

Interview Transcript

Cynthia Li:

Hi, my name is Cynthia Li. Today is October 24th, 2023 and I'm interviewing Brian Baik through Zoom for the Colby College Korean Oral History Project. Do you agree to grant the college permission to archive and publish this interview for educational purposes?

Brian Baik:

Yes.

CL:

Okay, awesome. How are you doing today?

BB:

I'm good, you?

CL:

I'm good too. How are you feeling going into this interview?

BB:

Just a little nervous.

CL:

It's okay. You'll know all the answers because it's about you. Can you introduce yourself a bit and describe your connection to Korea? Any major events in your life or whatever you want to mention about yourself or how you identify?

BB:

Okay. Well, my name is Brian. I was born in Guam, and then moved to Korea when I was around four or five years old. And then I grew up there until third grade. I lived near the countryside in Jinju. And it wasn't that eventful over there since it is more like a countryside. We did have land where we grew crops. So we had a lot of vegetables and stuff that we grew on our own. So, I grew up eating a lot of those. We still ventured out into cities whenever we needed groceries and stuff. But the closest market would be the outdoor markets where we would buy most of our groceries and then a lot of the people knew one another in the town since it was pretty small. And yeah, that's it.

CL:

Cool, thank you. Who were you living with? Where do you live now?

BB:

I live in California now.

CL:

And can you talk about when you came to California?

BB:

Well, around third grade, I moved over to California to live with my mom because I was living with my grandma and my aunt back then. My mom wasn't able to take me to America when I was little. So, that's why I lived with them for a while. I was able to move over afterwards, so that's when I started living in America. Yeah.

CL:

Thank you. Do you know why your family was in Guam? Did you have any exposure to Korean community when you were there?

BB:

I believe they were on a vacation at Guam, but I was just born over there afterwards. So, once I was born, we had to stay there for a little bit. There weren't that many Korean people around. It was a lot of Filipino people and other Islanders. So yeah, it wasn't too many. But people go for vacations and stuff.

CL:

So you were on vacation for a couple of years then? Or, your family was?

BB:

Yeah.

CL:

Do you have any memorable events community-wise, while you were living in Guam? Or were you too young?

BB:

Wouldn't say memorable, but it's more of like traumatic events, because I did almost drown. So that was a traumatic event and I think that's the reason why I remember that one. But I was saved by the lifeguard over there.

CL:

Moving to South Korea must have been a big change. Did you understand the reasons for the move at the time?

BB:

No, because I was a little baby, so I didn't understand why we were. I don't believe I was too conscious back then either. All I knew was that we were moving over there, and then once we had moved my mom and my dad got a divorce. I guess that's one of the reasons why they moved back was so that they can go through the divorce process, and then my mom could move out afterwards.

CL:

Can you describe in detail what an average day for you in Jinju was like?

BB:

My average day... The Korean weather is very... There were a lot of times where the weather was sticky, humid, during the summer. The winter was very cold and it snowed. Usually, I would be staying indoors because of it, to avoid those weathers, and also I did not like the sticky weather, especially. But aside from staying home, I would go out. There was a convenience store next door. I would go there and grab myself some snacks, come home, and then watch TV and eat. There was also piano tutoring center right next door that we can hear the piano playing from the outside. Listening to that a lot, I started taking lessons over there as well. And then since for Korea, a lot of kids tend to go out by themselves at a very young age, I did that a lot. And then I even ventured out by myself around five years old. And that includes going to school as well. We would be having to walk over to school ourselves and then come home. Yeah, that's basically it.

CL:

Can you describe the environment that you lived in, home-wise? You already mentioned the weather, but like the house, and what the school environment was like?

BB:

The school environment... I would say the school environment is very different from America's I would say. The school I attended were multi-story tall. Each story or each classroom in the building depending on which floor you are in, you knew what grade they were in. Because they label it as "1 - " and then another number. And the second number would determine the classroom you're in, first number determines your grade. And then schools tend to end around 4:00 or 5:00 PM because you would have to participate in some kind of extracurricular. So you can't just go home after class, you would have to go to the extracurricular since it is part of school. Once that was done, we go home and then eat dinner and then repeat. During summer, we would have summer homework. We would have to study as well since the teachers basically want you to not slack off during summer. Which, I didn't know that when I went into elementary school and then I completely didn't do any of the work. [Laughter] So when you don't do something, they tend to punish you. In Korea, it was like fine if you got hit. So they would hit you on the hand or like, ask you to stand outside of the classroom. We also did bloodwork where

they determine your blood type, so that you know your blood type during elementary school, and then they start your savings account early on. So from first grade, you would have to bring in an X amount of money to put into your bank account. And they keep track of your savings account like that. And then I guess that's another upside of it. School life in general, since kids go to school by themselves and there's no one that's picking them up, kids would be playing outside for a while before going home. And, this is starting from first grade. So it's very different from how it is here. Overall, the environment in Jinju was - I would say very peaceful, since it is more of a countryside. Obviously, it's gotten more modernized now. But back then it was more... Since everyone knew one another, it wasn't too far from knowing who did what or who was where since everyone had eyes everywhere. So it was very safe, I would say. Also, there wasn't really much of a crime in Korea either. So yeah.

BB:

So since it was pretty safe, and people walk to school when they're very young, what were your primary concerns when you were growing up in Korea?

BB:

Getting hit by a car, because I was a little kid, and little kids are kind of hard to see even when you're driving. And I think that goes for any country. Since, if you see a little kid just pop out of nowhere, as a driver, you're not going to expect that anywhere in the world, no matter how the country is. So yeah.

CL:

And what about among your peers? What do you think were your primary concerns like as an age group?

BB:

I was a very shy kid, so I would say making friends in general. Like how others thought of me at a very young age, which I cared about. Yeah, that was it. [long pause] And then, I guess... [Laughter] There's like this scary story. And [Laughter] we would talk about basically, there's a lot of superstitions when it goes to East Asian countries. And one of them was a scary ghost story that my friends and I would talk about. I personally did not like scary things when I was little, because I got scared a lot, but I still read all the stories and liked hearing about it. So I will say that was one of them. Any kinda like ghosts or monsters? They would freak me out, I will say. And then my grandma would always talk about the conflict with North Korea and saying how, "Oh, you may never know when it's gonna happen." And she was scaring me like that as well.

CL:

What were some things that she would talk about?

BB:

Just talking about the war and how it went, and how if there's sirens going off, that means that there's a war going on. That's basically what she would talk about. But she didn't really talk about it too much.

CL:

Were you ever exposed to sirens or anything that she described?

BB:

No, the only sirens we would hear about are lost children. But it's because kids like to go out. So they would get lost and then they would radio it to the town. And then they'll be like, "Oh, look out for this kid." I was one of those kids.

CL:

You got lost before?

BB:

Yeah.

CL:

Do you remember the experience?

BB:

My aunt went to the TV station to talk, and then [Laughter] the radio went on. And I went home. And then they were like, "Oh, he's right here." And I got in trouble. That happened twice.

CL:

And so, what did playing look like when you guys were kids? Was it like exploring, or were there any traditional games that you remember that you played with friends?

BB:

There weren't any real traditional ones. But adults would play like *yut nori* (a board game played by casting sticks) which is like, with sticks and numbers. I'm not sure how to play it, but I know they played it during New Years. And then there's also this card game that I don't know what the name of it is. It's basically having to match two cards of the same kind. That's how you're supposed to win it. But as kids, we didn't really play traditional games. We had Maplestory, which was really popular. And then, that was it. But in Korea, to play Maplestory, they had to

have your Social Security or something? I'm not sure why. I think it was to verify your age. But yeah.

CL:

So what did you do in your leisure time?

BB:

Watch TV and cartoons, because there wasn't much I was able to do. So most of the time I was watching TV, sleeping, napping. I didn't have internet access per se. Because I didn't know how to work a computer. All I knew was to just watch TV. And then watch the comedy ones, especially since those made me laugh a lot. That's how I would pass my time.

CL:

Did you have any ties to religious affiliations during your time in Korea?

BB:

Yeah. So I'm from a Christian family. Going to church every Sunday was a regular thing, and then we would be walking in the morning over to the church, and then we would have service every Sunday. And then we would also eat over there and go home after that. I also went to a private school when I was younger. And then, there, we would pray before meals. We would also... We didn't do any sermons. It was just praying before meals that was the most religious thing we did. Everything else was pretty normal. In Korea, we did have to make our own meals. So we would take turns learning about how to make certain meals and we would do them ourselves, too. So that was it.

CL:

What were some of the dishes that you guys ate? You mentioned that you guys grew vegetables at home. Did you have a favorite food that you guys would make?

BB:

I would say the most staple- the most common food we would eat is rice with egg and soy sauce and like a soup. That would be like the quickest meal for breakfast that we would have. But, my favorite food would be *omuraisu* (rice-filled omelet) which is with ketchup, egg, veggies. And then, the vegetables we grew were used for side dishes like *kimchi* (fermented cabbage). Like, four different kinds of them. And then, we also made more of... I'm not sure what it's called, but it has honey and then orange peel. Not orange peel, it's orange or lemon peels in them and we would use them for tea We also have made... I did have a favorite dessert which was called *sikhye* (rice punch), which is a rice punch. So it's made with rice, brown sugar, water and that is very refreshing. And it's really good. So I really liked it. I would say another part of it is like the burnt part of the rice we call it *nurungji* (crispy rice). We basically get the burnt part of it. It's not really

burnt, it's just crispy rice that we pour a barley tea with, and then that's how we would typically eat those.

CL:

What were your experiences outside of Jinju like?

BB:

The city was very big to me, maybe because I was small. The malls were very big and they had a lot of stuff in it. Because the market that we used to go to is an outdoor market, seeing a mall was very new to me. And then they had a lot of foods that I didn't see at the market because the market is fresh foods. While, the market had more, frozen section and packaged foods. Outside of Jinju they had a lot, I would say, more people outside than Jinju. Because Jinju they had less people, it was more of like, a lot of people stay at home. But they are very lively outside of Jinju. Basically, had more traffic - more social. It was more social, let's say.

CL:

Did you have any interactions with people as a kid?

BB:

No because I was shy. The most interactions I would get is like, "Oh, you're so cute." and me turning red. [Laughter]

CL:

Do you think that city life, or, exposure to the cities in Korea prepared you at all for your move to the US?

BB:

No, because both are very different in culture. So, people here and people in Korea are very different on how everyone acts. Especially because I came from more of a countryside, where everyone's very nice to one another. Coming here, it felt like everything was so big, so far apart, where it's not really walkable distance to walk around, especially in California. There were a lot of people driving in cars compared to walking, which I was used to. And I noticed how little kids were treated like little kids. Not like preteens. So they... I saw how they acted more like babies when they shouldn't be. Maybe because that was how I was conditioned back in Korea. So yeah, it was very different. So I will say it didn't really train me. Rather, it kind of opened my eyes to how different the two cultures are.

CL:

Did you have any impressions of America before actually getting there? What were they, and how did they change when you got there?

BB:

I thought America was all desert. And cowboys. [Laughter] I thought I was gonna see horses- which I did. I did see horses. I did see desert. But I didn't know that they had buildings. I thought it was all white people here. So it was very interesting to see non-white people everywhere. I didn't know black people existed. [Laughter] I mean, I was a little kid. So like, seeing other different cultured people in America is like, very new to me when I came. So when I came here, I was surprised that they had more than just the desert. They had buildings, they had houses. And it wasn't like apartment houses, because in Korea, they have a lot of apartments over houses, so seeing houses was new.

Because I didn't really like- I wasn't exposed to riding in cars often. That was also new, since I had to get used to riding in cars a lot. But once I got here, the first thing I noticed was the heat, which I really did not like because the heat in Korea is more humid. And heat here is painful. [Laughter] I think I hated it because I got sunburnt a lot. In Korea, I didn't get sunburned often. I guess those are the main differences that I saw once I had that idea of America.

CL:

When you got to Orange County, did you associate with any other Korean families? What contexts were those in? Did you feel like you maintained your connection to Korean culture after getting here when you were in middle school?

BB:

I would say yes. Because they had a lot of Korean people here in Orange County. So there wasn't really a need for me to change how I was. Obviously, I did have to learn English, which I was really bad at growing up. Mostly because I wanted to maintain the Korean side. So I would talk to a lot of other people that were in the same boat as me, who just came over here from Korea. And I would talk to them in Korean a lot, which I did up until middle school, where I stopped hanging out with those people. So, up until middle school, I did maintain a lot of the Korean aspect of myself. Especially since I went to a Korean church over here. I also learned Korean over there, because they had Saturday schools where you would... They would teach you Korean and stuff. So a lot of those all put together just altogether basically made it, made me, keep the Korean identity. Yeah.

I obviously did have to learn English, which I was really bad at growing up, mostly because I wanted to maintain the Korean side. So I will talk to a lot of other people that was in the same boat as me, who just came over here from Korea. And now I talk to them in Korean a lot, which I did up until middle school, where I stopped hanging out with those people. So, up until middle

school, I did maintain a lot of like the Korean aspect of myself. And especially since I went to a Korean church over here. I also learned Korean over there, because they had Saturday schools where you would do a teacher Korean and stuff. So a lot of those are put together just all together basically made it maybe keep the Korean identity.

CL:

Yeah. Did you feel any difference, having lived in Korea compared to your peers? What were their backgrounds like? Were they Korean American?

BB:

Some were Korean Americans, but a lot of people that I hung out with at school were from Korea. So they weren't really that [many] differences from me to them.

CL:

Was there an English-only policy at school?

BB:

No. My elementary school and middle school both [had] majority Hispanics. So it was either English or Spanish that was majority spoken. Some people would say, "Oh, you should speak English." But other people defended one another saying like, "Oh, no, it's fine, blah blah blah." So we had like two sides of the people sometimes, but none of them were teachers. It was just among students that they would say that.

CL:

Did you guys have to take any foreign language classes?

BB:

When I was younger, no. But for high school, yes. But the foreign language classes that was offered in elementary school was Spanish, which I took a little bit of. And then I also took Korean as a Saturday school. So yeah, those were the only two.

CL:

What kinds of support systems and resources did you have for developing and improving your English?

BB:

I used to use music. So learning lyrics to songs helped me improve my English and the pronunciations. Obviously, in songs you wouldn't pronounce it the way they pronounce it always. But it did help me to learn how it should somewhat be pronounced as. So it helped me learn different words and how to use those words, and what it means. Aside from that, it helped me to

conversate with other students whenever I needed something or compare answers. I believe my first friend was a kid that came from Mexico, so we talked in English a lot.

CL:

Did they have any kind of ESL, like extra support?

BB:

There wasn't extra support, but there was ESL classes where a lot of kids in those classes were just learning English as their second language. So, their focus was mainly on English over any other subjects.

CL:

After coming to America, what were your primary concerns at this point in your life, and some struggles that you faced adapting to a new cultural context?

BB:

Can you repeat that one more time?

CL:

Yeah. What were your primary concerns after coming to America?

BB:

Making friends, and if I'm going to fit in, was a main concern, because that was already a concern for me in Korea. I barely learned the formula in Korea to like, how to make friends there, but it wasn't gonna work out in America. So I would say that was very... That was like the number one thing. And how I'm going to do with the new family I was going to be with- which was my mom, my stepdad, my brother, and how living with them was gonna be from then on.

Yeah, I think those were the major concerns that I had. Lastly, was learning English overall.

CL:

Can you describe what an average day for you was like in middle school?

BB:

In middle school, I kept my circle small, typically. But I did have two groups of friends, which was ones who were Korean speakers, and the other were English-speaking. I typically hung out with the Korean speaking group more when I was in seventh grade, because I was closer with one of the guys over there. And then, as we grew up, I felt less connection towards them. So as days went by, I would distance myself from them. So by eighth grade, I hung out with my other groups more. Overall experience in middle school, I would say it was a typical middle school

experience where we were hanging out during lunch break and nothing too crazy. But with the Korean friends that I had, we would go out during night. Very Korean-like, because a lot of Korean kids in middle school tend to go out a lot, very late. And then come home very late. So yeah.

CL:

What would you guys do when you went out late?

BB:

I was also very Korean-like, because in Korea, in middle school, middle school kids in Korea typically start smoking or drinking at that age. So it was very much the same at that age. We would be drinking or like smoking, or just playing games. So yeah, that was very normal to us.

CL:

Your involvement in the church communities in both Korea and the US is interesting. How did the communities shape your social life and the way you spent your free time?

BB:

In Korea, the Korean church in Korea didn't really impact me too much because I was a little kid. But in America that's where I made a lot of my friends now. Since a lot of them went to my elementary school, middle school and high school, and some went to my college as well. So a lot of the people from those churches definitely helped shape my social groups. It did also somewhat challenge and shape my views on life since churches are supposed to give you a direction on life. So socially, and philosophically, it definitely like shaped me growing up. Since it is a Korean church, people do gossip a lot. I think that's the only downside that I saw, which made me go less and less. As I grew up and notice more of these, I started to just go less and less.

CL:

Do you ever think about going back?

BB:

To church?

CL:

Yeah.

BB:

Uh, no... Sometimes, but mostly no, because now I have a lot of things to do that I just can't give up some of my time for. But I would say maybe later in life, I would once or twice.

CL:

What was your life post-high school like?

BB:

Post high school...it wasn't. After high school, I joined the collegiate dance team. And then I was also going to college full time. So it was mostly revolved around dance and the dance community. And then, so most of my life, I was just dancing, going to competitions. A lot of partying, a lot of drinking, a lot of experimenting, events, etc. The whole college experience, I would say. It was very different from how I viewed myself when I was younger, definitely, since when I was younger I would have thought that I was going to stay like this Christian goody-two-shoe. But after the first relationship going out of high school into first year of college, which was really bad. [Laughter] It definitely changed who I am as a person after that, and shaped my mind differently, which made me steer in my life a little differently too. I don't regret it. It was definitely fun. It definitely helped me learn more about life, and more about the world that the schools, or like, anyone else could have ever taught me.

CL:

Can you talk a little bit about the educational aspect? What were you pursuing, and are you still pursuing that?

BB:

I originally went into college as a mechanical engineering major.

However, I did not go through that because of my first relationship. I was going through it. So I had a very I had a hobby of taking photos back then. I went ahead and tried pursuing something in photography. As I was taking the courses for photography, I learned that I also liked digital design. I started pursuing both digital design and photography, which I made a portfolio and everything for. But, as I thought about it more and saw the job market for them, it was very competitive. So I switched over to psychology because I really liked the concepts in psychology and the materials that I learned. And I pursued that up until I got my Associates and transferred over. I stopped pursuing it because of the repetitiveness of the materials and how I would have to get more than a master's to really get a job that I wanted to because I wanted to be a marriage counseling, or a sex and health therapist. With the units I racked up, the course I was going into was education, so I finished my bachelor's in that. Now currently, I'm pursuing a second degree which is in computer engineering with a minor in computer science.

CL:

And what prompted you to get a second degree?

BB:

I graduated during COVID. During COVID, one of the classes you have to take for education is to shadow a teacher. During COVID, it was terrible. I don't think I would have been able to teach any of the students during that time because teaching-wise it was very difficult. Mostly because a lot of the students weren't able to pay attention. And it's not their fault, either. Since we are on Zoom, it's not like we can discipline students to stay awake during those. So I will say it definitely would have challenged me as an incoming teacher- as a new teacher, especially. So I decided to get a second degree which would have been more dependable- less dependent on how the world is, which is an engineering degree. So I went for that.

CL:

Do you think that your cultural background has influenced your academic and career choices at all?

BB:

No, because... Even my cultural background did kind of influence it, since a lot of Asian people are known to be engineers, I actually had a lot of freedom to choose what majors I wanted to get into. However, growing up when I was very little, I did want to be a biomedical engineer that would help my grandma live longer. So I will say it did influence me as a little kid up until now that I'm still choosing to be an engineer. But I wouldn't say it was due to a cultural impact. Rather, it would be a personal impact.

CL:

When someone asks you, "Where are you from?" How do you answer that question?

BB:

I actually don't get that question often. They would ask me straight up, like, "What's your ethnicity?" and stuff. If I did have to answer, "Where are you from?" I would answer it literally saying, "Oh, I'm from this city. I live in Buena Park." So I would have told them Buena Park. But if they're asking me about my ethnicity, like my ethnic background, then I would tell them, "I'm Korean." Or if they're asking me where my hometown is, then I would answer with, "Guam, Saipan." So it really depends on in what context that question is coming from.

CL:

Do you ever feel a conflict between Korean-American identity and Korean-Korean identity?

BB:

Can you repeat that one more time?

CL:

Yeah. Do you ever feel a conflict between Korean-American identity and Korean, just Korean, identity? Because you lived in Korea?

BB:

I would say not for me, but kind of, yes. I would say, to me, I do have a somewhat of a personal experience to that. But it's more of a personal thing because or maybe... I think other people have experienced this too where you can definitely see the differences between Korean-Koreans and Korean-Americans. Korean-Americans have more of a liberal way of thinking compared to Korean-Koreans, which are very conservative in terms of how they think, and a lot of Korean-Koreans tend to be more aggressive in their mindset. And Korean-Americans are like, very... I can't say very. They're more open to hearing the other side, before acting. So definitely, there is a little conflict there. I would say growing up, if I were to have chosen, I would choose the Korean-American one because I am more of a... I like the freedom of thinking for myself, and the freedom of choosing how to act on my feelings rather than acting out of my feelings before thinking, which is more of a Korean way of doing things.

CL:

Are there ever any moments where you feel less American? Or you feel that your experience living in Korea is more spoken to? Does that make sense?

BB:

Say that one more time.

CL:

Are there moments that you feel more connected to your American culture or less American?

BB:

Is there an example you could give me?

CL:

Maybe like a racist encounter.

BB:

A racist encounter?

CL:

Yes, definitely. Do you feel less American?

BB:

I wouldn't say so. I would say in every culture, there's different values that everyone holds. I feel like in America, the social culture is very upheld. Obviously, there's different cultures in every culture, but, like, the social culture in America is very different from Korea's. Personally, I uphold a lot of the American social values [rather] than Korean social values. Mostly because I align myself more with the American ones than the Korean ones. So even with an encounter that I might feel like I don't belong, I personally know that I do. And I believe like, the personal beliefs also do matter in this sense.

CL:

I thought of another example that's less brash. In my life, I've felt that there are stricter cleanliness standards in Asia, and I feel disgusted when one of my American friends comes into my room with their shoes on or gets on the bed with their outside shoes on. So I guess that would be an example of me feeling less American. Do you have any of those moments?

BB:

That is a very good example. I did have those moments. But I don't believe I felt less American, mostly because I feel like when I did experience that it was only in Caucasian households, a lot of any other ethnic household. And this doesn't only go towards Asians, it goes to every other one that I've been in. They take their shoes off. It was only to Caucasian households that I actually put on my shoes. So it's very... Not [an] American [thing], I would say, it's more like a Caucasian thing. So like, it wouldn't make me feel less American.

CL:

I guess just make you feel more connected to your ethnic background?

BB:

I would say so, yeah. Because for any Asian countries, we typically take our shoes off, so that we keep the floors clean. So I would say yeah, it definitely does. It's a little weird to see people coming inside with the shoes on still.

CL:

Okay, cool. So, switching gears, from knowing you personally, I know that dance has been a big part of your life. Can you share how you discovered your passion for dance and what role it plays in your life?

BB:

My brother's a breakdancer, so growing up, I tried breakdancing. [It] did not work out. And then my friend from junior high introduced me to a dance team for high school and lower. So when I first joined that I started liking how dance is. So ever since that I joined the dance team and then

danced basically all throughout my life, since. I will say I found the passion for it when I felt the adrenaline of performing and also the adrenaline of dancing overall.

CL:

What kinds of dances have you experimented with?

BB:

I was in a dance team that did a lot of different dance styles. So I've done Dancehall, popping, locking, cutting, house, breaking, hip hop, hip hop contemporary, salsa, and more modernized hip hop I'd say. So those are some of the styles that I've done over the years. Oh, and walking and voguing as well.

CL:

Did you ever dabble in K-pop dance?

BB:

I did not. It was mostly because of the people that K-pop dances. There's nothing wrong with K-pop dances, it's just that the people, like the fan base, that create K-pop dances... I didn't really align with them, mostly because a lot of them are Koreaboos. And it doesn't help when it's a Koreaboo if that makes sense. It made me feel kind of... Want to stay away from it. Because I didn't want to be bombarded saying like, "Oh, you're Korean," you know, those kinds of interactions

CL:

So would you say that the Korean wave in the US has kind of pushed farther from your Korean identity?

BB:

I wouldn't say so. I would say it only applies to the American ones, due to the fact that that's what I've seen most majority of the time. The Korean fanbase in America and how they act in general, like some of them are very obsessed - to the point means that they have a lot of power [Laughter] for a lot of different things, like the Twitter account with, you know, the Trump thing. And like, buying tickets and stuff, yeah. With that kind of obsession over idols is kind of, you know, [Laughter] unhealthy. So I would say I definitely strayed away from it due to that fact. If I was in Korea, I believe it will be a very different story. But since I'm not in Korea, and I'm in America, it is very different from that.

And like buying tickets and stuff? Yeah. With that kind of obsession or for idols is kind of, you know, unhealthy. So I will say I definitely strayed away from it. Due to the fact, if I was in

Korea, I believe it will be a very different story. But since I'm not in Korea, and I'm in America, it is very different from that.

CL:

Finally, could you define Koreaboo for someone who might not know what it means?

BB:

Yes, a Koreaboo... So, a Koreaboo, hmm... Is someone who is very obsessed with Korean culture and Korean things, especially pop culture. So anything that has to do with Korean drama, Korean idols in K-pop, or like Korean dramas, they tend to... It's basically a lot of fanbases revolving around that. And it's not just the fan. It's obsession over that. Those fans, I mean, obsession over those idols along with their culture. And that's what a Koreaboo is.

CL:

Do you think that someone from Korea, or a Korean person, can be a Koreaboo?

BB:

No, because if you're from Korea, and you live there, you cannot be Koreaboo because you are Korean. Meaning, you're not necessarily obsessed with your culture. It's more like a pride towards your culture. But if it's not your culture, and you're obsessing over it due to media then you're a Koreaboo.

CL:

Do you have any memorable experiences with Koreaboos?

BB:

I was talking to Koreaboo last year. It wasn't bad, but they were very obsessed with like K-pop culture. I would say definitely interesting but it's not really bad, always. It's just that it can be a lot for me as a person, so it's more like a personal thing.

CL:

[REDACTED]

Are there any lessons or values from your childhood experiences that continue to influence your life today?

[REDACTED]

BB:

My grandma told me to never cuss. So I still haven't cussed to this day. I would say because, I really respect my grandma. So I didn't want to go do that to her. I would say a lot of my lessons were learned after high school, after my ex, so not really a lot of the stuff growing up because a lot of those changed over time. But a lot of the ones that solidified were majority after the breakup.

CL:

Have you been to Korea since you left?

BB:

I have once, I think. And it was just to visit my grandma and stuff. But aside from that, no, I have not, but I do want to visit.

CL:

What did you do during your visit to Grandma?

BB:

It was during winter, so we just walked around like tourists. And then we bought things, ate a lot of good food, went to an overnight sauna, like a spa. Just a normal experience. I was only there for a couple of days.

CL:

How do you think that going that back after living in America for so long might [have] influenced your travel in Korea?

BB:

I would say knowing how the pop culture has influenced overall the world. I would say that it will be very, like shocking to me when I get there. Since back then, Korea was still not so big in terms of the pop culture scene. But now that it's more worldwide, definitely is gonna be able to see a lot of those influences around Korea. I mostly would be excited to see the changes that Korea has been doing infrastructurally since I know that they've been going more modernized over there, as well as the good food that they have.

CL:

Is there any other experience with your culture that you find particularly meaningful or memorable that we didn't get to cover?

BB:

I don't believe so. I think we covered basically all of them.

CL:

Okay, well then that's all the questions that I had today.

BB:

Thank you.

CL:

Thank you so much for your time.