

Oral Histories of Tompkins County

Archival Finding Aid

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Asian Diaspora in Tompkins County: Oral History Collection

The *Asian Diaspora in Tompkins County Oral History Collection* was established in 2021 to highlight interviews and stories in our archives that explore the experiences of Asian, Asian-American, Pacific Islander, and South-Asian people living in Tompkins County. The topics of these interviews explore a wide range of experiences, community, and culture, and the stories shared may have been guided by the specific project the interview was recorded for. This collection will continue to expand as our Oral History archives continue to grow.

Interviews with:

Ooy and Bonner Herren (00:28:12)

Ooy Herren discusses her business ventures in Thailand, including a gas station and a bakery, and her restaurant in Ithaca, Thai Basil. She also discusses the time-intensive nature of owning a small business and the difficulties that the language barrier has imposed.

- *Recorded 5/5/2019*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2019-5-5_Herren-Ooy-and-Bonner*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2019-5-5_Herren-Ooy-and-Bonner_Transcript*
- *Recorded as part of the 2019 Generation to Generation: Immigration & Food project.*

Dr. Abdul Jalil (00:44:02)

Dr. Abdul Jalil discusses his education in Bangladesh and Japan, employment as a scientist in several countries, and work at Cornell University. He also discusses his role in Ithaca's Muslim community and his business, Ithaca Halal Meat and Grocery.

- *Recorded 4/15/2019*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2019-4-15_Jalil-Abdul-Dr*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2019-4-15_Jalil-Abdul-Dr_Transcript*
 - *This transcript is awaiting verification for phrases in Arabic.*
- *Recorded as part of the 2019 Generation to Generation: Immigration & Food project.*

Mimi Melegrito - 2018 (62 minutes)

Mimi Melegrito discusses her childhood in the Philippines and the story of how she immigrated to the United States. She reflects on her first memories of the US, the story of how she met her husband and moved to Ithaca, and her work in Ithaca as a volunteer in nursing homes, food banks, and local 4-H youth clubs and programs.

Trigger warning: violent imagery

- *Recorded 3/2018*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2018-Melegrito-Mimi*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2018-Melegrito-Mimi_Transcript*
- *Recorded as part of the 2018 Generation to Generation Oral History Project.*

Mimi Melegrito discusses working with teenagers at GIAC since the 1980s and her efforts to resolve conflicts among these teenagers, often dealing with issues of racial prejudice and substance use. She also discusses her mission of improving people's lives and her observations about housing discrimination in Ithaca.

Trigger warning: violent imagery

- *Recorded 10/25/2017*
- *Audio File: No audio*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2017-10-25_Melegrito-Mimi_Transcript*
- *Recorded as part of the Fall 2017 - Global Engagements: Living and Working in a Diverse World Cornell University Anthropology course.*

Baldev & Kamaldeep Sekhon (01:14:06)

Baldev and Kamaldeep Sekhon discuss moving from Punjab, India, to the United States, where Baldev first worked in agriculture in California, then in construction in New York City, before opening New Delhi Diamond's restaurant in Ithaca. They reflect on the downsides to being disconnected from their family in India and family values and activities in India.

- *Recorded 4/23/2019*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2019-4-23_Sekhon-Baldev-and-Kamaldeep*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2019-4-23_Sekhon-Baldev-and-Kamaldeep_Transcript*
- *Recorded as part of the 2019 Generation to Generation: Immigration & Food Project in 2019.*

Amy Somchanhmavong (00:52:51)

Amy Somchanhmavong speaks on the intersection of creating a space for Asian American studies in academia and connecting this pursuit to community engagement. She reflects on leading the push for the establishment of the Asian American Studies program in Binghamton University and, upon moving to Ithaca, becoming involved with various community-based organizations in order

to apply this work. Amy currently served as the Associate Director of Community Service-Learning and Partnership at Cornell University and was the co-founder of the Ithaca Asian American Association and Ithaca Dragon Boat Club.

- *Recorded 10/24/2019*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2019-10-24_Somchanhmavong-Amy*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2019-10-24_Somchanhmavong-Amy_Transcript*
- *Recorded as part of the Local Sisters of Change Project in 2019.*

Hiroko Takashima (1 hour 7 minutes)

Hiroko Takashima discusses her experience growing up in Ithaca as the daughter of Japanese and Eastern-European Jewish parents, and her role in developing Mama Said Handpies with her business partner and husband Gabe Flores. Hiroko talks about her studies in natural health and herbal medicine and how those passions of hers support her cooking and recipe development. Hiroko talks about her thoughts on cooking ethnic foods for Mama Said Handpies, how traveling has influenced her use of spice and flavor, her focus on using local ingredients and supporting local farms and food businesses.

- *Recorded 11/29/2021*
- *Interview File: OHTC_2021-11-29_Takashima-Hiroko*
 - *This interview was recorded over Zoom and exists as a video and audio file.*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2021-11-29_Takashima-Hiroko_Transcript*
- *Recorded as part of 'Food and Foodways in Tompkins County' project in 2021. An projects of the Public History Initiative at Cornell University.*

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