Olivia Hoffman [00:00:00]:

My name is Olivia Hoffman. I'm a student here at Mount sec. The event was particularly enlightening. I enjoyed learning more about the Chinese American culture, something I never had the chance to learn about growing up completely homeschooled with really, really outdated textbooks for history. So everything I've been learning in my history class here and in the movie over there was completely new. Learning that there were Chinese Americans who literally grew up in America despite the Chinese Exclusion act was fascinating and incredibly impressive.

Chisa Uyeki [00:00:43]:

Welcome to the Mount San Antonio College Podcast. I'm Chisa Uyeki, a Mount Sac professor and librarian, and I'm pleased to be your host for this season. Our goal is to keep you connected to our campus by bringing you the activities and events you may not have time to attend to share the interesting things our colleagues are creating and innovative ways they are supporting and connecting with Mount Sac students. Join me as we explore Mount Sac. In today's episode, we listen in on documentary film director and producer Larissa Lam and producer Baldwin Chiu in conversation with Mount Sac students about the making of their film Far East, Deep South. This film began as a search for one family's roots, but became an exploration of a broader story about hidden histories of intersectional communities forged in the segregated South. They share their filmmaking processes and challenges that they faced in their work to preserve these lost histories. Don't miss Larissa Lam's Mount Sac connection and why sharing a fuller American history motivated her to make the film.

Chisa Uyeki [00:02:07]:

Perhaps you'll want to explore your own family history because your stories matter. Check out the resource list for how to watch Far East, Deep south and how to access the books mentioned in the episode at the Mount Sac Library. Enjoy. Hi, this is Barsi, the producer of this podcast, and I just want to share a quick note that while you're listening, you may notice some background noise here and there throughout the recording because this event was captured from one microphone in the room by our wonderful host, Chiso Wecki. I hope you enjoy eavesdropping in on this very interesting conversation between filmmakers and Mount Sac students.

Larissa Lam [00:02:54]:

Want me to go first? I'm Larissa Lam.

Baldwin Chiu [00:02:56]:

She didn't even ask.

Larissa Lam [00:02:57]:

You want me to go first?

Baldwin Chiu [00:02:59]:

I could give you an answer. What if I said no?

Chisa Uyeki [00:03:02]:

Okay.

Larissa Lam [00:03:02]:

Alphabetically, you're first.

Baldwin Chiu [00:03:03]:

Okay. Yes, I'm going first.

Larissa Lam [00:03:06]:

I'm Larissa Lamb. I am married to him, and I'm actually from Diamondbar. I grew up in Walnut, Diamondbar. My mom used to be a librarian here at Mount Sack Lake, long, long, long time ago. And I used to take classes in the summer when I was in high school here. So it's really nice to kind of come full circle and be here. But I'm the director and co producer.

Baldwin Chiu [00:03:27]:

Of Far East Deep south, and I'm Baldwin Chu. I am married to her. And my relationship with Mount Sac is that I'm from Sac, Sacramento, the other Sac, which is where I had Bad Bolius. So let's make up for that. Yeah. So the story is about our family's history, this unknown history, and Larissa directed it. And we've been married for 16.

Larissa Lam [00:03:55]:

Yeah.

Baldwin Chiu [00:03:59]:

Yeah. Happy to be here, guys. And I'm excited that you guys get to hang out with us and watch the movie later on and hopefully.

Larissa Lam [00:04:05]:

Have you guys seen the movie yet? No.

Baldwin Chiu [00:04:07]:

So hopefully there'll be deeper discussions afterwards. Right.

Larissa Lam [00:04:10]:

Spoilers. Thank you. Because this is a. It's a rare documentary where we actually do have to say a spoiler alert. Because part of the fun of it.

Baldwin Chiu [00:04:17]:

There'S a few spoilers. There's still.

Larissa Lam [00:04:19]:

There's some. It's like a mystery.

Baldwin Chiu [00:04:20]:

Yeah.

Larissa Lam [00:04:21]:

So we don't want to spoil it.

Baldwin Chiu [00:04:22]:

But what we will say is that the journey took us about six years to create this journey. Like, this is a six year endeavor to make this film. And what we tried to do is take you along on that ride with us. Not for six years, but maybe, you know, 70 something minutes, we try to take you on that journey with us. So hopefully when you guys do watch the film today, in an hour.

Larissa Lam [00:04:42]:

Yeah. And I will say I made the film and I may get a chance to say this too on stage later. But, like, I made the film because I grew up in this area and I learned very little about Asian American history. And so when I went to Mississippi and discovered his family and so many others had been there for generations, and not just in Mississippi, but in all the neighboring, neighboring states. Tennessee, Louisiana, you know, Arkansas. I was just floored that we never learned this. And then to kind of know a lot of. There was so much history, even segregation, which we generally learned about growing up, was like, oh, Jim Crow.

Larissa Lam [00:05:19]:

That was a Southern thing. And then yet those laws applied here in California, too. So there was so much that was missing, and they kind of prompted me. Worked in the music industry for like 20 some years. And then all of a sudden it's like we're in Mississippi and there's Chinese there and there's this whole history of, like, what's going on. And so that was really what prompted us to make this film. And be here today. And I was just sharing with some people earlier.

Larissa Lam [00:05:44]:

Like, it's really special for me to be back here in, like, kind of my hometown area, because, like, that's the reason I made the film, is to speak to the student like me that was from here that thought they had no connections and American history, and they didn't. They didn't belong, or that their history was not important. So, like, every person here, I see such a diverse room. I'm just so excited that, you know, all of you have personal stories, your families have stories. All our family histories make up American history, world history. And so we're just open to any questions you might have. I can just keep talking to you.

Baldwin Chiu [00:06:19]:

I can attest she'll answer her own question. Let's switch places then.

Olivia Hoffman [00:06:29]:

I think the biggest question I think Olivia and I talked about this was, like, what did you have to go through to get. What were the challenges? What were the challenges you came across when it came to making this film?

Larissa Lam [00:06:39]:

The movie? Yeah, the challenges in terms of making movies.

Baldwin Chiu [00:06:42]:

I'll start with sounds, so you'll see in the film without trying to give anything away, but you will notice that some of the people in our film are older. And so what we really tried to do was capture the stories before they're gone. And I think that was one of the things that was a challenge for us, was how do we get all these people that have such great stories, and how do we get them fast? And the sad thing is, a lot of them are no longer with us. So I think that was one of the challenges that we had.

Larissa Lam [00:07:09]:

I think the other challenge was there was so much history we wanted to include, I think, earlier versions of our film. We were, you know, as it is, it's like the fact that Chinese in Mississippi. How did segregation impact them? Even just the history of Chinese grocery stores and all of that. Like, that was a lot to unpack. And then the layers, like, the Chinese exclusion and the impact, you know, for your generations, and immigration, like, there's just a lot to unpack there. And so there were things. There was laws after laws. Like, we had a version where we were talking about Lumb versus Rice.

Larissa Lam [00:07:45]:

We were talking about Wong Kim Ark, about birthright citizenship, you know, being upheld. And, like, there was all these things that we wanted to cram in because, you know, once we learned about it, we're like, we want to share all of this with everybody. And we realized, like, we couldn't do it all. And so we decided that we had to really keep it down to the family style being the connecting thread. And all the history had to be related to what the family went through or the people of the region, like, went through. And then from there, we hope that after the film, it sparks people to go investigate more or learn more. I mean, there's a two hour documentary that Rick Burns and Li Shin Yu did on the Chinese Exclusion X.

Baldwin Chiu [00:08:25]:

The full version is almost three hours.

Larissa Lam [00:08:26]:

Oh, yeah, we saw that. But I don't know what the version that's available out there, but we see multiple versions of, of that film. But, you know, after this film and you're like, I want to go learn more about the Chinese Exclusion Act. Go watch their documentary. I don't know if the library here has that. It's on. It was on pbs, you know, or even other books. You know, Erica Lee, you know, has written several books on the Chinese Exclusion act, an impact on her family and different families.

Larissa Lam [00:08:48]:

Jane Hong, who's in our film, has also written a book about opening the gates to Asia. I mean, so even the people in our film have written books. So, like, we hope that spurs more learning. You know, in 76 minutes. It can't be exhaustive. And so if any of you guys end up writing books or make movies in the future, like, that's always kind of a rule of thumb, is that you don't want to like, hit people overhead with like a, you know, like with everything and the kitchen sink. But yet you hope to leave people wanting more and wanting to investigate more.

Olivia Hoffman [00:09:18]:

It was the massive scale of the project and the time limit that you had to get some of the stories before they died out.

Larissa Lam [00:09:25]:

Yeah, those were kind of the two challenges is getting them, getting the people while they were still alive and preserving that history and then just whittling. Because everybody had a story, you know, so it wasn't just the history I talked about as far as laws and everything like that. It was also the fact that every person you see in our film, they had a story. And it was so hard to cut. I mean, there's some people in there that didn't even make the cut. Like Uncle Pat, somebody named Pat Pang, who at the time he was 102. He's since passed on, but we interviewed him and he was a World War II veteran and he was talking about Europe and, you know, being in the Navy. And so, like, again, and his family had a store in Mississippi.

Larissa Lam [00:10:06]:

And there was something about a Coca Cola strike. And like, there was like all this stuff and I wish we could have included it, but it was Again, kind of a side note. I mean, we hope we can share his story in some other type of oral history project. But, yeah, there's a lot.

Olivia Hoffman [00:10:21]:

This isn't much of a question, but it was more of like, just something.

Larissa Lam [00:10:24]:

I wanted to say to you guys if I ever got to meet you.

Olivia Hoffman [00:10:26]:

Because Professor Choi, I think you guys have met her, she assigned one of your podcasts for us to listen to for an assignment. And it was really, I guess, validating, I guess, to hear how you guys compared every single, I guess, violence happening towards other races and then how ours is never spoken up against or, you know, like validated, or if it does happen, it's never really interviewed or, like, shown anywhere. I really wanted to, like, thank you guys for addressing that, because I've never felt that validated for something because I always hear like, oh, African Americans go through so much. And then I was like, but what about us?

Larissa Lam [00:11:05]:

Yeah, girl, you don't know how many conversations we've had to have with a lot of other people in the community, whether they're white, even Asians, white, black. I mean, sometimes even like convincing our own people that this stuff happens when they, you know, because it's always like, oh, well, that never happened to me. I never, you know, I never experienced discrimination. So then even our own people start to sweep it under the rug and dismiss it because, like, because their experience didn't reflect that, didn't, you know, it didn't happen. And so I think it's really important for us to kind of bring that to light. And, you know, I know a lot of the faculty here and instructors here and professors here are bringing those stories to life.

Baldwin Chiu [00:11:44]:

And sometimes speaking from the Asian American community, we self diminish our sufferings because we see it as, like, humiliating or we see it as a sign of weakness or, you know, from the experience of my father and grandfather, great grandfather, you'll see in the film, they did so much to try to get away from it. For us to dive back into some of those disparities is like moving backwards. And I think for us, we just have to understand, and I had to understand that, okay, they were living through a time where it was in their eyes, better for them to forget the past and move on. But what we are living in today is that if we forgot all those things that they went through, then the cycle gets not only repeated, but we start believing and disbelieving the actual facts that have happened in the past. And so now we've lost part of our story. I think the intentions weren't like that. The intentions were that our descendants wanted to think positively and move forward and just get through it. But the unintended consequences is that even those hard parts of our past is a part of our story.

Baldwin Chiu [00:12:54]:

They do still make up who we are. And we don't have to dwell on it, but we should really know it. Because I always say we really need to learn the past to understand how we got to the present. And only then can we more effectively create a better future. I think we put a lot of Band Aids on problems that we see today. You know, there's a lot of things we're trying to do to bring healing to this country, right? But if you really look at what they're trying to do, they're like just Band aids. We're not going to the root of the problem. We're not learning how it was caused.

Baldwin Chiu [00:13:22]:

We're just trying to, like, patch it up until patch on patch, patch, patch, and we're still bleeding, but there's patches on patches on patches. So that's why we really want to encourage you guys. Hopefully after you see the film, you're inspired to find out what your story is, because your story matters. And that's what we really want you to know, that, that all of our stories really matter. And we hope that you go and go and discover those.

Larissa Lam [00:13:44]:

And I'll just add one last thing, and I think we might have even said it in that one episode is like, you know, I always liken it to fighting a disease, right? You know, somebody has, like, my mom has cancer, his dad had kidney disease. Nobody ever goes around going, like, oh, your disease is worse than mine. Like, we need to cure both of them, right? Like, or they. We need to make those people better. So sometimes I feel like with our plights in this country, like, it becomes, you know, as our. One of our friends says, the oppression Olympics, right? Like, who had it worse? The slavery worse is like, you know, fleeing a war torn country where, I mean, like, it's all bad. You know, like, everybody's trauma is different. Or if somebody comes in who, you know, grew up homeless or, you know, I mean, like, everybody's got a story, or maybe everybody's pain is still their pain.

Larissa Lam [00:14:28]:

And so I think that's where it is. Acknowledging one another's pain and realizing, like, we have to solve all the problems. We have to uplift everybody. How long did it took for you guys to make the film?

Baldwin Chiu [00:14:40]:

It took about six years from the beginning, from the time we got there. So we started the film 10 years.

Larissa Lam [00:14:46]:

Ago yesterday was the anniversary, 10th year anniversary, anniversary of when we first went to Mississippi. So when you see a film and you're taking the trip to Mississippi for the first time, that was exactly 10 years ago. But, yeah, from that time, it was.

Baldwin Chiu [00:14:59]:

Six years till far as Deep south.

Larissa Lam [00:15:01]:

Was completely birthing a child. It is. And you'll see her daughter. You'll see her daughter. And she's like one when it starts. She's like 11 now. But we also made a short film in the interim. I'm just curious, are there any, like, people that are interested in going into film that are in here? Okay.

Baldwin Chiu [00:15:16]:

Oh, good.

Larissa Lam [00:15:17]:

So we did a short film first called Finding Cleveland, which was about our first trip. It's kind of embedded now in forest Deep South. But just for that very first trip where it was just like one day where you'll see all these crazy things happen that we discover. And it was really kind of a test case. I mean, I'd worked more in the music industry side and a little bit in television. That was my background. I'd done music composition and all that and had been a recording artist. But filmmaking was not actually in my wheelhouse necessarily.

Larissa Lam [00:15:44]:

And we went there and so we decided. I just thought the story is so remarkable. I. I feel like we need to make a movie about it. Long story short, we make a short film first because, you know, when we didn't have any money to make a longer film. But this was our test case. We showed the film at film festivals. We had a lot of success, and then we ended up touring the country with that short film.

Larissa Lam [00:16:03]:

And then realizing there was an appetite for this, like, there was, like, people going, oh, my gosh, like, you know, we need to hear more of these stories, you know, we want. Or other people telling us. Like, my family was here, you know, in Mississippi as well, or from other parts of the south where they were, you know, they came during the Chinese Exclusion Act. And so we realized that there was a much larger appetite and audience for this and even beyond just the AAPI community that needed to hear the story. And so that's why we embarked on doing a feature film. And of course, we had to raise a lot more money to do that. And we used the short film to raise money as we were doing these speaking engagements. So if you are making film or projects, sometimes you can leverage a short film, especially if, like, for students, like, short films are kind of your lifeblood.

Larissa Lam [00:16:48]:

So that's a great way to not just like, oh, I'm just gonna throw it up on YouTube, where it's just part of my portfolio. But it can be something if it's a story of substance that you can develop into a longer film.

Baldwin Chiu [00:17:00]:

And if you do the math, 10 years ago, and then it took us six years, that means we released the film March of 2020. So something happened in the world at that time that we didn't get to do our theatrical run. And then it happens to be our film comes out. And then now we have all this anti Asian stuff going on, right? And at the same time, we have anti black, you know, Black Lives Matter type stuff going on too, all at the same time. And our film is sitting there saying, like, here I am, but who? You know? And hopefully when you see the film, you'll see why. Our film actually started doing really well during that time because we were addressing both communities and we were addressing some of our shared history together. And again, you know, when we start understanding each other's stories better, then we start understanding each other better. So that was a tough time for us because it detracted our entire goal of how we want to release the film, but it gave us different opportunities.

Baldwin Chiu [00:18:01]:

So if you're going to go into filmmaking, I mean, these are things that we as filmmakers have no control over, but we are forced to shift, right? And I think that's not just in filmmaking, but everything in life, right? You can plan all you want. If something happens, you need to be able to shift with it. So it was a good life lesson for us. The film ended up doing a lot better than we thought in the virtual world when everyone was at home. And now we're just happy to be here now because now we can go back out and do things in person. We missed out on that for the first couple of years. Having you guys here see it in person is going to be a great experience for all of us because, you know, once you see it in person, we can experience it together, we can laugh together, we can cry together, and then we can all talk about it together.

Olivia Hoffman [00:18:42]:

Are we allowed to get angry together?

Baldwin Chiu [00:18:44]:

Yes, always.

Olivia Hoffman [00:18:45]:

I get angry.

Larissa Lam [00:18:46]:

Yeah. No, it's okay to be outraged. My favorite screening one time was we were in Connecticut. It was actually with our short film. And a lady of, you know, European, white, European descent stood up, like, at the end of the Q and A. And she was, like, outraged. She's like, I can't believe the Chinese exclusion happened. We did this.

Larissa Lam [00:19:03]:

I can't believe this happened. And it was just like, you know, it's okay. And I was like, you know, we want that feeling because when we discovered that there is a little bit of that anger and that outrage. Why did we learn this? You kind of see that in some of the reactions we have in the film. But hopefully when you leave at the end, it's not just you stay in anger, but you move towards hope and action. I mean, I think that's really what it is. So we hope we don't leave you with anger or even sadness. It propels you to want to create a better future so that the past and those things that you're outraged about don't happen again.

Larissa Lam [00:19:40]:

What? Very, very disarming, very cathartic.

Baldwin Chiu [00:19:44]:

What are your majors?

Olivia Hoffman [00:19:46]:

English major.

Larissa Lam [00:19:46]:

English.

Baldwin Chiu [00:19:47]:

Leaning towards data science. Data science.

Larissa Lam [00:19:50]:

No crunching.

Baldwin Chiu [00:19:52]:

What is it?

Larissa Lam [00:19:53]:

Animation. You'll see some animations.

Baldwin Chiu [00:19:56]:

Any engineers in here? All right.

Olivia Hoffman [00:19:58]:

My brother's an engineer. My other brother's a coder and my dad is an engineer.

Baldwin Chiu [00:20:03]:

And you are English.

Larissa Lam [00:20:05]:

English.

Olivia Hoffman [00:20:07]:

I mean, I'm a nursing major to.

Baldwin Chiu [00:20:09]:

An English education major, so it's all good.

Larissa Lam [00:20:13]:

I was a business economics major at ucla, but I was already going into the music industry side. But, you know, it's okay if you don't know and you decide to switch because, I mean, I was in the music side and now I'm in documentary filmmaking. And even, you know, I think of myself in the education space too, because we're doing all this work to kind of advance Asian American, you know, AAPI education across the country. And so, you know, where you are now isn't where you have to stay. Just know that. And even you're gonna have many phases of your journey. And so don't, you know, don't be afraid to also explore other topics and even jobs or internships, because even if you find out that's not what you want to do, that is still something that you learn.

Olivia Hoffman [00:20:55]:

Out of curiosity, did you need to.

Larissa Lam [00:20:57]:

Write a script for this show or documentary wise?

Baldwin Chiu [00:21:00]:

Yeah.

Larissa Lam [00:21:00]:

Yes. Yes and no. So one of the challenging things about. It's a great question. One of the challenging things about documentary filmmaking is because it's documentary. Depending on the type of documentary, you're following your subjects, you don't know what's going to happen. And in our case, we didn't really know what was going to happen. Again, without spoiling anything, there is an ending at one point where we thought it was going to just end in Mississippi.

Larissa Lam [00:21:25]:

I'm not totally spoiled by anything. And then we ended up having to discover more things in another location. That changed the way I had to kind of do the Film, you kind of work backwards in documentaries. So you kind of film, I mean, you can kind of plot out certain people you want to interview. You can kind of map out. I mean, in our case, we didn't know we were making a documentary at first. But as you're kind of planning the longer film, like, there are things like, oh, we want to interview people about their experiences in the Jim Crow South. You know, you want to interview historians about the background, you know, about, you know, Chinese Exclusion act, immigration, like, you know, those are things you can kind of interview.

Larissa Lam [00:21:58]:

But then you have to take all of that and weave it together in a cohesive story and then you're working backwards. So then I'm working with like 40, 50 hours with interviews, whittling it down to like an hour and 15 minute film and trying to make it cohesive, make sense, be engaging and interesting. And so we script in terms of like cutting and pasting it, you know, and figuring out like the. From those interviews. But in some ways I think it's harder than doing a written script because there you write the script, you edit the script, you shoot the script, you.

Olivia Hoffman [00:22:30]:

Know how it's gonna go before you start.

Larissa Lam [00:22:32]:

Yeah. I mean, it may still evolve and change, you know, with your script. And there are definitely, you know, stages of that.

Baldwin Chiu [00:22:39]:

The positive thing is that when you start writing at the end, you know what your writing on, because you have all the information. Whereas if you're writing for a narrative, you're coming up with ideas to write that are infinite. You have an infinite things to write.

Larissa Lam [00:22:54]:

Yeah, that's why I'm like. It's like it's in reverse. It's like reverse engineering.

Baldwin Chiu [00:22:57]:

So she has a finite amount of, we have a finite amount of footage and information that we have to work with. We know that's our basket. So we're going to write, recording to that basket.

Larissa Lam [00:23:06]:

That makes a lot of sense.

Olivia Hoffman [00:23:07]:

I was just curious because I don't know anything about film writing. And as an English major, I don't know where I'm going. So there are all possibilities. Journalism is always. Journalism is. But like, do I really have to?

Baldwin Chiu [00:23:19]:

Well, the good thing about English is that everything is written or typed. Right. So let's say you start working with this gentleman in engineering. You still need good writers to write technical documents because you still need to be able to translate those things too.

Larissa Lam [00:23:33]:

Yeah. And I would always say if, if you don't know where you're going, a great way to kind of know if you're going in the right direction. Is hearing what other people say your strengths are or what you're good at. And so this was a very new path when we did our short as far as, like, experience and then doing the feature. So weird. It's like, I haven't even done that much film, and yet I feel like I'm a veteran now. And that's only because people have, like, affirmed me. Because so many times I feel like, you know, everybody gets imposter syndrome.

Larissa Lam [00:24:00]:

You know, when I worked in the music industry industry for years, and I mean, still work in the music industry, and I still feel imposter syndrome there. But I Even more so as a filmmaker because I didn't go formally to film school. And so I was just speaking to a film class yesterday at, you know, I did it remotely for American University in a documentary filmmaking class. And so I was like, they're actually, you know, inviting me to speak to film students. And then I'm like, am I qualified to do this? You know, but the whole thing is, it's like, if you're good at something or people appreciate your work in one area, they're gonna affirm you in that. And so I would take those cues.

Baldwin Chiu [00:24:35]:

Here's a fun fact. When you guys watch the film, our music is in the film.

Larissa Lam [00:24:40]:

So it's like a little Easter egg hunt. See if you can hear him.

Baldwin Chiu [00:24:43]:

So I rap.

Larissa Lam [00:24:44]:

Rapping and I'm singing. Mine's the easiest. Well, not the easiest. Only if you pay attention, actually. Yours is easy to identify. There's only one rap and the film. How was doing the interviews? How was doing the interviews for the film? Good overall, except for 102. That one.

Baldwin Chiu [00:25:02]:

But that was fun.

Larissa Lam [00:25:03]:

It was fun. Uncle Pap was hard of hearing.

Baldwin Chiu [00:25:06]:

It was hard. So we were in a room like half this size in a. In a nursing. In like an assisted living type of a place for veterans, right? So they give us a private room about half this size to do the interview, right? But he couldn't hear us even though we were in the same room. So just imagine this room, the door shut. We're in here with this old man along with his nephew, and we're trying to ask him questions. And he goes, huh? And then so we start talking louder. Eventually it just sounds like we're yelling at this poor old man and people are outside the door.

Baldwin Chiu [00:25:43]:

I'm just imagining people walking by and they're like, who are these people yelling at?

Larissa Lam [00:25:48]:

Let me give you an example. This is just hilarious. It's like, uncle Pap, what branch of the military did you serve in what? And then his nephew would go, uncle Pab, whatever of the military did you serve in? And then he would go, well, back in Germany, there was Hitler and then in Russia there was Stalin. So he didn't even answer the question. And you get 20 minutes of World War II, two stories. And so it was hilarious. So the interviews were fine, but definitely working with people that are not accustomed to being on camera. I mean, a lot of our scholars were used to being interviewed, so they weren't as much of an issue.

Larissa Lam [00:26:27]:

But for like regular folk, I mean, sometimes it took a little while for them to get comfortable.

Baldwin Chiu [00:26:33]:

You'll see my father being interviewed. And just so you guys know ahead of time, I didn't interview him because he never talked to me about the past. Like, why should I bring up the past? Right? And why would you care about it? Right? So all these years of asking him questions, he never. So when you see my father, it's gonna be because of her, because she's the safe one.

Larissa Lam [00:26:54]:

He liked me better. So how many interviews did you guys do?

Baldwin Chiu [00:26:59]:

Oh my gosh.

Larissa Lam [00:27:00]:

Oh, my gosh. Was it like 25, 30?

Baldwin Chiu [00:27:03]:

What was going to say about that?

Larissa Lam [00:27:04]:

There's some people that we had, we didn't have.

Baldwin Chiu [00:27:06]:

Not everyone made the. Made the film.

Larissa Lam [00:27:08]:

Yeah, I mean, we had some professor, like one professor, I don't know if you know, Professor John Liu, he was UC Irvine. Like, he was fantastic. But we just ended up having to cut him because we ran out of. He's in our deleted scenes. And he was like, fantastic. But, you know, we couldn't include him. And then there were some other people like Uncle Pap that we mentioned that just. It was a rabbit trail of like World War II stories.

Larissa Lam [00:27:32]:

Even though he had some great content, but it was kind of disconnected and some other people in town. So yeah, like 25 to 30 people probably, maybe.

Baldwin Chiu [00:27:41]:

Yeah, it could be up to 30. Were there any reads that you guys cut in the beginning that you later.

Larissa Lam [00:27:45]:

Added because you felt like you wanted to add?

Baldwin Chiu [00:27:49]:

After we locked picture, I don't think we added anything.

Larissa Lam [00:27:53]:

The one thing we did do is, is we did change some titles. We added one thing audio wise and I not sure if this version has it or not, so. The bound feet. Oh, I did add in because we. When we showed the film, there was some confusion. This version should have it.

Baldwin Chiu [00:28:11]:

But it does, it does.

Larissa Lam [00:28:12]:

So hopefully you don't notice and it's not confusing, but his great grandmother had bound feet. And you know, that was the practice of Chinese women. Like Bounding. We didn't get to go into that because that was like a whole can of worms that we didn't open. But, you know, it's mentioned multiple times that a lot of people that knew her remember she had bound feet. And so because we introduced your great grandmother as the one bringing your father to America in the beginning of the film, there was some confusion at points with the audience members where they're like, oh, is that the same grandma? And so we added a line audio wise that I had in from a recording that we didn't use of his father saying she had bound feet. So I added it to so they.

Baldwin Chiu [00:28:50]:

Would know that's the same person.

Larissa Lam [00:28:51]:

So people would know it was over a picture of her, like, so they would know that's the same woman. So that is one thing I did add.

Baldwin Chiu [00:28:56]:

I have a question. So how did you decide who to interview? Because I'm sure some people were like open to the interview, but some people were not open for any question.

Larissa Lam [00:29:07]:

Yeah, most people were really receptive to being interviewed. We basically interviewed anybody that was alone that remembered his grandfather or great grandparents. That was the first criteria. Or even had experiences with the Chinese in the Mississippi Delta. And then, you know, later on, you know, we had several other scholars and historians who we added, some were kind of last minute without spoiling too much. As the story kind of developed, there was a need to bring in some other people because we started to emphasize the Chinese Exclusion Act a little bit more. And so we brought in Dr. Gordon Chang from Stanford.

Larissa Lam [00:29:41]:

And so he was kind of a late add in or in things where I was looking like I wanted more women talking about their experiences in the south too. So we had another Chinese American woman from the south like Carolyn Chan, who we added kind of last minute to. But everybody, I don't think anybody said no to us.

Baldwin Chiu [00:30:00]:

Everyone was very eager to tell their story because I think they all went used to watch the film and pretty much everyone realized that their story wasn't really told. In fact, I don't think there's a real spoiler, but there's some African American people in our film. And we did a panel with one of them after the film was done and he said, thank you for telling our story. And he's black and he's saying we're telling his story. And I was like, no, thank you for sharing your story. Right? And he's like, no, we want to thank you for telling our our story. But I'm like, how am I telling the story of Chinese in Mississippi telling Your story as someone that's black. And he said, well, your people, your community was in our communities.

Baldwin Chiu [00:30:44]:

And everyone would talk about our community, but you weren't ever in those stories, which means our story was always incomplete because you weren't in our story. So now that you've told us your story, our story is now completely. Please. Well, thank you for telling our story. And I was like, wow. I mean, it gives me goosebumps. Just.

Larissa Lam [00:31:02]:

Well, and it wasn't just Daryl.

Chisa Uyeki [00:31:04]:

It was.

Larissa Lam [00:31:04]:

There's some other women from Hays, Mississippi, that you'll meet in the film. Like, after the. You know, we were grateful that they came to share their story, and they actually thanked us. And I was just like, you know, I was just taken aback. We're like, thank you for asking us. And I guess nobody ever asked them.

Baldwin Chiu [00:31:19]:

They've always wanted to tell their experience with the Chinese comedy community, but no one ever associated them with the Chinese community, even though they were clearly together at that time. Together.

Larissa Lam [00:31:30]:

Yeah. And I mean, there have been other documentaries done, and I know, you know, we've heard there's been some journalists that have gone down there, you know, in decades past, and I think sometimes they weren't. Some people feel like they didn't capture the whole story. And so a lot of people were also saying, like, thank you for, like, showing this other side that doesn't always get told. And so the Southerners really distrust, like, outsiders. And I think the reason they talked to us was because his family had a connection there. And so I think also what they shared may not. Like, if they share something, journalists, like, they're much more guarded about it, or they may share different things or may get asked different questions.

Larissa Lam [00:32:05]:

Whereas, you know, there was a certain level of trust that we had with the African American community. And even, like, in talking to some local white historians, like, we were trying to get, like, an African American scholar or access to the, you know, people to talk to. And they were actually saying, like, oh, they're a tough nut to crack. But I think it's because it was somebody white who had tried to go into the community, whereas as Chinese, as Asians, the black community actually had a greater trust with us in the south because, as you'll see in the film, the historical relationship between the two communities. So it was very interesting because, I mean, the black and white tension is still there in the south, you know.

Chisa Uyeki [00:32:46]:

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