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Urara: I'd like to start with family background. Could you tell me where you were born, where you grew up and where you went to school?

Franklin: Sure. I was born in Honolulu, Hawaii on May 6th 1939 within the city and my family moved during World War 2 to what is now a suburb of Honolulu, but at the time was pretty country and so basically I grew up on a vegetable farm in Honolulu, and graduated from the public school system there in 1957 and went on to college from Honolulu.

Urara: So your parents moved from Japan?

Franklin: No, they were *kibei ni-sei*. (returning to the US, second generation)

Urara: Oh, OK.

Franklin: That is to say their parents were immigrants so, although I didn't know my grandparents, my dad's parents moved from Hiroshima city,

Urara: I'm from Hiroshima too!

Franklin: You are? (*laugh*) yeah yeah, moved from Hiroshima city to Hawaii, and then he was born in Hawaii actually, and he was not very well so they took him to Japan, so he was born in Hawaii so he is an American citizen, um, as a child he was taken to Hiroshima, where he grew up, and went through the school system there and went to one school of college in Tokyo before returning to Hawaii. My mom's family had gone to Colorado, where she was born so she was born near Denver and was taken to Hiroshima in what used to be pretty *inaka*, it used to be pretty rural, but Shobara is actually fairly sizable city now, and as a teenager she decided she wanted to return to the U.S. and left in the 30^s, met my dad in Honolulu, they got married, and that's, yeah so I'm the oldest of four children.

Urara: So can you tell me about your siblings also?

Franklin: Oh sure. I have two sisters and a brother, younger sister, and then a younger brother, and my younger sister died unfortunately a few years back, umm, my younger sister Carol is living with my mom, my father past away some years back, my mom is still alive, she is like 91, a little frail but still healthy, and my brother is on the island of Hawaii and still working.

Urara: So most of your family, do they still live in Hawaii?

Franklin: Yes.

Urara: Please tell us one story from your youth that has been an important lesson for today's Asian Pacific American youth?

Franklin: One story from my youth... well, can I do it from college?

Urara: Of course.

Franklin: So, I went from a public high school, which was not very good in Honolulu, to Princeton, so that was a major kind of culture change for me. One of the things that was really really different was being in and entering class of seven hundred maybe twenty-five kids who were almost all white, almost from fairly affluent families, so it was a very different kind of setting for me, ah, no girls, so that was a major adjustment for me. Anyway, one of my classmates and suitemates, we had lived in dorms that had a suite, ah in my junior year was followed by Robin Harrison the third, and Robin Harrison came from Savanna Georgia, his parents were bankers. So in the spring of 1960 he invited me home with him, so we drove from Princeton, New Jersey to Savanna, Georgia and... this was a very interesting trip for me because it was the first time that I went to any place that was considered the South, and this is the days of Jim Crow regulations, so...you know the car ride was a way of introducing me the whole part of country that I didn't know very well, um..for example driving through New Jersey and than parts of Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, you know it wasn't a turnpiking so it wasn't a fast journey. I remember we stopped in North Carolina to get some gas and to use the

bathroom. And so, ah, I had ever see you know the kind of Jim crow stuff that existed before didn't know about this, but the bathrooms in the back were not male/female, but white and colored and so the things was I didn't know which one to use. Oh no, if I use the wrong one do I get beaten up or any.... So that was one kind of, sort of exposure to a part of the country that I didn't know very much about. So that's a lesson that I think understanding about race relations and the place of Native Americans or Indians and African Americans became something important to me.

Urara: So before that incident you didn't recognize yourself as ethnic minority?

Franklin: Ethnic of color? Hardly you know that the whole Hawaii thing was deceptively, um, at least the notion of potential solidarity with of the people of color was difficult because we grew up in a state, it was a territory that where, and is still true today Hawaii had been the only state in the union which has never had a white majority. So even though white supremacy was a part of what you grew up with, and you accepted because the newspapers, the cultural facilities, the artworks, the museums, the textbooks, everything about the national culture told you that there was prejudice, there was racism, um, but in the day to day kinds of work, my growing up in high school in the 50's was a watership era in Hawaii, it's the period when, particularly Asian Americans and Native Hawaiians, but people of color actually through the union movement and the democratic party, actually took control of some of the political rights, not the economic parts of the society but some of the very important parts of the society. So it didn't feel like I couldn't participate in political makeup of the, you know, of the society I was part of.

Urara: So now I'd like to move on to the work experience. Can you tell me a little but about your work experience especially as related to the APA and the United States and the DC area?

Franklin: Sure. After I graduated from college I went to a master's program at Harvard in East Asian studies in 1961, 1963.

Urara: What was your major for undergraduate?

Franklin: Oh, history. I did American history and Asian history. So I had gotten a little bit interested in Asia, but not so much in terms of trying to figure out who I was, but more, I mean I think it was part of the agenda but I didn't recognize it at that time. My interest in trying to place myself in Asian American context came very slowly, and I think it begins in the early period, but so I finished Master's, went back to Princeton for PhD in history and I did a dissertation on Saga-Han, feudalism in Nabeshima- Daimyo, so um, that took me quite a long time, and I actually finished that degree, but in the meantime I started teaching at Occidental College in Los Angeles in 1968 and got very involved in a lot of civil right and anti-war activities. So it was a very radicalizing time period and my family was involved in a lot of what I think would be considered to be pretty radical activities, and peace marches, hunger strikes, that sort of thing. And this 1967 1968 period is when APA, Asian American Studies begins, so I was a part of the early period of trying to create a field.

Urara: Wow. So what brought you to DC?

Franklin: Well, I've been teaching for 30 years and, as a visiting professor at University of Pennsylvania, Hunter College, Princeton and Columbia for 2 years, and in that period, 1995 and 1996, the Smithsonian invited me as a consultant to talk about how the Smithsonian should perceive with regards to introducing APA content into the Smithsonian. So I became a consultant in the process of doing that they decided that they should have a program and asked me to become the director.

Urara: So you are one of the founders of the...

Franklin: Yeah, I became the first director of the APA program. That was 1997, almost 13 years ago.

Urara: So before that they didn't have any specific program for the APA?

Franklin: No. Even throughout this whole 12 years when I left the academia and started working here, I was the only senior person who had any content knowledge about APA. So still very far behind. The Smithsonian has for a huge museum for Native Americans; it's a huge beautiful building. They have planned a national museum of African American history and culture. It's gonna be on the Mall and it'll open to the public in 2015 in 5 years from now. There is, in congress, a bill, well actually the bill created a commission to study the feasibility of a Latino museum and I'm pretty sure that will happen. So in terms of the 4 sort of major racial groups, our APA group is very very far behind. I think we eventually will need a separate museum just because it seems to be too difficult for their established 19 museums to actually incorporate a lot of the APA artifacts and resources and history and personnel to be able to do this on any kind of equitable part with other groups. So that my thinking is that the Smithsonian will have to move into this direction.

Urara: I actually did a little research about you on the Internet before coming here and I found out that you are the only and the first Asian American to be a curator at the Smithsonian.

Franklin: Yeah, I know that's true. Presumably this will be, um, since I have retired there is not. So there's no curator who are...there are curators who are Asian or Asian American in terms of their descent, but in terms of their content there isn't anybody now. But there are searching for replacement for me and I think they schedule to hire another curator as well, so the number of people who are in the authority will double from one to two.

Urara: Good to know! Please paint us a verbal picture of one memorable day at one of your jobs and let us know why it was memorable.

Franklin: Oh, let's see...that's a hard one...there are just a lot of different kinds of examples. If I can do two, I will do one from my academic life and one from the Smithsonian. I think the academic one would be um, moving...taking the job at the university of Hawaii. This is 1978, 10 years after I started teaching in California. And taking the job as the director of the ethnic studies at the University of Hawaii was one which was very complex, it was a difficult position and, and, um, the responsibilities were pretty awesome and daunting but it was a way of me getting back to home turf and being able to do my job in a context that I kind of understood although it has been changing a lot since I left, but I think talking that job was one of the turning point in my academic life. And it grounded me in a way and it taught me the limits of what I knew and how difficult the...the sort of future responsibilities would be to try to create this field. At the Smithsonian I think the most recent sort of memorable day was bringing together the Indian American community. We've had, in the 12 years that I've been there we've had specific projects on 6 major nationality ethnic groups; Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Filipinos, Vietnamese were the 5 and Indian Americans were the 6th and, one of the things that is interesting in my career from 1970 census to 2010 census is that in 1970's Japanese Americans were the largest single Asian ethnic group in the country. Today in 2010 we will be the 6th. So the Asian American profile has changed very dramatically as a result of the 1965 Immigration Act. So adding the Indian American group to this group of projects that we have completed and the Indian group is the one just began. I think when we got the group of a dozen families together and toured part of the American History Museum and then went to an Indian Restaurant in Cleveland Park and it was a part of the fund raising event to see if we could generate support from the community to do an Indian American project, an exhibit, website, curriculum and public programs. And for that we hoped we could raise a couple of million dollars. Ah, that evening, some people stood up and said, you know, it's great to join this founder circle and donate 25 hundred dollars, and at the end of the evening we had raised about 93000 dollars in one dinner. So I knew it would be a success but that was a great feeling to know that our work had generated that kind of support from the community. So that was a great day.

Urara: Ok, so now I'd like to move on to community involvement. Please explain your life outside of your paid work either at community groups, religious groups, professional groups and other groups.

Franklin: Oh boy... my community involvement has for a very long time been through my work.

Urara: True.

Franklin: And you know, from the time suddenly I left UCLA in '72 started working with the California State University system, the nature of Asian American studies and then ethnic studies at the University of Hawaii, that academic research and teaching was quite predicated upon direct involvement with community needs and community requirements and direct communication with community people. So in a funny way I didn't have a community life outside my...because it was pretty much all consuming. And here the jobs differed and the involvement differed because take a place like Hawaii, my community involvement there included quite a number of grassroots groups fighting for land or trying to get better educational access too, resources, talking to state legislators, that sort of things. So pretty down home, pretty grassroots. At the Smithsonian, the community would be congressional representatives or congressman from California, from Washington state, um the White House, leaders of the Japanese American citizens league, the National Japanese American Memorial foundation, the organizations of Chinese Americans, leaders of the Asian American journalism association, so the community is very different. They are people who are in charge of national organizations and they are headquartered in DC. So they are not like common folk, but for us they are the community that we need to support out of the Smithsonian.

Urara: So you got involved in the community pretty much through your research and work experience.

Franklin: Right.

Urara: Being involved in the APA community, do you see any change in the community over the years?

Franklin: Oh sure lots of changes, I mean if you go back like me to 1970 or 1969, I mean the nature of the community has shifted, just the example I gave you that the Japanese American was the largest group at that time and now we are the smallest group among the 6 major groups. I think the expansion of and inclusion of more people like Southeast and South Asians and even East Asians, so the people from Afghanistan, from Tibet. Particularly in the DC area we have folks like... small communities to be sure, but communities who are from Mongolia or Tibet or Bhutan or Burma is very different from the latter part of the 20th century. So even in the last 30 years it's been a huge change in who gets represented, what concerns there are, the whole thing about immigration for example and undocumented people is something that wasn't so clearly articulated back in the 70's or 80's. Things like transnational connections, the fact that people now can travel back and forth so rapidly, keep in touch with Tweeting, Facebook, sending Korean soap operas, that sort of things is where people can come America is a very very different thing.

Urara: So it's getting more diverse in a lot of dimensions.

Franklin: Yeah, and I think this is why there are such, I think there are some anxiety among for example African American communities partly because being taken over un number by Latinos for example, but in the White community in particular I think there are segments where this has so rapidly changed from the America they knew in the 50s and 60s and the feeling that white people were you know just generally in charge and the sense of disequilibrium that the United States they knew is slipping from the grass. I think it brings us into a very dangerous and very unsettling time, which I think is the sort of the motivating thing behind the things like the Tea Party movement and you know the election of Obama tempted many people to think

we are in a post-racial kind of society. I think it's absolutely wrong. I think it actually has exacerbated racial tensions and many people feel that they are losing touch and they are losing control of the country. And so in a way it heightens the racial tensions.

Urara: Going a little bit back to the community involvement, what have these experiences added to your life? And the lives of the other APA changed your life, your personal life being involved in the community?

Franklin: Say that again?

Urara: Being involved in the community, did it change the way you see yourself or your personal life?

Franklin: Oh I'm sure it has, I mean because if I had gone into Japanese history then teaching and researching Japanese history as an academic, my guess is that I would have maintained a fairly traditional kind of way of looking at a...becoming an expert in the field and being to a certain extent able to maintain a distance because that's the hallmark of, has been anyway, for a very long time for most academics, a primary value is to maintain a distance between yourself and your subject and objectivity. The critical part of Asian American studies, ethnic studies for many of us has been the integration of the researcher and the subject, so that we unabashedly say we are not objects, we of course try to academic to be analytical, but the key is to understand and advocate for and provide a means for the rest of the society to understand, say Asian American community and to provide a link that is at one scholarly but at the same time direct and ah not just simply empathetic, but integrated so that that part I think has a huge difference in terms of how I approach being a scholar or an academic and trying to do my work.

Urara: Right, now the folk life questions. The staff of the 2010 Smithsonian folk life festival will be inviting dancers, musicians, material artist, story tellers, craft makers, calligraphers, language teachers and those who have participated in historical APA groups or experiences to help us tell the story of Asian Pacific Americans next summer on the National Mall. Please describe what you want to share with the audience at the festival.

Franklin: Personally what I would share, I, one of the things I know Phil is doing this and he is doing a good job, within a limited number of tents I think we have 4, and try to be as inclusive as possible, even if at the risk of doing only token inclusion of the smaller groups I think it would be useful because we are doing at least two very important things here. To bring the APA communities onto the Mall and because we are documenting them, it's a way to do, in the year of the census it's really important and timely to say 'ok, this is the approximately 350,000 people of Asian American Pacific islander descent in the DC metro region'. It's a way to get a snap shot of very large very complex and very diverse community so that if another folk life festival in 30 years or 40 years in 2050 takes place that has a similar kind of focus, it'll be interesting to see what has changed in that period and because it would be really nice to know 40 years earlier in 1970 when Asian American studies began, what the APA demography was like in Washington DC. It was very different, we know it was pretty different and we have some clues, but to have performers and story tellers on the Mall, you know, telling what it's like to live in a community then would've made a great comparison and contrast.

Urara: So story telling?

Franklin: So I hope... Yeah storytelling, real story telling about I think it will be important to have folks who can describe and you know in a analysis not in a academic kind of ways, but to really talk about who we are and how this matters in terms of the Washington scene, and for that I think you will need to have folks who are sensitive both to the fact that this is the nation's capital. And this is an international gathering and we have dozens of dozens of groups that are represented here and to really kind of take a look at both broadly and deeply as we move along so I mean this kind of video history stiff is really useful because not all of us can be on the Mall and we can't go to the Mall all the time so this sort of recording I think is a really good idea.

Urara: It really lasts forever.

Franklin: Yeah.

Urara: You mentioned that Asian Americans are still a minority at the Smithsonian. What was your first reaction like when you found out that Asian Americans would be one of the topics at the folk life festival?

Franklin: I was very happy, I mean I've been working a program, has been working with the Folk Life Center for a very long time and in fact when I was in Hawaii in 1988, 1989, the Folk Life Centre came to us, I was then the chair of the Hawaii arts council and broach the subject of Hawaii being represented on the Mall because periodically the summer festivals have featured a state so they were thinking about featuring Hawaii as a state. So I worked fairly closely with the Folk Life Center staff then, so I knew about that and I knew that something like this might become a possibility one day if we are close enough and I had a lot of respect from my colleagues there. I think they are a good group.

Urara: Our interview is almost done...you said you used to work as a teacher...and there is a question, the teacher will feature those who can teach as well as those who can perform. Do you have any background or experience as a teacher? You had been a professor for a while, right? What were you teaching then?

Franklin: Asian American history.

Urara: Ah, broad history or specifically what you had learned?

Franklin: You know, in Hawaii, where I taught for the longest time I taught a course on the Japanese in Hawaii because Japanese Americans were still a large group there. Here on the East coast I try to be a little bit more broadly based and so taught Asian American history at places like Penn or Colombia or Princeton as a seminar. But at College Park I taught one course a year until several years ago ant that was more specifically Japanese Americans and that the World War 2 and the whole thing of imprisonment and what I considered ethnic cleansing of people of Japanese descent from the West coast, you know there are so much literature, so many documentaries, so much research that's been done that it's easy to devote one seminar to it, and it could be many many years actually of research, so I did that for several years at College Park, enjoyed it very much.

Urara: We actually read a book written by Mine Okubo 'Citizen...' I forgot the number...

Franklin: '13660'.

Urara: Yes.

Franklin: Yeah...she was a great artist.

Urara: I have one more question. You said that you were pretty much involved in the radical activities in the 1960s in California. Could you tell me what it was like back then?

Franklin: Well, you know, for me it was publically a little irresponsible...I was a husband and a father, we had a couple of kids, so it was...there was no fear at that time. 1968, um some of you know about the student strike at San Francisco's bay, which was followed by one at Barkley. And those 2 campuses in northern California really lead the way and there were strikes and student activism at places like UCLA and Columbia as well, so there was a national kind of movement to.....and I guess the national atmosphere was volatile, It was very...I guess dangerous is the word. Because there were riots in the city, you know, Jack Kennedy had been assassinated in '64, Bobby Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr.had been a assassinated in '67, I mean there were people burning down parts of the cities, folks were trying to confront the military to keep them from going to Vietnam, you know the Native Americans were occupying Alcatraz, you had wounded knee, it was a hugely...it's really difficult to sort of evoke that time. Even the books that I've read and documentaries I've seen um..don't evoke for me realities that we were living through partly because most of the books and documentaries focus primarily on white/black relations and while our heroes at that times, our models were not so much Martin

but Malcolm. So Malcolm X and you know whatever is necessary, the Black Panther Party and , and you know with hindsight we can see they were something that were not the best and we underestimated the values of people like and the courage of Martin Luther King Jr., so there's lots of stuff that changed in my thinking, but people who are...um confronting imperialism or colonialism through direct action Marsdom for example whose accesses now Stalin you know, who would never...now considered to be models or heroes but at that time these were very attractive people whose writings and sayings, many of us were influenced by because it was a call to action, and it didn't look like you know, the Republican Party or the Democratic Party or people who are involved in politics, even the ones who were radical fairly like MCGovern, the peace people were doing enough. So taking to the street and trying to capture the places where we were working like university campuses became an attractive alternative and as a way to try to change the society and, you know, this is a very different kind of a feel thank people who got involved with Barak, and you know 'Yes we can!', 'change is possible', and there was some changes but the degree and the intensity and the nature of change that we were trying to create at that time was closer to revolutionary than anything the president I think believes. These were fairly moderate. I mean he would've been, he would not have been a hero to us. (laugh) And I believe in him, I think he's doing very good stuff, given the constraints and all, but we were after much bigger game and you know it didn't work out well I don't think although the level of comprehension in terms of understanding the nature of our society and what kind of change is required to get, for example, really good health care or to eliminate poverty. Those things are not possible given the construction of society as we know it today. And in that period people were seriously studying that and I don't think very much of it is going on today you know in terms of really deeply thinking about where we are who we are and where we need to be, so we may need a period like that. (laugh)

Urara: At last I have one more question. I suppose as a curator you have directed many exhibitions at the museum. Could you tell me one of the exhibitions that you organized that was memorable for you?

Franklin: Oh boy...they all have been...it's like asking parents which one of your children do you favorite most because they are all sort of you know very different, they have different temperaments, they have different shortcomings, but there's been a dozen that I've been personally involved with so they are all very special.

Urara: Do you think the exhibitions you organized have changed the community? Gained more recognition or...

Franklin: Not as much as we'd like to, there are certain constraints in terms of how far you can go, what you can do with them, and um we certainly have more modest kind of goals and aims than the 60s and 70s now, so for example in doing the different exhibitions like the Indian Americans that is just beginning, I think the motivation for that and goal for that is much more modest, we are not trying to radically trying to change people's thinking, but what we'd like to do is let the community, the Indian American community for example, know, and the non-Indian community, know that this is a very important part of the history, empower the Indian American to feel, to really honestly feel that its experiences and diversities are important enough for the Smithsonian to notice. So when you get a national...you know the nation's museum to pay attention and I think it revalidate in across the country to really believe that their stories are worth telling and listening to. So hopefully that's the main thing we wanna get done.

Urara: Thank you very much! Is there anything you want to add to our previous conversation?

Franklin: No, I think you guys are doing great, so I hope you can do a bunch of these with all kinds of different people. So when you make a list of people that you are planning to interview, think about what you are missing. And...

Urara: Cover all kinds of field.

Franklin: Yeah.

Urara: If there is one statement you would want to make to your grandchildren and their generation, what would it be?

Franklin: Boy....um...for me, I mean I don't have anything, I certainly don't think I have anything to say. I do have grandchildren, two of them. And even now I'm not sure that I have words of wisdom for them, I think what I can say is that it's been a interesting life and you know that the ancient had a saying 'may you live in interesting times' because for classical Chinese anyway, this is from the Daoism kind of tradition, 'the best life possible was to stay in your village and live out your life in a calm and unturbulent kind of way'. So interesting times are times of war and ciao and difficulty, so 'may you live in interesting time' is a curse, so if you don't like somebody, you tell that person 'may you live in interesting times' because the good times are really relaxed and you know. I don't seek that, I actually think the interesting time is good.

Urara: Yeah, because to really appreciate the calm life, you have to experience the interesting times too.

Franklin: Yeah.

Urara: I think we are done. Thank you very much!

Franklin: You're welcome.