they do not have as many connections here and if they do not have enough English fluency skill. Do you know if you or your family have used organizations outside of immediate friends and family network? Outside of this personal network?**

**Person B:** Auntie and Uncle, those are my two resources, or my mom. Auntie and Uncle probably talked to someone the network too. The Chinese associate, someone they may be already know, they just like a pass information verbal by verbal [verbally]. Like if I said my Auntie to someone she trusts, then that person has some other person who trust from the association.

**So, it’s a little informal connection. You’ve talked about how you have aunts and uncles have given your parents and you advice when it to these restaurants and where exactly the residents live in living and how to work, the day-to-day operations. Have you or anyone in your family helped others own Chinese restaurants or settled down in New York City?**

**Person B:** Every time, when someone wants to open a restaurant, we have a habit of sending some gift or borrow some money to each other to help make sure that he opens up the restaurant. That's the community thing [we do] in our community.

**Since Covid-19 pandemic started, and the rise in anti-Asian hate crime, what is your experience as a worker in the family Chinese restaurant, living in Crown Heights and in New York City?**

**Person B:** After this happened [Covid-19 pandemic], I remember there's a mom and a kid. The kid wants to come to the restaurant and mom said, “Don't go inside, don't go inside. They have virus.” I have other bad experiences and then I'm going to talk about good experiences. Another one is, a youngster of the black [community] come to our restaurant and said, “I'm going to shoot you after you close down the restaurant or something like that. I'll meet you at the street,” or something threatening. That made me actually don't want to send my kids [to school] because they used to go to Chinatown school. I called up the school, let them know this thing happens. I called the police to make a report about that too.

The good is some people still come in and they talk about their experience. This is not the first time they accuse a community for something, for example the blacks they accuse them for, it’s a disease also back in history. I forgot what it is, when it was happening, they got isolated for that disease. They say something from Africa. Then there were some other diseases they say from other countries too and then they start doing something about people in in America. Actually, they didn’t even go to you know their country. Like, I never I haven't been visited China for over 10 years and they accuse me of bringing a virus. Some people understand, some people don't understand, so it's really about how you talk to people.

**Would you say crime and discrimination against ethnic Chinese in New York City is worse now than in the past? You have lived here for a very long time.**

**Person B:** I'm not sure, maybe get better. I know that when I go to college, I read this book in a classroom setting about back in history, the Japanese, the [bombing of] Pearl Harbor. Because we look like, so they also lock in the Chinese people over there. So, it was a big, terrible life experience back then. Compared to right now, I guess it's getting better because you know there's more protections. Also, the City’s doing something else with the hate crimes. They start to clean out the train stations and homeless people because we see a lot of people sleep there. Sometimes they just come over, they’re not afraid of you. They look at me, I'm Chinese, I guess we’re easier to handle so Chinese people will be the pig for them to attack. Or maybe I really don't look like the one who's strong enough [to fight back] so they attack me. But anyway, I just feel people look at me [target me] when this happens. You just have be more protective. I guess I'm the person who scared a lot, so you just have to be more protected for yourself.

**Yes, more cautious. Thank you. Is there anything else you would like to share? Thank you, thank you for your time.**