"Untold Stories: Histories of People of Color in Oregon"
U-Engage ALS 199 Fall 2014
OSU Faculty/Staff Oral History Project

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Interviewee: Janet Nishihara
Interviewers: Karly Rodgers, Hayley Pearson, and San Pail Whitehead
Transcriber: San Pail Whitehead and Avery Sorensen

[00:00:00]

KR: Our names are Karly Rodgers.

HP: Hayley Pearson.

SW: San Pail Whitehead.

KR: We are students in Oregon State University's U-Engage class, "Untold Stories: People of Color in Oregon." Today's date is November 18th, and we are conducting an oral history interview with Janet Nishihara.

JN: Mhm.

KR: Okay. So, please state your name and spell it out loud.

JN: Oh, Janet Nishihara. J-A-N-E-T N-I-S-H-I-H-A-R-A.

KR: What is your birthdate and birthplace?

JN: Birthdate,[EDITED OUT]. Birthplace, Ontario, Oregon.

KR: With which ethnic or cultural backgrounds do you identify?

JN: I identify primarily as a third generation Japanese American and more generally as Asian American.

KR: When and where were your parents born and what are their backgrounds?

JN: Oh, wow. Let's see, my dad was born in 1925 in Utah, and my mom was born in 1927 in Eastern Idaho.

KR: Where did you grow up and where were you raised?

JN: So I was--I've grew up near Ontario area. I said Ontario because that's where the hospital is. We actually were raised in a small, near a small town nearby town called Veil. So we were about 15, 20 miles outside of Ontario, but really out in the country.

KR: What was your transition from high school to college?

JN: Oh, what was my transition from high school to college? Um, I really, really wanted to go to college. Being in a small town--I liked growing up in a small town--I was, I felt a little, um, stifled, or held back by not a whole lot of opportunities in high school. In fact, I took like two years of typing, which no one needs two years of typing, right? I took two years of typing because there wasn't a whole lot of other classes to take. Um, if they had A.P., I would have taken A.P. So I felt--when I came to college, I thought, okay finally, this is my opportunity to try some different things I didn't have a chance to try in high school because they didn't have it because it was a small school. So I was real excited about coming to college, and also scared because, like I said, I grew up outside of a small town. So, coming to Corvallis was like, wow, big city, there're stop lights here and things like that, and elevators, and stuff that we didn't have anywhere near where we grew up. I remember when we were kids, wanting to go to Boise so we could ride the escalator once in a while in the mall because there weren't any where we were. So. So yeah, it was scary and exciting at the same time.

KR: Where did you attend school and what did you study?

JN: Well, I attended Oregon State University. So I came here as a freshman right out of high school and I studied - I came in as an English education major and graduated as an English education major, so I didn't change my mind along the way and really enjoyed the classes and things and the people I met. So.

KR: Who were your mentors, personal and professional?

JN: During college?

KR: Mhm.

JN: Okay. One of my mentors was my academic advisor. So, he was a very, very interesting guy who would gladly spend a lot of time just sitting in his office and talking about whatever we wanted to talk about. And I had never really had that before, so that was really cool. And, luckily, he was the advisor for my major, so he also helped me out at the same time. So he was one of my mentors. There are other people, a lot of my mentors were upper division students, juniors and seniors, who were here when I was a freshman--they helped me out a lot too.

KR: What made you decide to come to Corvallis, to Oregon State?

JN: You know, [laughing] the main reason I came to Oregon State was because my dad told me that I couldn't go to University of Oregon. Because in Eastern Oregon is relatively conservative. And, at that point especially, in the, like, mid to late '70s, U of O was seen as very liberal and Oregon State was seen as very conservative. Which when I got here it didn't seem that different, but that was really the reputation that they had. And the reputation in Eastern Oregon was that people that went to U of O were all hippies and all smoked pot or something. And Oregon State, they were all Cowboys and I guess drank beer. I don't know. When I go here it just was exciting to me, so that's the main reason why I came to Oregon State. Because if I were, you know, being logical about something, I would have picked a school with maybe a bigger English program. But I'm really glad I chose what I did because it means the classes were small, we got to know the professors really well. So, some of the bigger schools, classes had 75, 80 students in each class. We had 20, so it's a lot better in my mind.

KR: What is your current position?

JN: My current position for this year is, I'm the Interim Associate Provost for Academic Success and Engagement and Director of Advising on campus. And that's just for this year basically; I don't know when it's going to end, we'll see. It's supposed to end by June, it will probably end before that. And, usually I am the Director of the Educational Opportunities Program.

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KR: Have you held other positions with OSU?

JN: Yeah. I started here, well I did my undergrad here, and then I came back and did graduate school here. So, I've been a graduate teaching assistant, I've been a writing instructor, I've been an academic counselor, I've supervised some other people, and I've been the director of EOP. So, most of my positions have been within EOP.

KR: So, what are your job duties?

JN: Wow, right now. That's a good question. My job duties right now are, it seems like they keep changing, or somebody will call me and say, "Hey did you realize you are supposed to be doing this?" and I'm like, "No! No one told me that part. So, okay thanks for letting me know." A big part of my job duties are coordinating the work that's going on on campus with the first year experience. So, sort of, just keeping all that stuff moving and keeping it going until a new person comes into the position because I am just doing it for this year. So, first year experience. As director of advising, a big part of

my job is to make sure we're still moving forward on helping the colleges get better and better in the academic advising they provide for students. So, a lot of the first-year academic advising, and I also oversee, like, the EOP and some of the academic support programs for students--academics for student athletes, academic success center, so helping those units grow and develop also. So those are my main areas.

KR: Who has been important to you here at OSU in terms of your work and position?

JN: Oh, well, I think several people. Let's see who comes to mind first. One person definitely is Dr. Larry Roper who, up until recently, was the Vice Provost for Student Affairs at Oregon State because my, one of my graduate degrees is in Student Affairs. And so, I feel real attached to that unit even though we're not currently in that area. Another person is Susie Brubaker Cole. She held the position I'm in right now before. So I'm, sort of, trying to fill in while she takes on another position. There've been a lot of people who were, like, directors of the EOP before who helped me grow a lot. And I mean, some of the professors, a lot of the professors on campus, too, that I took classes from. So, kind of a lot of people.

KR: How have you seen the OSU community change over time in terms of diversity and inclusion?

JN: You know, I think, it's sort of this, sort of two answers to that, and one is about students. I think we've gotten a lot better at recruiting and retaining a more diverse student population. I think it's gotten a lot better; it's way better than it was when I was a freshman at Oregon State, in terms of diversity. I think we haven't done as good of job with faculty and administrators and things like that. It's a little bit tougher in some ways. Students come here and they're committing to four, five, six years, or whatever it is at Oregon State, and if they just can't stand it anymore, then they go find a job or go to graduate school someplace else. Faculty it's different because they're committing, basically, to setting up their life here, and if the campus and the community don't seem like a good place to do that, then why would they stay? You know, it's a difficult thing to do. So that's--I think there is big growth in terms of students because there is more support services around and the university has been paying attention to. I think their next step is to start paying more attention to the faculty of color.

KR: And then, what about Corvallis in general in terms of diversity and inclusion? How has that expanded?

JN: Boy. I don't know if I have an answer to that. I don't--it's just not a very diverse town. It's really easy to, sort of, go around town and not see a whole lot of diversity. And I've been here for so long, it doesn't bug me, but every once in a while, I'll be with somebody, we'll go to the movie theatre and before the lights go down somebody will look around and go, "You're the only person of color in this." And I'm just like, "Really?

Did you have to bring that to my attention? Thanks a lot." So I usually, yeah, I usually don't pay attention, but there's some situations where I am like, "Wow, okay yeah, I'm in Corvallis."

KR: And, are there any events, initiatives, programs in particular that stand out for diversity and inclusion at Oregon State?

JN: As being good, or? I'm assuming, yeah.

KR: Yeah, probably good.

JN: There's a couple of pieces. One is the Difference, Power, and Discrimination Program. You guys may not have heard of yet. It's a part of the BACC core. You have to take a course that's in Difference, Power, and Discrimination --that means the course has to cover those areas and has to be based in the U.S. and it has to deal with difference, basically. And not just, "Oh, like, oh, these people eat different food and these people dress differently," not that sort of level but a deeper level where it's like so, "what is the discrimination this group has faced and how they dealt with it?" So, having—getting that requirement into the general ed. requirements at Oregon State, I think, was a big change on campus in terms of making it clear that we mean this across the campus. It's not just an ethnic study major who has to understand that, or a women's study major who has to understand it, everybody needs to have some background in that in order to become a fully-thinking American in a lot of ways. So, I think that was a big deal. I think the, having—there's a contract that was signed between the administration and the different cultural groups on campus that says that the cultural centers are here in perpetuities. So, they can't, the university can't just say, decide we need that land, we need that space, we need that building, and kick people out.

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This contract says that any decisions about the cultural centers themselves, the physical location, the physical structure, has to be in agreement between the communities involved, and that means on-campus and off-campus and the administration. So that was a pretty big step, I think. And that's something that Larry Roper was real instrumental in setting up. And I think it says a lot; it says a lot to me that the university values it so much that they're willing to say—'cuz it's valuable, I mean, any piece of land in central campus is valuable land. Anybody would want to have their, their building there. In fact, where the new Asian Pacific Cultural Center is going in, they claimed that spot and then the College of Business said, "Oh but we already drew our plans up to have Austin Hall at that spot." And they said, "Could you ask the students again to make sure that's the spot they want?" And so, we got them together and sent out this thing, and they all voted, and yeah, that's the spot they wanted. So now, so Austin had to move further down the hill. They're still gigantic. And they've been real

good neighbors so far. I think they're going to be great neighbors for us. But, they could have easily said, "but we're the college of business, you know, we're central to this campus, we need that spot"—but they didn't. So, I think that's a good sign also.

KR: And, what do you see as OSU's role in supporting faculty and staff of color, like just in general like you said before?

JN: I think their role is to, I don't know, I'll have to think about this more, but—it's to, to understand the different pressures that are on faculty of color when they live here in town. Years ago, I was at a search committee interview sort of thing, and they're asking the candidate about—'cuz there's a candidate, a person of color—he said, "What would you do to make Corvallis a more welcoming community?" He's like, "Well, there's not much you can do to the town, you can't make the town do certain things." And they said, "Well, wouldn't it be better if all the faculty of color were required to live in town?" And his response was, "Well, as soon as you make all faculty live in town then that might be a requirement, but you cannot make certain sub-populations required to live in town when it costs more to live in town, this may not be where they want to raise their children, all those kinds of things. So, how could you make a restriction on a certain group of people and not on another?" Which I thought was a good response because that would be, kind of, scary if we moved to a place where certain groups were required to do certain things that other people weren't. That doesn't seem very American in a lot of ways.

KR: Backwards.

JN: Yeah, it seems to be backwards. Um. But, I think, I think the administration is getting closer to—they still don't listen to faculty of color very much, I don't think. We don't have a very strong, unified voice. So I think they think, okay everyone's happy, but they're just not listening I don't think. So, I don't know. I don't know what the answer to that is.

KR: And then, what do you see is OSU's role in supporting students of color, in addition to that?

JN: You know, there was somebody who said, "A rising tide floats all boats." Which okay, I go with that to a certain extent, but that's—you're assuming that everyone's boat is equally seaworthy, and everyone's, you know, everyone's got the same cool stuff on the boat, and all that kind of stuff. And I think, just talking with students, I know people come from very different backgrounds. I was just in a meeting with a student from Union--and Union, I don't know how many people they graduate every year, I think it's like ten, maybe. And like two go to college in a given year. So that's a very different student from a student who goes to Lake Oswego High School, or to Sunset High, or something like that with big schools with lots of money available to them. So

the idea of a rising tide which floating all boats--which, I'm assuming, means making the whole institution better and more supportive--I don't know if that exactly is the way to go about it because I think there are a lot of students who come as first generation students who are really, rurally isolated students who need a little bit more support than, sort of, the general support that everybody has. I think we do need to raise the general level of support for everybody just to make sure that everyone feels like they know what's going on, and how to fit in, and all that kind of stuff. But I think there are certain populations that we need to pay special attention to. So, sort of both of those things.

[00:15:04]

KR: And then, what do you see as your role in supporting your faculty of color colleagues?

JN: Oh, wow. I've been thinking about this one. I don't know right now. I think—'cuz we used to have a fair—relatively strong organization that was faculty of color group. And sort of, people got real busy, and it sort of hasn't been very active in the past couple of years. And there was a women of color group that got started last year, year before, that kind of got going and then everyone got busy. We sort of haven't revisited that. And I think that's the one I want to see if we can revisit because there's a lot of things that women faculty of color, in particular, that might be something that we can pull together on. So, as long as people wanted to get together and just have food and stuff, we had a great time. We sort of, just, hung out and talked and tried to get together again. But it's just, it's just harder than ever, it seems like these days, so. So, I don't know what my role is right now, but I'm thinking of trying to nudge people to try to get that going again. So, yeah.

KR: And then, in addition to faculty, the students of color as well.

JN: Um. Huh. Right now, my main role with students of color—well, I have a couple—one is when I go back to EOP, got a big population, big percentage of the population in EOP are students of color. But I also do a lot of advising for student organizations. So I'm the faculty adviser for the Cambodian students, the Hmong students, Asian Pacific American student union--those are the three main ones right now. Just, sort of—and they run fine on their own, so I just, sort of, show up in meetings and show my face and hope they remember who I am. And go down to the kitchen, that's, I'm hoping the new kitchen, I can cook down there, that's what is fun, it is so much fun down there. 'Cuz one time I showed up down in the kitchen, and I said, "How can I help?" And they're all like, "Oh no, no, we don't need your help." And I said, "No, I'm here to help." They said, "Well here's 20 pounds of onions, can you chop them up?" "Well, okay. I guess I volunteered for this. I think, have you ever heard of this thing called a food processor? And you just put the stuff in it and it chops it up?" "Oh that's not traditional." I'm thinking, "I don't care, it's 20 pounds of onions, that's a lot of onions." So, so it's a lot of

fun because I think you get to meet people, and talk about different things, and I think that's real important for me, as a faculty member. And also, students just, sort of, hang out together and talk about stuff. And you're doing something that, you know, telling somebody to chop up onions. Okay, you can't mess it up a whole lot, so yeah. So, I hope that answered your question.

KR: No, it did. What recommendations do you have for OSU to become a more-inclusive campus?

JN: Oh, gosh. Hm. For a long time, there've been a lot of groups who've suggested that we need somebody in charge of diversity on campus. And I'm always torn 'cuz I think, I don't know how that works and I haven't really investigated other institutions to know how it works for them. But a lot of other places have, like, a chief diversity officer or something like that. And we've had lots of committees that have met and done research and checked on things and they've suggested different things. A lot of times, those are notorious for being all this work putting in and then it gets put on the shelf. So, some of it is just—there's another group going right now that's got more deans and upper, sort of, big-shot, more powerful people. I'm hoping that they get listened to, and whatever they come up with becomes a decision that changes the university. I think the university needs to take some sort of visible step on supporting diversity on campus. Right now, it's sort of, you know, there's a lot of really good people and a lot of different places, and if there's some way to pull us together a little bit more, that would be a good thing, so. Yeah, right now, it's pretty, pretty spread out all over.

KR: Could you reflect on the season of change the university is currently in and where you see the university heading in the future in terms of diversity?

JN: Um, tell me more what you mean by season of change do you think?

KR: Um, well. [break]

HP: What do you think our enrollment now compares to the people, students of color video that we discussed in class?

JN: Oh okay. Um, students of color video that we saw was relatively recent. So I was also thinking about when I was, when I first came. Like I said, the numbers were pretty low.

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But, more recently, the numbers have grown, especially with certain groups—Asian-American groups, some of the Pacific Islander groups, and Latino groups, the numbers have grown more dramatically. I think African-American numbers have stayed pretty stagnant which is not, I don't think, a good thing. I think there are more people who

should be, we should be recruiting and going after and saying, "hey come to Oregon State, it's a good place to be." Back in the '60s, the reason that EOP was created was that there was a walk-out of black students in 1968. There was a disagreement between a football player and the head coach of the football team about whether they could grow facial hair during off-season. It sounds like a funny reason to have this huge blow-up, but, I think, it was just the tip of the iceberg of students, black students, being on campus being followed around by the campus police, being kicked out of fraternities and told they couldn't join, and being, you know, just being discriminated against a lot on campus. And this was it, that was like, that was the final straw. And it created this situation where, my understanding is, the vast majority of black students on campus got together and did a walk-out of campus. And some of them literally left campus and gave up scholarships and gave up their college plans and never returned college. So, this was a huge change in their lives. I mean, that—I wouldn't have the guts to do that kind of thing; I would be like staying real low and trying not to make my parents mad at me for doing something they thought was wrong or something. So, that took a lot of guts to do something like that. So the university responded by creating EOP as a means of providing support for those students. So that was at least a start on the university's part. I think the cultural centers were also the same sort of thing in terms of providing some place where students felt like there were staff and faculty who understood them, there are peers that they could get together with, and some place where they didn't, didn't feel like they were sort of the focus of attention all the time. Because when I've talked to students before, one of the big things they've said—I had a student several years ago who was African-American, male, chemistry major. And he said he got to his junior-level classes and here are all these other people he'd seen in his freshman classes, his sophomore classes, in the tutoring rooms, in the labs, all this stuff—walked into his junior year and they said, "Hey you must be in the wrong class." He's like, "You know me, you know who I am, why would you say that?" They said, "Well, aren't you an athlete?" He's like, "No, you've known me for two years and you know I'm not an athlete, why would you assume I was?" They said, "Well that's what all the black guys on campus are, right." So, you know, sometimes stereotypes really override our common sense and stuff we already know. So, there's still a ways to go on some of those things, and I think the more numbers that we have on campus, and the more we can mix people together at their comfort level, the better off we all are. Because I—it still bothers me that we send most of our students, a vast majority of our students, graduates out into the world with never having had an African-American faculty member in front of them in the classroom because we don't have very many on campus. That's a disservice to you as students to not have had any opportunity to develop relationships with any faculty of color for the most part. Because you're probably going to go a part of the world where you're gonna have to know how to work with people. And if you go out there with stereotypes in your heads, it's going to be really hard--and we don't want to send you out there with a hard time, we want to make it as easy for you as possible. Numbers-wise, I think there's a huge advantage, and I—also makes

people feel not as, they don't stick out as much and so there's more, there's more people who understand what they're going through, so.

HP: How does that influence you as being a mentor to people of color here, or any student?

JN: You know, yeah, yeah. I think I'm more—I don't like to think of myself as a mentor, sounds weird. Somebody asked me, "Will you be my mentor?" I'm like, "I don't know what that means."

HP: That's a good thing though.

JN: Yeah I think so, but it feels weird to me. Yeah I'll hang out with you and I'll talk with you and stuff, just seems a funny title to me. Yeah, it doesn't—I have to figure out what that means in my head. But um, I think I—if a student of color asks, certainly yeah. Can we just talk about how you got here or what's going to help me do you think, and those kinds of things, certainly. And any student, I'm open to that. I just tend to hang out more with certain groups, so I think they see me as more—they see me more and they recognize me. So, I think that happens a little bit more, so.

KR: Alright. And what are some issues of importance with respect to people of color in the community that the community's facing?

JN: Oh okay. I can speak, maybe, more particularly about Asian-Americans, yeah. Just there's so, so many.

[00:24:58]

A lot of the issues that the Asian-American community faces have to deal with timing, I think. 'Cuz I was talking with a student a couple years ago who said, "well, I don't—how will you understand" - an Asian-American student whose parents immigrated here, they were born here right after their parents immigrated so they were born in the United States but their parents were definitely not Americanized yet? So, we're trying to—we're having this conversation about how could I, as a third generation person, understand what their situation is. I said, I can't 'cuz I'm not in that situation, but we can talk to each other and we can try to come closer to each other to understand. It's just like any other culture, too—I can't understand what it's like to be African-American, but that doesn't, shouldn't stop me from wanting to get to know people and get to understand what their situation is like better. And I hope I don't come across as saying, no I understand all, what all you all are going through. I may understand what their children's children may go through because it seems like it's a similar pattern of acculturation that happens, at least within Asian-American communities. I forgot what your question was.

KR: Oh, it was issues of importance in respect to Asian-Americans, people of color in general.

JN: Yeah, you know. So there's the timing thing, the acculturation thing. The issues that I see that may not be generally seen within Asian-American population in any way, is how do we keep Asian-American college students in particular – 'cuz that's who I work with--how do we keep them, how do we help them become what they want to become, whatever that is, and however Americanized that is, or however culturally, whatever they retain, whatever that is? But also, gain some sort of a political understanding and ways to work together to make things better for other people. I think that's the tricky piece, especially if people are relatively recent immigrants to the United States or their parents were. I think that, a lot of times, a lot of energy's spent on just surviving. So how do you just survive but also do these other things that you have to have more than just survival at? You have to be able to have time and energy and support to go and try to make change in these others ways to, you know, have protests and do those kinds of things. So, I think part of our job is to help students figure out how to do that--how to have them so that they're not just surviving on campus as students but that they're growing and learning and also feel like they're making this contribution back. Because I think that's what makes—I mean, people feel a lot better after things like that too. So.

KR: Could you just talk about, a little bit about your APCC roles and how you contributed to that?

JN: Oh, okay, okay. You know, years ago when we were talking—there were the cultural centers were being developed along the way, and there was a lot of talk amongst the Asian-American students about do we need a center? What would—why would we need a center? What would we do with a center? What does that mean? Because the thing is about Asian-Americans, and a lot of the others groups too, is that calling somebody Asian-American is this gigantic group. There's like 60 or 70 different ethnicities minimum with there, lots of different languages, lots of different backgrounds. Until the '80s, late '70s, the main groups were Japanese-Americans, Chinese-Americans, Korean-Americans because the way immigration went with from Asia, in particular, into the United States. It shut down in 1924 and opened up again in '53 and still had this real tight limit on it. So if you were Chinese, we could have ten or something—I don't know what the numbers were, they were really small. So the majority of the populations were people who had grown up here, which is real different. And during that time, also during like the late '50s, is when the Japanese-American third generation started realizing what camp was because most of our parents wouldn't talk about it. They're like, "Oh camp, camp, camp." And then they realized, "Oh wait, no, these were prison camps, wait now we have pictures, oh." So this political realization plus the '60s were happening and all that kind of stuff. So there's that group of people. There's a group of people who are, like me, third

generation, fourth generation, fifth generation, and very acculturated--grew up in a very white neighborhood or whatever. And then, all of a sudden, we have people who are coming in who had--just were--had refugee status from Southeast Asia because of the war and had been really, pretty much, just picked up and dropped in the United States. So we have all this--sort of, we're all trying to figure out who's who and who is Asian and who gets to call themselves what and what qualifies. And just talking with each other and realizing we don't know where to start talking.

[00:29:50]

So those conversations were really, really, interesting to me between the first few Vietnamese students that we had who came because they came, those were some of the earlier ones. People who were like, especially air-lifted out of Vietnam just as the war ended, had educations there but had no credentials, and so came to school in the United States. Already some of them were doctors already or engineers or something, but didn't have a license for it. So, highly educated people in Vietnam and coming here and having to wash dishes while they got their night school degree or something like that. So all of this really interesting stuff going on, and how do we come to some agreement? And, the other piece in the mix, were the people from Hawaii. And I remember we had an administrator from Hawaii and we sat down with him and he said, "I don't understand, in Hawaii we don't talk about this stuff." He said, "In Hawaii you're the majority." You know, Japanese-Americans were 45% of the population in Hawaii, and then you have the Chinese-Americans and the Korean-Americans and the Filipino, so the vast majority in Hawaii identify as what we would call Asian Pacific Islanders on the mainland. And there, it's like, why even say anything because we're everywhere in everything. So, trying to come to some agreement between the third, fourth generation Asian-Americans, the recent, the newer immigrants, and then the people of Hawaii who had been here, whose families had been here for a long time but had a real different sense of identity. So that, to me, was a great accomplishment of the APCC is bringing those people together and coming to some agreement about why there was a need for a cultural center, because there was a lot of disagreement. And finally, it came together. We got--and we started out in a little room in Snell Hall, which was very small. It was like 10 by 10 or something and had two chairs and a table and it was about it. And it was like, "Oh, oh thanks, we can fit four people in here." And at that time, we had, I don't know how many, thousand Asian-Americans at least, so. So, but we knew we were in line for getting one of the old houses they had on campus at that point, where people would—they were rented out to people, I think, in some sort of lease agreement where whenever they left, then the property would revert back to university. And they were probably gonna take down those houses and build some other building. So, we got in line and we got a choice between an old, green house, I think, down where the parking structure is now and then where the APCC is now out on 26th and Jackson. And we went for that one, partially, because it was close to the BCC and we wanted, we knew there was trouble--there had been trouble in the past for vandalism at the BCC;

somebody had burned a cross in their lawn, yeah some really horrid stuff. And we knew with those two being close enough to each other, they would be able to provide mutual support to each other. And both of them had living facilities, so, at that time, the coordinator at the BCC was living upstairs and the coordinator at the APCC lived upstairs. They had full—you know there was a bathroom and full living because it was a house before. So that was the goal at that point with the hope that they would work more closely together. And now, we have the new building being built, and it's gonna—it no longer has the living facility in there because we don't need that anymore, it's not on the fringes of campus. So, I'm very excited about the new building. We got to go on a tour of the inside of it the other day, and it was really, it was very cool to see what it's gonna become. It's going to be open pretty soon too, so yeah. I'm excited for the possibilities.

HP: Cool, looks pretty new. I walk past it every Tuesday.

JN: It changes every week, I swear. Yeah. Well, it's supposed to be open--they're supposed to be moving things the end of December. So that's really soon, yeah.

KR: Oh wow, that's really soon.

JN: In fact, we're supposed to be teaching a U-Engage class there next term. I don't know about that, we'll see. We'll see if there's furniture or anything. Inside walls would be good too.

HP: Oh. Yeah, insolation.

JN: Yeah, heat, electricity, that'd be good.

KR: And then, what about the history of EOP, the services, and roles?

JN: Oh okay. Like I said before, the EOP came about because of the walk-out of black students. So we always try to remember that because we owe a lot to the courage of those students to take a stand on something on these issues. And so, at that point, there were very few students in the program because there weren't near as many—well after the walk-out—there weren't near as many African-American students on campus. And, but the people who created it were pretty forward-thinking, and they didn't say, "Oh you have to be a student of color to be in EOP." And basically they said, "You know, we're looking at groups that we know have, don't have the same access to, or graduation from higher education." So the main criteria were based on what were then TRIO, the TRIO student support services criteria—based on that but expanded. So, TRIO is first generation students, low income students, and students with disabilities. And EOP is that plus students of color, really isolated students, veterans, older than

average students, single parents, sort of that group of students that face a few more hurdles in the way of completing college.

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So, EOP, I like the basis of EOP because it's—the idea is there's students out there if they're, if they want to apply for the program--because no one's making them apply--if they want to apply for the program, have access to the services, then yes, we want you to come on in. But you're also making a commitment because the first term students are in the program, they have to commit to working, to meeting with an academic counsellor every two weeks. So that gives them that person, that sort of mentor person that has a lot of knowledge about how the university works, and deadlines, and classes, and all that kind of stuff. But, more it's somebody that they can come and say, "You know, day care didn't work out, I had to take my kids to class, you know, how do I, how do I figure this stuff out?" Or even, brand new freshmen students who are like, I, you know, "I am 415 miles away from home and this is the biggest city I've ever been in, what am I supposed to do?" So I think there's a lot of advantages. And, you know, and all the research shows that there's huge advantages to people having access to that kind of person on campus. So, I think it's on a good basis in that way—the foundation of it is real solid.

KR: And then, could you talk a little bit more about the TRIO project and what exactly that is?

JN: Oh, okay. TRIO is a federal program through the U.S. Department of Education, and it's been around since the '60s, I think, and has a bunch of different levels. And it's called TRIO because it used to be three programs but now there's seven, but they never changed the title. So it's kind of hard to explain, it's like—but the first main ones were Upward Bound, students of Portland—Upward Bound which is for high school students and they helped them get into college. Educational Talent Search which is also for high school students. And then, Student Support Services, which is for students while they're in college. Since then they've added some other ones. The main one we're looking to apply for next is called the McNair Scholars Program. And that's a program that takes TRIO eligible students, so first generation, lower income, students with disability, plus underrepresented students of color, and helps prepare them for doctoral programs. So not even just aiming at graduate school, it's like, we're gonna get you into doctoral programs. 'Cuz it's named after Ron McNair who was an astronaut in the Challenger when it blew up, and his family worked really hard with a lot of different federal agencies to get funding for a program that would encourage more, especially, you know, African-American, Latino, Native American students--especially because they're so underrepresented in the science field--to get into doctoral programs and hopefully, become your teachers, and professors, and scientists, and researchers, and stuff in the future. Because we're losing--we're crazy as a nation sometimes—we're

losing this huge pool of creative ability and intelligence and just energy by not tapping into that group, so. I think it's got a huge potential, and we'd really like to get—we had it here at one point, the McNair project, but we'd like to get it back again 'cuz it fits Oregon State really well. I mean we have a lot of STEM majors, we have a lot of students, and we have a lot of undergraduate research that could participate, so.

KR: What were some of your challenges and how did you strive to overcome them?

JN: Oh, okay. Challenges. Some of the challenges were just from, you know, growing up in a small town and trying to adjust to a bigger city. And I don't remember that being that hard. Some of the challenges are—one of the challenges, let's see, let me pick one. One of the challenges I think would be being a woman of color on this campus. And sort of, either being, having people—I would, I don't want people to roll their eyes when I walk in a room and go, "Oh here she comes again, and she's gonna talk about the same thing again." But, I'm probably going to talk about the same thing again [laughter]. So, it's how do you, how do you, how do I keep trying to move things forward without having people go, "We don't want to talk about this anymore?" But we haven't made enough change. So how do you convince people that we still haven't made enough change, we still need to keep working on some of these things, even though they're tired of hearing about it? Because, being tired of hearing about it is a luxury. You know, if you're, if you have a position of privilege, you can say--if you're, you know, if you're a white male and you can say, "I don't want to hear about women's issues anymore, I don't really care," and maybe you don't have to hear about it anymore, but that doesn't mean that they're not just as relevant or more relevant for women. So it's how do you, how do we keep the conversation going and keep some forward momentum so that change happens for the future? And that's, that's a long haul.

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And when I look back, I think okay, a lot of change has happened—we have DPD, we have an Ethnic Studies Department, we have all the cultural centers, and the four that are being rebuilt, and the new one. Some changes happened. It's been slow and may not have been want everyone wants, and we always slip back a little bit when the blackface happens, we're like, wait, I thought we—I didn't think we'd have to deal with this anymore. And so, how do we do, how do we keep moving forward and how do we keep people's energy up and still being interested in being involved with making change happen when it feels like it's going so slow, especially when students cycle through real fast. So the good thing about working at a university is that, wow, we get students here, they're all energized, they're here for like 4 or 5 years, and the bad thing is they're here for like 4 or 5 years and then it cycles through. And sometimes we have to back up and start again and say, okay, oh yeah, we didn't educate this piece very

well, and so it didn't stay present in the, sort of in the conscience of the student body. Yeah.

KR: That's awesome, yeah. And then, what do you see as some of your greatest accomplishments?

JN: Oh dear. Some of my greatest accomplishments. Some of them, I guess, would be being involved with the DPD, creation of the DPD, and being involved with the creation of the Ethnic Studies Department, being involved with keeping this, the College Students Services Administration going as long as possible, being involved with the faculty of color group, just some of those organizations and some of those changes that have occurred on campus. I think those are pretty important. That and those are like secondary to all the students that we have that graduated. There's—we get calls from alum who say, "Hey I got into grad school," or "Oh, did I tell you what I'm doing right now?" Or they come back and visit and they bring their kids. Sometimes they bring their kids and they go, "Oh, we're travelling around looking at colleges." So, yeah, just seeing people being successful, too, I think that's pretty major. So.

KR: Great, and then is there anything else that we haven't talked about that you want to add, any other stories?

JN: Wow. No, I think I'm pretty good. I got more stories, but I think I'm pretty good right now, so.

KR: Awesome. Thank you so much for coming.

[end of interview 00:42:16]