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Interviewees: Asian Pacific Islander American, Mixed Heritage Focus Group: Charlene Martinez, Daniel Cespedes, Hevani Fifita, Delfine Defrank, Olivia Calrillo, Reagan Le, Stephanie Shippen, Makayla Bello, Marwah Al-Jilani, Jason Tena-Encarnacion, Aisha McKee, and Mackenzie Gipple

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DC: Daniel Cespedes

HF: Hevani Fifita

DD: Delfine Defrank

OC: Olivia Calvillo

RL: Reagan Le

SS: Stephanie Shippen

MB: Makayla Bello

MJ: Marwah Al-Jilani

JE: Jason Tena-Encarnacion

AM: Aisha McKee

MG: Mackenzie Gipple

[00:00:00]

CM: Alright, so we are here at the Mixed Heritage API round table at Oregon State University. My name is Charlene Martinez and I use she/her pronouns. Oh, and today is March 17th, 2017. Just your name – we're going to have everyone introduce themselves by their name and pronoun and then we'll get started with our conversation.

JE: My name is Jason Tena-Encarnacion, he/him/his.

AM: I'm Aisha Mckee. I identify as she/her/hers.

SS: Hi, I'm Stephanie Shippen, she/her/hers.

RL: Hi, Reagan Le, he/him/his.

DD: Hi, I'm Delfine Defrank. She/they pronouns

OC: Olivia Calrillo. She/her pronouns.

HF: Hevani Fifita, she/her pronouns.

MB: Makayla Bellows, she/her/hers.

MJ: Marwah Al-Jilani, she/her pronouns.

MG: Mackenzie Gipple, she/her pronouns.

CM: So this is going to be a pretty free flowing conversation and we're going to start off with the first question which is: If you can think of any stories that come to mind about belonging or not belonging?

[Background conversations]

AM?: I have a story. So I identify as Caucasian and Pakistani or Scots-Irish and German specifically. Recently, as in the last two years, Oregon State established a Pakistani Student Association. So it's a relatively young chapter, it's definitely shadowed by the larger Indian Student Association on campus, but all the same, it's there and there's probably two dozen of us or something. So, I had never been to a meeting until recently-ish, because it didn't exist when I started here.

So I went to this meeting and I am very phenotypically white and so walking into this room--I went with my friend who's Pakistani [and] who's a grad student in mechanical engineering as well, which are all things that I am, so I walk into this space and--I think he had told them that I was coming so they kind of knew I was there but their conducting the meeting in English and I think everyone kind of noticed that I was new and they didn't know who I was and there were like 'can you introduce yourself' and all these things. And they're all talking in English and then at one point they were discussing an event they were going to have in the spring and it was a Chai tasting and the president looks at me and goes 'you know what chai is, right?' And being Desi I was like 'of course I know what chai is. It's what we drink.' And my friend who's there just kind of advocates for me in Urdu, which is the language of Pakistan, like 'she speaks Urdu.' And everyone in the whole room just goes like 'oooooh.' And I think everyone was just like 'oh, she's one of us.' So I felt like in that moment, him advocating for me and stuff made me feel very welcome and I think that everyone just felt more comfortable with me once we had established that I had this language that you can't see when you look at me.

HF: I kind of have the opposite experience. So I identify as Tongan, African American, and then Caucasian but like, German and Irish. And during luau--we have luau every year and we start practicing in like January and then we go on April--and it's very much, I kind of feel like there's a disconnect. Because my dad lived in Tonga but my

grandma and grandpa told him specifically you're not going to speak Tongan, you're going to speak English, we live in America now. So he lost the language that he was able to speak so it was never passed down to me or my siblings. But a lot of the Polynesians here all speak Tongan, Samoan, but I don't. So a lot of the times I kind of feel like the odd one out because they're all speaking and they'll talk about things on the island because they've all been. I've never been to the island before.

[00:05:01]

And I kind of feel like I can't relate and it's kind of like there's a disconnect. And a lot of the times they're very, very close and, like me and my cousin Kasia [sp] aren't very close, as close with them and a lot of it has to do with that disconnect because we haven't been to the island, we don't speak the language so it kind of feels like we're the odd ones out. And I feel like a lot of times--I feel like my other identities conflict sometimes. Because I can sometimes hear within that community microaggressions towards other identities that I hold.

So that can kind of make me feel like I belong [partially] as well because they'll say something about black people but for a lot of this time they didn't even know that I was black. So I was just sitting there hearing all these things and so it was just kind of hard for me to be. I feel like I can't belong because even other identities aren't even welcomed here. So that's kind of been my experience. So I've always felt like I'm not really Tongan because I don't know how to speak, and I've never been. So I feel like I've had a hard time even accepting that identity for myself because I don't have these things.

CM: So before Jason asks the question, I'm going to actually introduce Daniel. We're taping right now, video tape--not video tape, audio recording--could you just introduce your name and your pronouns and welcome everyone?

DC: My names Daniel Cespedes. I go by they/them or he/his is fine.

CM: So it's a pretty free flowing conversation you just have to ask the question.

DC: Great, glad to be here.

JE: So just following up with you. I was just curious if, number one, have you ever tried to engage with them in learning the language? And number two, are--have you seen them resilient to maybe, to help you? You know, as far as learning the language.

HF: Oh definitely. And I've been kind of, not really necessarily learning too much, but I've been asking 'oh, how do you say this, how do you say that?' And they're more than

welcome--they're not weird like 'oh, you don't know how to say this.' I've experienced that a little bit from some of the girls that I'm not too close with. Kind of like 'oh, you don't know how to say this?' And I'm like no. But most of the girls are like really 'oh! We'll teach you. This is how you say this.' Especially during one of the numbers we're doing for Samoa. Like, we have to state stuff.

So they've been totally down to help me and teach me how to say the things and what they mean and don't really talk down to me or be condescending at all. So in that way I have felt belonging, now that you bring that up. But, yeah. They've been very helpful. And, you know, there definitely are some who are like 'oh, she doesn't know how to speak this so you know let's stop.' But for the most part they've been pretty welcoming and have been eager to engage in helping me learn the language. Because I really want to learn just because I really want to be connected in that way and I just think it would be awesome. And they've been really helpful in doing that.

DD: I think for me it's that idea of like socially I know they want me to belong, or I know that I belong in certain space with my Loa family members or when I came to OSU and became a part of LSA and taking up that space. I knew that they wanted me to belong and I knew--personally, they wanted to get to know me even though I always felt like growing up I didn't belong. On a grander scale I think I don't belong as a mixed race person, if that makes sense? Where it's like, how much my family tried to assimilate me into American culture and I don't feel like I belong to any community, like my specific multiracial communities in that aspect, if that makes sense? Or like, separately, because I can't totally identify as two separate things instead of like one whole thing.

MB: I think to bounce off of what Hevani said about going into, or [being] accepted into community that doesn't accept other identities. Growing up, I'm half black and half Lao and I grew up in Oregon and just around my Lao side and so they kind of grew up with what they've seen in the media when they immigrated here and so there's a lot of racism around any other ethnicity or race that didn't, you know, that wasn't Lao. So right off the bat my mom told me the story about her and my dad. My grandma disowned my mom for marrying a black guy. So right after hearing that when I was young I already know, okay, I'm not accepted as a [unintelligible] mix that my dad, why would she accept me? Even Lao as half of me I was like, if you can't accept half how can you accept me as a whole. Growing up I was constantly reassured that that half wasn't valid. Like I would get--just simple things like every time we would go out to eat like 'oh sorry there's no fried chicken here.'

[00:10:11]

And it's kind of like it made me, like growing up only around that side and occasionally going to visit my black side in LA, I didn't feel--what's the word--I lost my train of thought. I never felt as if I were--I'm kind of like a mix. I've just always kind of like, I disowned my black side and only settled with the fact that I'm Lao. And I tried as hard as I could to just be as Lao as I could. So it wasn't 'til being exposed to the injustice surrounding the black community and realizing how much I was affected by the same thing.

I was like, I can't escape being black because I'm effected by all these things people in my community are being effected by. So that's when I kind of start to embrace both of my identities but, yeah. It was a journey but, I don't know. I'm still--even when I go back home there's still [those] constant microaggressions or like, sometimes even blatant racism so it's still not validated in that sense but coming here and learning about these things I think I'm finding that I don't need to be validated by them. Just finding validation within yourself, if that makes sense.

CM: So, I'd like this question, so kind of building upon belonging and not belonging, and centering ourselves as folks who all kind of occupy space and settled in space at Oregon State University. What is your experience as blank, answer the question however you identify, been like at OSU?

[Significant dead air]

DC: Can I ask a specifying question onto that? I'm curious whether or not that's inquiring more as to how--what our experience has been as we appear phenotypically or as like in regards to how we've brought different aspects of our heritage to our experience here and how that's been perceived?

CM: That's an awesome question. I think this question, do you feel like your phenotype validates or invalidates your multiraciality and your multiraciality can coincide with that question. So however you want to interpret that. Feel free to go in whichever direction you want to go. I'll just pass this around. It's circulating. You can kind of respond.

DD: For me it's like changed over the years of how people perceive me. When I came here to OSU I was phenotypically brown looking, or I was brown and just living in Oregon, the fact that you don't get sunlight enough, or I didn't get as much sunlight as I did when I lived in Southern California and it just like, over the years-- Or also it could be how much I put myself out there on campus and like actively [*call?*] myself out there that people already know who I am and don't need to explain as much as I did when I was first here at OSU. I think even within the POC community or the API community I

would get, at OSU I'd get questions like, what are you, and who are you? 'What are you' is probably what pissed me off more because it's just like, oh, this again. But for me it just changed as me being a fourth year here. That's all I've got to say.

[00:15:28]

HF: I don't really feel like I have been, like I appreciate all the support I get on this campus. When I was first as a freshman I didn't know what I was doing so that year I didn't really do anything. But this year I said, okay well let me join the BSU and PI club and meet up in a lot of these communities. These people have been super welcoming, regardless. Because I mean, obviously they know I'm mixed, but they were just like whatever. Come listen, speak, do whatever. I didn't really get like--I didn't really feel like 'who are you, what are you doing here?'

So that was really helpful, it actually really helped me a lot because it kind of just made me feel like, nice. That made my life a lot easier to deal with that. I found a lot of really good friends and connections so I can have through that and it's really helped me on my journey to balance my identities and myself and knowing that within these communities at OSU they will accept me regardless. No matter if I'm, you know--I'm not like full something; they don't care. They'll be there for me, they'll have my back and stuff like that. So I felt like [it was] a pretty good experience. But outside of those communities I feel like it's kind of rough because a lot of those people, a lot of people outside those communities aren't as like 'I don't care.' Like she was saying there's a lot of 'oh what are you, who are you.' I actually had someone tell me--because they thought I was Hispanic--and then I said I'm and then they said no you totally are. Like trying to tell me what I was. I was like I know who I am!

[Group laughs]

Just stuff like that. Like crazy stuff, like how you telling me my identity, like my culture. I don't care what you think I look like, I know what I am. So you get a lot of stuff like that and you're just like what? So I think those things, being different like, ooo, that's so cool, like exotic, like wow. That's so cool.' Like that kind of thing. Like, I'm a person. I don't know.

I love my culture and everything but I want to be treated normal, not like this anomaly, you know what I mean? So I get that kind of thing, especially as I'm ordering food. And I'm just like, I want my food and people will be like 'where are you from?' I'm like, where did you get that from, I'm just trying to order a burrito. Just like that kind of stuff. Because it makes me think, do I stick out? What am I doing to make people ask me these questions? And I got a lot of that at OSU. Especially because it's not as diverse

here. Like I used to live in Central Valley in California so people were just kind of like oh yeah, you're like whatever, we're all diverse here. And I came here and it's like you don't seem that diverse so then you really stick out.

So their like 'whaa, this is new.' I don't know. That's why I appreciate the communities here that much more because I can just come in there like I'm mad I'm stressed, just distress and come here and be like, you're not going to ask me what I am, who I am, where I come from. Just coming up to me speaking languages I don't know just, yeah. So it's good and bad. It has little pockets of good while still some problematic things.

CM: Daniel, I know you asked the clarifying question, did you want to answer one of those questions?

DC: Well, I think it's a little bit--it's made me reflect a little bit on my personal expectations of what I have of other people when it comes to my identity. Especially when I'm meeting people for the first time. I get a lot of questions about my last name. If somebody's just meeting and we're on a first name basis or whatever, most of the time people just presume I'm white because of my phenotypical features. It's usually a thing that, discussion begins they ask me about my last name because it's Spanish but because of the history of colonialism it goes through the Philippines, it goes through Guam and then back to here.

So it's one of those things where it resonates with a lot of--that's like the same kind of tone that I have found when I start to talk about elements of my identity, because I can go through the history, I can go through how I feel about the history and all these different aspects of it, and on being mixed. And I get the sense, and all of this may be personal or circumstantial, but I do get the sense that it goes into territory where people aren't interested and that's fine, or they don't have anything to say or add to that and I wonder if I'm dominating the conversation conceptually--or topically. Because it's all stuff that I'm very proud of and I'm happy to talk about, but conversation's a two way street. I think maybe that's the uncomfortable part of, I guess, trying to bring in what I feel is an accent of my identity into a place that kind of expects you to be as white as possible. That was kind of the vibe I got as a student but in my experience it was its own and I don't think speaks for everyone's student experience here too. It's a complex thing.

[00:21:33]

CM: Yeah, I shared the statistic, I think at the Multiracial Aikido retreat and in various space so y'all have heard it, but I want to share it in this round table that when I tried to poll to segregate the data of people who checked two or more races, and I think that

adds up to about six percent of students here at OSU around 60+ percent who identify as API, well 60 percent of those folks. Of the six percent 60 percent of those checked API and then 90+ percent checked white with two or more races. So I think that's a really fascinating demographic and also wanting to know about that. What does that mean or who are those folks. So I just thought I would share that with you.

HF: It's interesting you say that. I was just thinking, because I feel like a lot of times I try to like, not disown, but I don't like to think about my white identity because it's so conflicting when you have another identity that's been oppressed by another identity. So then you're like, it's like really hard for you to think about it in that way. So I was really interested in that statistic because honestly I always talk about being black and being Polynesian but I never talk about my experiences being white as well which I think is important because I feel like with that, being that brings on its own privilege, I guess. Because I get to be mixed with white I do get to be like, have lighter skin and those other things and how that affects my perception and how I am treated vs other people and honestly I love being white as well. I love that and I feel like it's definitely hard when you're in a space where people are white people this or white people that and you're like, my grandma was white. Or like, my dad is white or whatever. So I feel like that's also really interesting.

I think it's really complex. So that's definitely something I want to try to like work on, that identity, because at the end of the day that's who I am. But a lot of the times I'm just like, I don't care. I kind of resent it a little bit, thinking about it. Because of the history of America and the history of colonialism and stuff like that and learning about why I'm white is even harder because my aunt was doing genealogy and it was like, I'm not white because my great-great-grandma wanted it to be. So it's like even that way makes it hard with that identity because it's like, that came about in a really awful way, but here I am today. That's who it's happening. And I always hear stories too, that my great grandparents, how they came from Ireland or Germany and their journeys and I really appreciated them too and think they're super awesome. So, I don't know. That made my head hurt. It's just super complex, how to navigate that because of the history, I guess.

[00:25:10]

Especially when I have to visit my white family. That's interesting. That's real interesting. Especially during family reunions, it's hard. Because that's like my family, my aunts, my uncles, and they'll be talking about Affirmative Action is racist and my mom, my gosh. Like I was just trying to visit. So [laughs] I don't know. It's really hard.

MB: To add on that, I've found you can never really escape being multiracial. What I mean by that is, I could never show up in a space just as myself. Just slide into the conversation, or people would ask what are you so somehow you have to state it or I'll be asked that I'm half black, half Lao, especially doing the work that I want to do is like black youth empowerment, it's like how am I, if I don't phenotypically look Lao or look black, like step into an all-black space and for them to feel comfortable me, if I don't look. So I always have to somehow squeeze into the conversation that, no I'm black.

I understand. Even coming to OSU and stepping into the BSU I didn't want to have to explain I just wanted to show up as myself but then I'd get stares or like, have to fit it in somehow. So even here I couldn't escape. Back home, I was always known as the blasian girl, everywhere I go 'the blasian, the blasian.' Or fetishized. People would be like you have to do it once with blasian, and I was like whaaaaat? Just stuff like that, growing up in Oregon you just never, there's not a lot of multiracial people so I was always, if people were looking for multiracial people they would always direct them to me. So I could really never escape, I wasn't really, people didn't know me for my achievements or for things I've done, people would always know me for a blasian. The black and Asian girl and I, even though I loved being multiracial, it's like when will I ever be known as just Makayla, you know, for my achievements and what I can do. I'm always going to be seen as mixed race, multiracial.

RL: I think, for myself, I don't identify as being multiracial even though that [unintelligible] to me. And growing up when I was younger I had really light brownish hair and, because of my light complexion, when my mom took me around by herself people would start asking are you multiracial, is your dad white. So I never thought much about that. I never thought to find out who was French on my side of the family. I know it's on my mom's side but I never really asked that question. And even when I was a student here at OSU [unintelligible] an officer position with the [something] student association. I ran and got the position and after I got the position people were like, are you Vietnamese? They knew I was Vietnamese even though I won, like I became an officer but they knew I was Vietnamese, and they were like, oh I thought you were something else. They never knew I was Vietnamese until I told them I was Vietnamese.

When I was running for BSA, because they thought I wasn't Vietnamese at the time but then, even though I was elected I was an officer, that's why they questioned that. I always get questioned, what are you, in a sense. Even though I'm [benefit??] multiracial because my white skinned complexion and people just don't know what I am. They know I'm Asian-American, Asian, but they're not sure what, in a sense. Again, I don't

identify as multiracial person but I know they have an absurd percentage of French in me but I never really thought much about that or even explored that side of me.

CM: Welcome.

[All laugh.]

DD?: This organization is wild.

AM: You know I really like the question, well not like, but I have learned to kind of come to terms and find the curiosity in the question 'what are you'. Because I kind of play a game with it now where it's just like 'what are you' is just like what outrageous combination do people really think I am. Because there are definitely--I think it's the curly brown hair. Like a lot of cultures and ethnicities have curls and I think people just don't really know what to do with that.

So they have--I have a lot of fun with this now at this point in my life. I think especially because I lived in Los Angeles for my undergrad and people there are so diverse so people there really wanted to connect with me so I had people come up to me and speak Portuguese and I'd be like, I'm not Brazilian, or people would be like, are you black and white, and I'd be like no. But you know those people that they had been exposed to that had similar phenotypical characteristics to me so that was always kind of interesting.

But I think in Oregon that has kind of died down. I think people kind of assume I'm white. I'm also in engineering though and that's also a predominantly white field, and male so I think that the first thing you notice is that I'm a woman not that I am a nonwhite woman or I mean, I guess I am. I pass as white. But it's always kind of interesting seeing the dynamics from where I grew up, [which] is an incredibly diverse place where probably 25 percent of the kids at my elementary school were mixed race so it was very normal in that context. Then moving to LA where there's more diversity but it's still kind of segregated and then moving to Oregon where that diversity is kind of in a little bubble, sometimes it feels like. So, it's always interesting.

[00:30:59]

CM: I think context is huge. It makes me think of when I was an undergrad it was, you know, I didn't--my mom is Taiwanese and my dad is Columbian, they had to speak English to each other to get along. Well, they didn't get along either, but. They had to speak a common tongue, right. So when I got to college I felt this urgency to explore my Asian side, Asian-American side. And I feel like I dove deep there. I tried to learn the Chinese Mandarin language, I went abroad to Taiwan, I studied Asian-American

Studies and it was because of that time that I felt like my Columbian identity, I felt like, was stronger. And then, fast forward many years later, like seventeen years later I'm here in Oregon. And it's become essential in different way to assert my multiracialness as an Asian and Latina and I'm regularly not seen as either here. And I don't know if it's because Oregon folks, like it's just like such a taboo topic, like everything is a taboo topic so we're not going to talk about anything. Or, you know, if there's a curiosity but they're just not going to say because they're so Pacific Northwest nice, like I don't know what's up but that's--. So I float through Oregon State not really knowing even what people think or say. And to me that's a different kind of frightening for me sometimes of like belonging, because I don't really know. But I'm also not seen so it's just kind of ambiguous kind of thing.

OC: Yeah, I think to kind of like add on to that as well. So where I grew up in Tacoma, it was a pretty diverse little pocket and we had a lot of mixed race, mixed ethnicity people there. So I think when people would as you, 'oh what are you', it was a different kind of question then how I feel like it's asked here when it is asked. Because there's kind of just like plain curiosity, it was so normal for people to be from many different communities, they're just like, oh yeah, what combination are you? Like, I'm this combination, kind of like that.

Whereas here, I'm almost never really asked kind of like what you're saying, it's just avoided. It's almost just like feels that they see that you are different and that's all they need to know. Okay, here's everybody and you're not, you don't belong. So it is annoying when people ask what are you, but then it's also kind of weird when they don't ask because it's like it's not even important. They just know you're different so you just don't fit all their categories. So I think it can go both ways. So yeah, that's just to add onto what you were saying.

JE: They usually, at least from my experience, they usually sniff you out if you're not
[Lost due to metal water bottle hitting something]

[All laugh]

You're from Cali or something or you're definitely not from here. Another layer to add onto it.

DC: If I could read into the, or boil down the personality of what I found Oregon to be in my ten or so years living here. It's like, I think there's a lot of energy in the seeking the easiest route when it comes to getting to know people. And especially in group settings it's, there is a lot of passivity around, I don't know, not wanting to be intrusive or anything that could be incriminated as invasive or whatever. A trend that I've

noticed is that people just kind of flock to what's easy and what's similar and because connection, I don't know, I just sense that people can find some kind of social connectivity easier that way and they make it more of a nonissue.

They make anyone that's different to their eyes and their perception as a nonissue as opposed to, and not put a like--What I've found is that it's been ruled by a lot more inaction than action. Which can feel pretty isolating at times. That leaves, in a lot a ways and like how I identify and what my identity is felt like being in a place where, well I'm going to get to know those people and I'm going to feel, I'm feeling like I'm stepping into a space where I'm going to be injecting me into this and making it all about me, when I just happen to have different elements in my personality, in my identity than these people do. And just by merit of bringing that up it's like whoa, why'd you have to change the dynamic of this social setting, why'd you bring that in here. I wasn't going to talk about our [unintelligible] heritage so [unintelligible]. Well, it's not like aggressive, it's just palpably different.

[00:36:31]

JE: I notice the blank stares that you get. It's like you can tell when it just isn't clicking for them or they're uncomfortable so instead of really engaging and being honest and having a conversation about it—like you said that you'd be open to, they just shut themselves down. You know, they back themselves up in a corner.

[All laugh and agree at once]

Like, we're going to get through this. It's okay to talk about it.

MB: How do you show up as your full, authentic self and those type of reactions? Or bringing up your multiracial identity. It's so new to people, especially meeting people in this area. It's like whoa, we're not ready for that. We don't need to talk about it. No, no, no, no. No time for that. When do we start—I'm mean, because we're always having to teeter-totter between showing up as a black woman or showing up as an Asian woman.

When can I step into a space as like, you know, with both my multiracial identities, being half black, half Lao? People are scared to have those conversations so that question has always kind of been on my mind. If I bring this up is it more a burden? Is it taking too much space up coming in as an Asian, bringing that multiracial concept into that space? So that's always been a question to me. Am I taking space, because of my privilege of being lighter skin or not looking phenotypically black so it's like, how much space am I taking up?

JE: For me, and this goes for my age too because I've gone through the process of where, like I grew up in LA. And the neighborhood I grew up in it was absolutely normal to see mixes all over the place. All over the scale. So there was nothing unique about it and it was very fluid as far as folks talking and it was second nature. Once I left that space and I saw these areas where they told you you had to go, right? If you want to be Hawaiian or Native, or Chicano you have to prove it, you have to go into these spaces no matter how far you have to travel and you have to prove yourself. So that means to either abandon your other identity or to give priority to one. And then the emotional labor that takes is just crazy.

So the older I get, including coming here, it's like it's about my experience and not to flaunt my experience, not to overpower anything, but instead of chasing these spaces, instead of having to check yourself in by the cliques. You know, whoever's doing this policing around the borders, I am going to be me. And that means I am going to speak multiple dialects, I'm going to do all these things, I may cross histories together, cross cultures together and it's not up to me to have to explain that to folks.

[00:40:00]

Because often times, at least in my experience and hearing other peoples' it's naturally that way. And happens naturally that way. It wasn't created in a lab or something. And I think when they see you comfortable speaking about yourself and going through that, going through those processes, then it doesn't become overbearing to them. You know what I mean? I center my experience and I let that guide the way instead of having to chase. Chase, always chasing, chasing, chasing because that's just, that's exhausting. And if you think about these other spaces where people who may identify as multiracial, they're going through some similar stuff too, as far as having to prove themselves or whatever. It's just kind of very complex system that we're in. For me, I'm at the time and place where I'm way too tired.

[All chuckle]

And I'm cool with that. It's like when we went to the Aikido and I was talking to some of y'all at the table. I was like checking up on y'all, looking at everyone and we're talking about experience first, not about the labels necessarily, even though we do carry that complexity, but we're talking about experience and how naturally that comes. How easily we could talk about that ahead of everything else that's policed.

MB?: One thing about Multiracial Aikido was that I've never been able to show up in a space being multiracial with both my identities. Just to put it out there for anyone who was involved in that, I really appreciate that because I was really new. I was like talking

to Charlene like 'whoa!' I've never been able to step into a space being my whole self. So I really appreciate that. And it wasn't until coming to OSU where I actually have been able to explore being multiracial because I've never, growing up I was never in a community where there was a lot of multiracial people so it's new to me. So I had to get it in Oregon too. I like it.

CM?: Stephanie do you want to weigh in on anything?

SS: I'm kind of soaking it all in. I guess I was thinking about—I was in New York last weekend. Sometimes when people ask 'where're you from' which is code for what are you, and like 'California'. Like, I don't throw them any information but I think a lot of the times I was running into that last week it was from people of color who were asking me that. And the way I interpreted that was 'are you in my tribe? Can we connect on a deeper level?' I also noticed disappointment come up, a sense of not wanting to disappoint other people. Like, I want to feel connected to you and I know as soon as I tell you what I am that's going to dissolve this in some way because chances are you're not going to be able to relate with my racial identity.

So I just noticed that, like there's both a part of me that's like 'I don't need to explain this to you' and there's a part of me that doesn't want to dissolve the illusion because then that's one less person that I can connect with. And I think as a multiracial person, finding connection in that way is like a unicorn, it's hard to come by which is why I value these spaces and the community that we're building together because it's hard to find a place where you can just come in and be. So I guess the intent of why people ask is also different and just sitting with Alec—do I have to tell you that and still be connected? And what will my reaction be if I do share with you what I am. It's complicated. I hear that word a lot today. It's complex.

DC?: I think for me just being raised and born in Oregon and working with students in this environment is—we know that identities are very fluid and very contextual and depends on the kind of space—and living in Oregon, Oregon has a very racist history and we're constantly in denial about it. Our goal is not to offend folks so [*something something*] right word to say? So it's a combination of being educated to put things into categories and simplify things. That categories are black and white, yes and no, right and wrong, in a sense and being in Oregon and not wanting to offend, that combination of two things, really impacts multiracial folks because they don't know what to do in that environment.

How do you engage with these folks because it's not clear to me how to engage with folks because it's too complex, too dynamic, too contextual. It's very fluid for them and that used to raise static, raise categories that I--[unintelligible] it confuses folks and how

to deal with that in a sense. And it being Oregon it has more in the way that people function, in being in denial and also trying not to offend folks but they know how to use [language?] in a sense.

[00:45:50]

So that just goes to show that the same folks who come from Oregon or different states have different identities, different experiences. Oregon is a big [stroke??] of white folks especially in this area. The Northwest is interesting.

MJ: When you're talking about this connected, like trying to connect to people I keep trying to find myself someone that's exactly like me and sorry if I cry, it's because I'm really overwhelmed this week. I always have to choose how I want to show up and sometimes I get the whole thing about saliency and wanting space that's something more salient than the other, but I'm just so tired [starts crying]. Like, not being able to show up and showing my whole self and sometimes I don't want – it's like always doubting, like this constant doubting of who you are and your experience is so frustrating. And yeah, it's like this constant search to find someone who's exactly like you and I know it's like, it doesn't mean anything. Finding someone who's going to be Palestine and Afghan, it's not going to mean anything really. But I feel like I'll feel complete in a way because I won't feel alone.

And I struggled so much writing a question down because it's like, I still feel like this. And this ability piece, you know, and all I wrote on my paper was like I just feel like being multiethnic or whatever the hell I am it just felt invisible. It's like feeling like – even in this really helps but it's like I'm just waiting for someone to be like 'I get it.' You know? I get exactly what you're talking about. And I don't know where to find that or like, if I have found it or – it's just, it gets deeper and deeper. I don't know. I don't know how to explain it. It's just really hard sometimes. Sorry. This term has been really hard. And it's all coming to an end now.

OC?: I think going off what you said about feeling invisible and our prior discussions. I've noticed in conversations with people that are close to is there's this kind of feeling that if you bring up challenges that you face as a multiracial, multiethnic person people just don't want to talk about it because they get really uncomfortable. Just like how we talked about how their uncomfortable just with general things regarding issues that various communities face that then you bring in this aspect of this really deep complex aspect of you as an individual not even having to deal with these multiple groups in like having to deal with defining who you are between all these various factors and think that's such a huge thing. There's so few people who are willing to tackle that issue with you. They either feel really uncomfortable and just kind of don't want to talk about

it or to a certain extent you need someone who has shared an experience like that to even understand and to be able to work through it. And it's kind of an issue. It's really hard to just sit down on your own. It's important to share these experiences with someone else but it has to be somebody's that ready to handle that complexity. That kind of also made me think too that I've noticed, depending on what communities you identify with if something happens

[phone dings]

Or if something comes up that effects a certain community and you want to bring that up with people you're close with you just kind of feel that, like I've heard for example responses like 'oh, well you don't really look like X community so you don't have to worry about that.' And I don't know if y'all have experienced that, but it's something that for me at this point in my life I don't really know how to respond to that.

[00:50:50]

If it doesn't affect me I just shouldn't worry about it or talk about it with you. That kind of thing. I guess that's kind of like a question, if y'all face that how do you handle that kind of thing?

JE: Going off what you're saying, the first part was—I think that's why it's really important for this space just because [the] more that we're able to be ourselves, I don't want to be too cheesy, but it's like [the] coach Carter speech. [If] We allow ourselves to shine, we give other's permission to. Or we encourage others, not give them permission. We allow them to be able to step outside maybe something that they feel trapped in. Since being on this campus I've gone to the Long House, I've been here, I've had some decent conversations with folks. We just really go to know each other over a weekend and we had a lot of fun. Like Sofia, six hour conversation between the coffee shop, the lounge of the hotel, and then the room. Because we could talk about those things. We're allowed to in that space. We're not afraid. And I think that's really, really important. And hopefully we can just help in any way, because I know you helped me a lot having a conversation.

So you are very important, just hearing you, and your patience to hear me, to hear our stories. So thank you. Then, to the second part, it's interesting. I've been finding stuff I get pissed off [at], as far as saying you can talk about this or you can't talk about that are, I don't know if it's going to make any relationship to this, but I hope it does. If you all've seen the video on Facebook with the person who was on the New York train stuck up for the Muslim.

[All agree]

And I know it's like, I'm Latino so I should be like look, you know because the line says [a] Latina sticks up and interjects for this Muslim couple but it kind of pissed me off and it irritated me that lump her as a Latina when she was clearly multi-mixed. Multiracial. It's one of those things where it's like, I could easily be like yay, you know. That's my sign, you know. But it bothers me that they want to be critical and celebrate this thing that happened but they're not critical in another way as far as putting her in a multiracial category. It's those complexities. We choose different avenues [of] what we can talk about or want to acknowledge and what we don't want to acknowledge at the same time. Can she have been an Asian woman, right? A strong Asian woman, who stuck up for this couple, no. She had to be a Latina, right? Fiery Latina. It irritates me.

HF: To go off what you said, I understand. When I was really little I went to church camp. And the part I was in California there were a lot of Polynesian and there were a lot of different races and it was like awesome. But I met a girl there that was also black, white, and Tongan. I'd never met someone like that before. And we clicked so fast, like that was my best friend, like we were going to the river, like 'where you going? Do you want some s'mores? Me too!'

[All laugh]

And then after girls camp I never saw her again. And I still think about her to this day. I met her for like three days.

[00:55:05]

I definitely do appreciate finding someone who is just like you. And I've never been able to find someone like that ever again. And that's why I say I really do appreciate this space but a little part of me really wishes I could have that person who's just like me that could be like my best friend. Especially because you kind of get jealous 'cos then you see the all black crew, they're all like so close together. All the Polys and Tongans are so close together. They have that friendship because they all are just like each other. But then there's me and I don't really have that closeness with that group or this group. So then I find myself just being really close with multiracial people because they understand me the most. But then there's still a little bit where I just want that someone who's just like me. It's kind of like I'm hurting myself because it's like unrealistic to want that.

Like you're searching, constantly searching and you get tired. So I definitely do see that and it's kind of upsetting. You wish you could because it's kind of unfair. Like everybody else gets to have that who isn't multiracial, they can just find someone who's exactly like them and it's unfair that I can't because I am multiracial. So it's definitely

hard. And that's why I keep trying to—I keep thinking about this girl I met when I was like eight. Because it was like that connection. I understand and it's hard but this space is awesome. And that's why I love it here because it's like y'all do understand. And I love hearing other stories too and other peoples' journeys to help me when I have questions. A lot of these questions, like you said, I try to ask other people and they're like 'I don't know what you're talking about or I don't really think what you're saying is true.' And then you know they can't help me at all so that's why I appreciate this space.

Especially when I bring up my white identity and try to be rational in that way I definitely get a lot of backlash. It actually really sucks. Especially in that way, when someone will be like 'you know what, you know eff these people and all these white people vote for Trump' and I just kind of try to be like you know maybe we should look at it another way they're like 'oh you're just saying that 'cos you're mixed.' That kind of stuff. It's definitely really nice to be able to come free that in that space because I'll get that from people of color. Like a lot of times the backlash I get is from people of color and not necessarily white people. So I totally get what you're saying. I totally get what you're saying. And it might be something that when I get older I'll figure it out but at this stage in my life I do find myself wanting to find someone who's just like me. Who can know to a T what I'm thinking. But I got my mom and dad so [unintelligible] [laughs]. Just be like 'y'all made me so now you can all combine your knowledge together', but yeah.

OC: Just to kind of add on to that, just a little other side of it as far as finding someone that's like you. I remember in my school—so half of my family is from Mexico and the other half's from Korea and there was another girl in our school who was the same mix. Even to the point where like her mom's side was from Korea and her dad's side, they were from Mexico, so exactly the same as my own background. And we were not friends at all. Like we weren't enemies but we were two totally different people. So I think, taking a—like there's two perspectives to it. You are shaped by your multiethnic, multiracial background but then you're also shaped just by other situational factors too. So I think kind of saying that is a little bit of hope like maybe we don't need to find someone necessarily exactly like us in the sense of the same mix but may be could just find somebody who has enough shared experiences that they are like us in that way, like in their experience way. And I think that might make it a little bit more—it might make it a little bit easier to deal with the idea of trying to find someone like us. They don't necessarily have to look like us or be the same multiracial, multiethnic background but maybe just sharing those core qualities of who we are. I've had best friends who were completely different from me as ethnic makeup but could read my

mind, like would finish my sentences. But we're two completely different people on the surface. So I think that's one way to think of it, a little bit on the brighter side of things. There's a lot of ways to connect with people and I know that being of the same mix is really helpful as far as experiences, they go hand in hand.

[01:00:23]

But I don't think it's required. So that might give more room for finding other people.

DD?: I'd like to touch on that, because I have siblings that have the same parents as I do so we have the same genetic makeup. And I once had a kind of—you see yourself in them. You have the same thing. But it's like, I don't know if it's because they're younger than me and they don't have that shared experience yet. My sister specifically—I don't want to talk about my brother, he identifies as white. Frustrating. Sure I could talk about it but you see somebody that has the same genetic makeup as you and my brother identifies as white and it's just like 'oh, I believe all these other things'. I try so hard to bring him up to be better and I just think Olivia bringing up different experiences and stuff and like as much as I try to consolidate with my sister—or like, have conversations with my sister and be like, you should be the same as me. You are kind of similar to me, you are my other person. Like, you are a woman and you are Lao and white heritage but it's because, I don't know if it's because of phenotype and stuff, like when I do complain about things or when I rant about things she doesn't always get it when I wish she would get it. Not everyone that has the same genetic makeup as you is going to have the same experience, not even your own siblings unfortunately, will have that same experience. As much as you want to.

MJ: Yeah, I just think the yearning of wanting to find someone like you is like, what you said really struck me because your Lao side is so racist against your black—against black people in general. And that's what I experienced too with my Arab family, and my Afghan family's really racist to each other. Like, they're just racist. So it's like, you want to meet someone who's like you who affirms that like—and when you have both sides being so racist to each other you start kind of hating yourself in a way. So it's like--

DD??: [Faintly] You're a burden?

MJ: Yeah, it's exactly like that. But then college kind of saves you and these spaces kind of save because they make you fall in love with who you are and finding someone who's just like you [Starts tearing up] makes you want to spread that love and like find that love in other people. And find out other people who are like you love themselves too. So it's more sharing that connection. I don't know how to explain it, but I hope I did.

DD?: It's like validating, right?

MJ: Yeah.

DD?: It's like really validating when you do. Coming into this space and [it's] just really validating to see all the faces and stuff. It's like we have this experience. It's not the same experience but we've been through some shit [chuckles].

[All laugh]

CM: I think that the, when I -Well one, y'all are, inside and out, just [an] amazing beautiful group. And thank you for your vulnerability and your stories. You didn't have to go there today. It's week ten, literally like the last hour.

[scattered laughs]

Before you split yourself out into finals. So I want to say first, thank you, but I also want to hold space for – there's a lot of people who are not in the room with us but who made us who we are. And sometimes that's really hard to reconcile the damage of that and then also the beauty that is in that. That's also in us and in the spirit, Mahwah, of what you're sharing of loving yourself and wanting to love each other more. I want to offer this notion that when we talk about racial constructs in our society and when we talk about trying to see beyond racial constructs –

[small sneeze]

In our society we know that there's an active tension happening there because we both know that that's not possible and yet we embody what perhaps could be possible. So when I think about multiraciality I'm thinking about: how do I both hold race, even though it's a social construct, core – like central – and not think about race at the same time. So we're like circling around that.

[01:05:13]

And dancing around that and everyone's in different places. So to end, I want you to share a power word on your card. It could be for yourself or someone else, but write it big and we're going to close out in that way and say a couple words. So, it could be something that gives you strength, it could just be a word that you love, it could be a hope.

[muffled conversation among group]

[sounds of paper rustling as group writes their words]

Okay, then what you're going to do is on top of that word you're going to write your name, comma – so like not literally. Sorry.

[group laughs]

Like, it's at the top, not on top of it.

[group 'ohs' in understanding]

It's because I'm processing as I'm thinking about what I'm trying to do and it – I know people can't stand that. Especially those who need organization so I apologize.

[group's jokes about directions overlap]

DD?: I always end up saying something snarky and then it never works out.

[group laughs]

CM: So then you're going to put your name you are and then you're going to put – you're going to –

OC: Wait, my name and 'you are'?

CM: Yeah, so like: Olivia, you are and then the word that you wrote.

[All laugh]

All you gotta do is write the word –

HF: No, it's fine you –

OC??: Mine doesn't make sense at all.

CM: It's not supposed to. You're just supposed to indulge me.

[all laugh]

It's not supposed to make sense.

OC???: This sums me up, just an awkward sentence.

[laughter]

CM: Here we go. Who wants to start? You can say a couple words then your little card.

MB: I tried to raise my hand, sorry. I'll go. I put 'Makayla you are whole.' And I guess just – I found that the best form of resistance is to show up in a space as your whole, authentic self just to kind of challenge that, you know, societal, racial norms. I'm going

to bring that multiracial conversation into the space and start challenging the mindsets we already have.

CM: To the left or the right? Which way do you want –

MB: Oh! I was like more?

MJ: I said, 'Marwah you are enough,' and then I added a little more, 'and always will be.' Yeah, those tears really needed to come out [laughs] like really needed to come out. It's the same things that always come up, like rise up, and this is like my safe place. I know how that word has been co-opted in so many different ways but I really do feel safe and like accepted and seen here. So that gives me the agency to not be afraid to show all my vulnerabilities because I know how they're being received and I know they're being valued and accepted. I just wanted to thank you for that and it's crazy to me – and I'm also bringing up, this stuff is painful and it's not easy and that's the part of the journey that I'm willing to see the beauty in. Because you realize my whole life I was doing this stuff to myself and it didn't get into someone's idea or someone's people's ideas to create this space for people to have a part of their experience in college and that just blow my mind. It blows my mind that it just takes that creation of just an idea to bring these people, to give them something to think about or something. A way to be. It's like the most powerful thing and it's making me really, really fearful to end college but it's making me also more and more ready to put on my armor and get out there.

[01:10:29]

MG: I put 'Mackenzie you are persevere,' but I guess that should be perseverance, just as a reminder to myself to not stop trying to attend things that make me uncomfortable in order to build new relationships and new communities within my identities. And just knowing that there will be some light at the end of the tunnel and having these communities to share experiences with is a nice check point in the journey that's ahead.

DC: I put 'Daniel you are weave,' because the, one of the things that I'm obsessed with a lot is tartan, the idea of tartan. Because you take like – and this is something that didn't adapt conceptually for like a long time but I just liked the pattern for a long time then I realized that it was this cool little symbol that was taking two different – actually multiple different colors – and making something really beautiful and unique out of it. So I struggled for a long time approaching different aspects of my identity conceptually because I wanted to embrace ideas of culture like full on and I realized that, not only was certain aspects of cultures that I descend from I don't personally resonate with or have yet to find that resonance with. I like – I don't know, I just.... It took me a long

time to realize that it's okay to just take the stuff you like or, not to just take and leave other stuff but to empower yourself over the things you like. Because there's no rule checker who's going to be saying 'oh, you're valid of this or you're not doing so-and-so justice by not representing this.' It's like everyone's experience is different. Everyone's experience is built on different things and different social circumstances and places and like, I don't know. You've gotta mix and leave and combine all that stuff together and nobody teaches you how to do that but yourself. And one of the most empowering things about coming here in this space is no necessarily finding people are like me but people who have the same values and are interested in—yeah solidarity is great and coming together over things we have in common is great but what's even more great is people who are willing to open themselves up and bond over things they don't have in common.

CM: That's lovely. So I just wrote 'Charlene you are courage.' You know, when we come up with things like this we don't really know who they're going to turn out so it's always a leap of faith. So thank you for continuing to support and affirm yourselves and these kinds of spaces because it gives me the courage to keep trying these things. You're amazing.

JE: I put 'Jason you are ohana.' And for me I'm really kind of past this point of allyship. I think it's a little too political for me and right now I think this is the most revolutionary thing that we could do is to be family and lead with love. And that's not always the easiest path, but I think that's what we need right now.

AM??: I did a terrible job at this activity. I picked a word that I reclaimed in my own personal vocabulary so it doesn't really mean anything to anyone else but my word was 'colored contacts' because that's a theme throughout my life that means a lot to me. So I just wrote 'colored contacts' which makes no sense.

SS: I did 'Stephanie you are deserving.' And I think going off of what you all have talked about, just deserving to take up space. Deserving to be my full self. Deserving to be whole. Deserving to be in family and community and just not having to feel guilty or—I may feel it but I don't need to, right? To feel guilty or less than. So I want to put out a plug for those of you to come to the Student Connection Group we will be meeting again next term. We'll iron out the specific date and time.

JE??: It's Wednesday

SS: Should we just say Wednesday? Okay Wednesday at twelve

[laughter]

Seems to be a good time, a better time than the Friday at twelve. So please come if you haven't been before we'd love to have you be here in this space and we'll be meeting in the APCC.

[01:15:10]

RL: I wrote down 'Reagan Le you are self-reflection,' or it should be self-reflecting. Just hearing your stories and your experience here and how that allows me to self-reflect because I'm constantly growing to develop myself and innovating myself but also the work here at APCC. So this, hearing your stories and what not allows me to do that. And also recognizing the importance of having Charlene and stuff be here. Who has the last couple of years really, really developed resources and space and kind of created a sense of belong for multiracial communities and also making sure that we all matter on this campus and also indicating itself. So stuff like that makes us appreciate Charlene and Stephanie and other folks in this space too [are] making sure that you all matter. And there's a sense of community and belonging here at OSU and also within the APCC too.

DD: I put 'Delfine you are lively,' because it's week ten, mainly, but also--

[laughter]

--because coming out here week ten, I didn't go to the drop in group earlier today but I was like 'I'm gonna make it to this thing.' Because I think whenever I experience being with other multiracial people I become a lot more perky or a lot more excited for life because I'm just like 'aaa more people in my life to interact with!' and create those connections so that's why I put lively.

OC: So I managed to salvage mine. So I put 'Olivia Calrillo – and it was like listen but I've now changed it to I'm listening. And I put this one because I think the best way to learn and to connect with other people is to hear their stories and their experiences. And I just, it's just been great. Getting to meet you all and hearing everybody's different stories. It's just fascinating, the range of human experience and how that shapes us into who we are and how we connect with each other.

HF: Okay so, I put 'Helvani you are unapologetic.' That's my motto now because I feel like I'm always telling people 'sorry for doing this, sorry for doing that. Oh, I didn't mean to be loud, I didn't mean to be this, didn't mean to do that,' but I'm just trying to be full of myself, like 100% myself. Like, I'm not going to tone myself down or do anything to please other people. I mean, I'm not going to be rude, you know, but I'm not going to try to silence myself because I feel like I don't belong. And so that's kind of my motto and it's working out pretty good for me. I feel a lot better. Like, honestly it's

so crazy who just how one simple thing like being unapologetic can completely change your life and how you feel about yourself or how you feel in general. So that's like me.

CM: Thank you everyone.

[All say thank you in return]

Until next time. You can take your cards with you. Unless you don't like them then you can give them to me.

[01:18:32]