QT Viets on their Vietnamese Roots and Routes Part II

[00:00:00]

[00:00:18] **Paige:** good evening. You are tuned into Apex Express Radio. We are bringing you an Asian and Asian American view from the Bay Area and around the world. I'm your host tonight, Paige Chung. And this is Acre Thursday, you know, acre Asian American for civil rights inequality. And tonight we're highlighting two are of our amazing 11 organizations ARU by way of Asian refugees United subgroup, cafe Collective, and Viet Unity.

tonight we're gonna continue talking about our Vietnamese roots and routes. This is part two, and last time we touched about our different families Vietnamese roots and their voyages to the us. And tonight we'll talk a little bit more about why we're doing the organizing work that we do and why we wanna organize vie people in the diaspora mainly in the US for the [00:01:00] four of us. Yeah. Would love for folks to reintroduce themselves and answer that question. I'll start off with Tao.

[00:01:06] **thao:** Hi everyone, my name is Tau. My pronouns are they them. I am based on TA land, also known as San Jose, California. And I will pass it on to Ma

[00:01:17] **Mo / Trang:** Hi everyone. My name is Ma, or you may also know me as Stan. They, them pronouns. And right now I am currently on Alon territory and my parents or ancestry have roots in central Vietnam and also South Vietnam. Hi.

[00:01:32] **hai:** Thanks everyone. Hi everyone. My name is, hi. I I go by my name. Hi means ocean in Viet. And I'm currently living also on a loney land in Oakland. I have lineage through yang , so along the delta in Southern. Thanks for having me. Yeah. I'm so excited to have you all back again. The last time we were like going over, so I was like, we should probably just continue the interview for another time.

[00:01:57] **Paige:** Yeah. I would love to just hear what folks are [00:02:00] thinking about in terms of how they started their journeys, like organizing. I know folks who have been organizing for a long time, but maybe you could start specifically in the part of your organizing journey when you decided like, I wanna be more involved in Vietnamese organizing Vietnamese community work. And just how you got introduced to it.

I can go first. Back in 2015, I was a student at DeAnza Community College out in Cupertino. And I was involved in some organizing there. There, there's a, DeAnza is a very socially, politically active school because there's a center on campus that teaches students about the history of Silicon Valley and asks them to get involved in local organizing and politics.

So I was a part of that program. And I at the time there was a movement for rent control in San Jose. And there was a whole coalition of a lot of different nonprofits in San Jose. But I met someone named Sandy, who's been a [00:03:00] longtime organizer there. And he was letting me know that we really need to engage the Vietnamese community, especially the older folks who are living in low income housing that are impacted by rising rents.

He was looking for volunteers to help translate some of the documents and do some door knocking. And it was me and. Cindy a couple other folks who got together and this was like my first time like translating like written documents that wasn't for like my family. So it was really like, whoa, like I could do this.

It's not like the best thing. Like I'm not like the best translator at that time. Like my skills have improved significantly. Then. It was primarily the door knocking, talking to a lot of these monolingual elders who mostly lived alone really reminded me of my aunts and how I assisted them growing up with lots of different documents and they were always so friendly when I door knocked they would be like, come in Kong and they'd tell me their whole life story just in their apartment.

And then I would talk to them [00:04:00] about the rent control movement. And so I think that was a turning point for me of huh, why doesn't my work engage with Viet folks? Because before then, it was mostly very separated from that. And then also there was this workshop coming up on campus where it was led by Kim Tran and the content of the workshop was how to talk to your parents or your family members about internalized racism like in the Asian American community.

And I attended that and. Kim told us there's this group called Viet Unity, and I was like, what? There's like progressive Viet groups. That's wild to me. I was just like, oh, I I went to Viet school growing up and I was in like girl Scouts, so I knew like our folks were like, organized in this sense, but like around specifically progressive organizing or radical organizing.

It blew my mind. And I was like, I came up to her after, and she told me about the high veteran school for organizing, and so I registered to attend [00:05:00] that and that's where it all began. I met high there and that was like back in 2016. I was still like a baby to the world. But just knowing that there were, other progressive Viet folks doing this kind of stuff.

It really just, it like. Filled in something in me that, I felt was missing. And additionally, I think the grounding around intergenerational trauma and healing also made a huge difference for me because I didn't have a good relationship with my parents at that time. And even though I was being politicized, I felt so separated from them.

And if anything, angry towards my family for trying to assimilate and asking me to do the same. So understanding what intergenerational trauma and healing is change my perspective of not only how do I relate to vie other Viet folks out here in the US but to my own family. So that's kinda how I got started [00:06:00] in all of this.

And then we formed a Viet Unity chapter ish out in the South Bay. Yeah.

Where did the hydrogen School of organizing take place in 2016? Was it in Oakland? No, it was in Los Angeles. Oh, okay. So I was part of the 2015 one where it was in Oakland. Okay. Hi. It was like, no. Okay, cool. I feel like yeah, hypo Hypering School of Organizing was also one of the beginning point where I got plugged into like fit organizing work in the Bay Area.

And. Yeah, for me I got politicized in college and then after college I was feeling lost, just like moving back at home and like living at home and was just like really seeking out for community spaces. So one of the space that yeah, I met High too was at VI Unity. So I feel like vi unity, like I during school of organizing is like where many of us was trying to find communities and, organizing and things like that.

And the other group that I feel [00:07:00] like was get me to know more like queer and trans people is the So Vietnamese speaking meal and at the time it's not like queer or Trans Pacific. But it's, or yeah, it's not queer or trans like Pacific, but it's just like a group of people wanting to reclaim or like language like speaking, practicing speaking at whatever level.

But it's at the time, it just happened at the group of us, cuz let's go through cycles and that cycle happened to be really queer and trans like maturity at the table. And many of us I feel like we might have seen each other at different like spaces before. I remember like I met Tracy at back then, like a pink before now lavender Phoenix.

And then it just Recognizing like everyone at the table, it was like 80% of us was like, mom was like, wow, okay. That is great. And we, yeah, just I think found comfort in each other and starting to organize with each other through ways of the unity. And then I [00:08:00] also like there are so many like creatives, like with, like in our community too.

And at the time I wanted to, I think like my organizing really deeply connected to like my personal like healing. So like at that time I was like, okay, how do I live true to myself? And then also being. Right relationship with my parents, where in a way that it feels good. And I feel like part of that was like having the courage to let 'em know was like the community that I have around me and not just like what their idea is of like the Korean trans community.

So that started the idea for Cafe Collective. And yeah, like the seed funding from Youth Impact Hub, which I like connected me to. And yeah, just so amazing how different connection happen, and organizing in that way of it's really powerful to then bring our parents and like along with other friends to come and witness and like shifting the culture and the understanding [00:09:00] around like trans and queerness in our community.

And personally I did a monologue. To share with my parents and it's in both fit and English. And I felt like that was the first time where I like actually have a a communication like with my parents about, and like sharing with them more about my life. Cuz before I just shut them out of it.

Because my projection is that they wouldn't be able to understand. And so yeah, after that showcase and after the monologue, I felt like their reaction would inform how I want to be in relations with them. And yeah, fortunately they like come to be more understanding and accepting and the next couple years has been like a really healing part of like our family and just like them learning more about like my organizing work and actually understanding that more of something that is important to me and not something that like I do on the side, kinda, it's like something I'm passionate about.

And it comes to have more respect, for it as well. So [00:10:00] yeah, I feel like that's how I come into it more deeply because before I wasn't sure, but then that was like that missing piece in like my heart. I was like, I feel lonely without it. Just like being in community and being with friends. Yeah. I'll pass to Hi, whenever you're ready.

Yeah, thank you both for sharing. I'm like, my, my memories and my my, my memories and my like fire in me are igniting and definitely making me think about yeah, how did I even understand concepts of community and coming together and similar to youth, how I actually, I feel like, I think I do need to acknowledge that so much of my, or part of my understanding of how be it people organize is definitely growing up in a family where the family unit was such a kind of important route in understanding who we are or who I am and how we organized in the, or how we like, Moved in the world.

And so growing up like section eight housing [00:11:00] growing up low income, like working class parents definitely helped shape my worldview of where I was situationally in the world. But I will also say I grew up part of my life in Orange County, where like Sundays, Sundays were like the Viet days.

It was like the like all week long speaking Viet, my parents gonna work, me trying to go to school. But it was like Catholic school, Viet language, like language school. My mom put me in choir for the church. So it was like eight in the morning to eight at night. Just like via.

So I think I I think I wanna to share that cuz I acknowledge so much of my understanding of. Power and relationships in the vie community because like I just grew up in it. And it gives me a lot of context and understanding for when we think about how do we shift things in our community to be more progressive and more left.

So I think I'm so much of my politicization around yeah, around What I do these days is at [00:12:00] the intersections of food justice, food sovereignty, land queerness, transness and around culture. And so I think the I remember there are definitely moments in my life growing up where at home definitely a challenge to feel accepted and feel loved around my gender and sexuality.

But definitely thinking about moments like. 2012 when 2012 and 2013, when, the city of Westminster decided to not host the but parade anymore and bring it over to private hands a committee of church folks and private business owners that didn't allow queer folks to be part of the parade.

And so that was really starting a coalition of of folks that later on became, formations of what we know of today as of like vi rock, Vro in oc. Yeah. And, meeting other queer and trans folks and just being like, how do we. How do we fight this? How do we [00:13:00] actually what are our strategies around that was my first kind of, Understandings around like queer and trans liberation.

And so meeting some amazing people who were organizing against this committee trying to organize our ye community to support getting allies to be part of it. Really understanding what is it like understanding like power and like understanding, like who do we who are we asking for or what are we asking for into whom?

Really starting to really understand campaign work. And so yeah, 20, like 2013 that, we had a huge contingency that while we didn't walk, we were along the sidelines just making our presence heard and felt and seen. And then that over time, I think the next year, starting the next year folks helped to push for queer contingent to now to be in the THT parade and has continued on ever since.

And so I think that for me that continued on to, [00:14:00] connecting with Ma and with other queer and trans folks to understand our healing and organi culturally organizing through Kitty Bit Cafe and being an advisor a core member and a supporter. I think that for me, my politicization around land and food really started when I was 18 and was told that I had diabetes and chronic related disease, diet related disease, and realizing that it wasn't just me anymore, it was.

My family, my cousins, my parents and then noticing that it was not just my family, but the greater Viet community other Brown communities, black, native folks on this land. And so I've just been on a, how can food be how can food be medicine to heal our communities in a place where that isn't ours that or a place that, we are not native to.

And so how do we be, how do we ethical. Rightful and loving stewards of this place [00:15:00] with other Bipo folks and have learned that. Yeah, I think connecting with our vie culture, connecting with our seeds, connecting with our land spending, making time to farm and making time to cook and making time to learn recipes and archive our recipes and be within relationship with our elders is such a strong medicine.

It's such strong anecdotes. It's such important work to heal ourselves in each other in our community. Yeah, I think so much of my life has been trying to ask what can we do together? That we, that I couldn't necessarily do on my own to build power, heal and create the world that exudes justice, fairness, equity, and joy.

Yeah. So I'll pause there.

Paige, do you wanna share?

 Yes. Thank you Tao. I was thinking about what folks were saying about their parents and just how the politicization journey paralleled with their relationship with their parents and

like, conversations about gender and sexuality [00:16:00] and coming out to them and also having them to understand like politics of what we do and the organizing work.

So it's interesting just to hear that as you're also talking about all of your different political journeys and made me like reflect about my relationship with my parents. And I was like, oh, what is my relationship with my parents? I would say I, I grew up with a lot of Vietnamese people and then I didn't because I have a lot of Vietnamese family members in Los Angeles where I spent a lot of the time growing up in, but I also lived in a lot of different places.

Like all my friends here know, like I lived in Tennessee for a long period of time Puerto Rico Florida, Arizona. So like I, we moved, my parents and I moved around the US a lot, but then we had a lot of Vietnamese family in Los Angeles and Orange County, so I never felt like Like hell of vie like how high was saying where they were going to choir and church and all of that, but it wasn't quite fully isolation.

And yeah, I think for me, organizing with Viet people in 2018 I would say like most of my politicization happened. It [00:17:00] was like sophomore year of college. I was like, Majoring in critical ethnic studies and taking all the critical ethnic studies classes. So I was having like a lot of theory and reading and thinking and discussion about different ethnic studies, movements and different theories about stuff like that.

And then also it was a year that I was an a pink now lavender Phoenix intern. And our cohort was hella Viet. Our cohort was like, there was like five of us and it was like three of us were Viet. And I was like, this is so amazing. I've never had Viet friends my age that were like, not my cousins.

So I was like hella hype. I was really jealous because one of the other cohort members, Julie was assigned to work with like Viet Unity and a P S E, and I was like, damn. Like, how come Julie got to do like the Viet stuff? But it was like, okay. But yeah, that was like super fun. Just like getting to hang out and talk to Vietnamese people my age and who are really progressive and left.

And then that summer was also the, in Kaia conference, which is where I met like a lot of the Viet Bay area folks. So I think Toto was [00:18:00] there. I met Tracy that summer. And there was also like vie folks from around the US because of the Acacia conference. So we had the I forgot what it's called, but the dinner where everyone practices Vietnamese, like you were mentioning earlier, Jane.

And I met a lot of folks there. And then soon after, I also did Hiba Jung in Philly in 2019. Yeah, so I guess in terms of like why I wanted to do it, I just, I think I just felt like a lot of solace when I met other Viet folks. And we were able to have conversations about our parents and our families and politics that I just, I didn't even know that I wanted to talk to other people about.

Yeah. And I think for me, like hearing the language is just, it just feels good. I think that's what I would say is like when I hear people speaking Vietnamese, it just feels good, like when you eat chocolate or something like that. And then oh, the other thing I was gonna say is during that time period in college when I was, oh, far away, I went to school all the way in Michigan I was really far away from my family.

And I always tell the story [00:19:00] to the cutie bit folks like I, they probably heard it a million times now, but when I get really homesick, I would watch the cutie Viet YouTube videos of people sharing poetry and like people singing and Just like that entire qd vie showcase in Laa that I've like probably rewatched a million times.

And so I was very fortunate to get to join the QD Vie Collective in, when did we start our last cohort? Was it 2021 or 2022? this round start? It started last year. 22 or Yeah. It feels like last year felt like two different years, so it almost feels like much longer. But yeah, I think I was really lucky that when I started working at Acre, I got to talk to ma and High a lot more and, Tao.

So I, I was able to get, continue staying involved with the Vietnamese organizing stuff. So it's been good. You know what I'm saying? Yeah.

 I'm curious, we're talking about our different starts with organizing in the Vietnamese community. I'm curious about what sort of learnings that you're facing right [00:20:00] now in this point in your journey. Some learnings or, and or some challenges that you're confronting or maybe like problems that you're figuring out.

I could also start with that one too, if, unless you wanna go tell. I would say one thing that I'm struggling with organizing both in the Vietnamese community, but I think just in general in our shared spaces is I think for me, cuz I'm quite a nerd, I'm really into like reading and critical thinking in that way.

I have a really hard time cuz I feel or I think that sometimes in organizing spaces, like folks can get really tied to social justice frameworks and then use that as a way of understanding everything. And then not think about new ideas or new concepts or new theories or new frameworks of seeing things through or and not really try to.

And that really frustrates me, I think. And also I understand it's really challenging because I think in order to have space and time and capacious to think, [00:21:00] you also have to be a little bit past surviving. Like you can't just be constantly thinking about your basic needs like food, rent, a place to live taking care of your children all the things that we have to do as people living.

So that's one challenge that I have is just like, how do I continue to engage people intellectually and also, yeah, it's just it's just like hard for me when people are like, I don't wanna read I don't wanna read this thing that you're reading or I don't have time to read or I think academic spaces are violent.

Which they are. I'm not saying they're not. But also we're just also just generally live in a very violent world. So I don't think academic institutions are some sort of special place that happens in. But yeah, that's the challenge I'm facing in a lot of organizing spaces and movements.

All right. We're going to take a quick break from our interview to listen to some music by Leo heck day, who is from lavender, Phoenix, and Toto, who is part of ENOVIA and Cudi VIT cafe collective You're listening to 94.1, KPFA 89.3 K PFP in [00:22:00] Berkeley and online@kpfa.org. Stay locked in.

[00:23:00] [00:24:00] [00:25:00]

Let me just introduce this song. This song is called , which is a song which is really old. It's like from, I think the twenties, forties, sixties, I'm not sure, but it's really old and it's a bolero for all, it's like a tribute to all of our elders out there. They know exactly every word. So I'm gonna help, I'm gonna try to remember all the words.

Cool. [00:26:00] Thank you. So ready for .

You just heard newborn hi phone by ENOVIA, a proud member of kiddie via cafe collective of artists and healers. You are tuned into 94.1 KPFA. 89.3 KPF be in Berkeley and online@kpfa.org. Let's return back to our interview with Viet unity and Katie Vick cafe collective.

I think, a challenge for me is especially the question around the future there's just so many different Vietnamese experiences, different ways that people saw not, just not only the different ways people experienced the war. There's folks who are in Vietnam now or came over here recently. There's just a, and I like, I've experienced this like being a student at DeAnza.

There were international students from Vietnam, right? And then working on deportation cases. For Jake Gam who came here in 2018, like her [00:27:00] experience of being Vietnamese or Vietnamese American is totally different from me, of course. And knowing that there continues to be a climate crisis in Vietnam and a lot of those folks may be coming here too.

There's just a huge variety of experiences and it's hard for me to think like, how do we all call each other Vietnamese when sometimes people don't even understand each other when they speak the same language, right? Because it's like the languages have changed, there's different dialects. So something that's really challenging for me as sometimes movements have a narrative and we can't stay in this narrative of I am a descendant of refugees, cuz that's not the case anymore for a lot of Vietnamese folks. Yeah, it's g yeah, it's just challenging, like thinking through all of that and obviously there are ways in which our oppressions are connected and our liberation is tied together. yeah, so I guess it's like sometimes I feel like we're supposed to have one [00:28:00] common thing, but even that commonality is just so vast that yeah, I don't know.

It's kinda, I'm like even confused about what I'm bringing up right now too. Cuz oh, all of us spoke about how being in hyper or Vietnam was basically life changing for essence meeting other Viet folks. But what does a space look like that invites, the growing generation of the folks that come from a lot of different experiences and what is a space that allows our progressive elders to thrive and connect because they do exist, but they themselves feel isolated too.

And I think a lot about, gardening, farming spaces and how that brings a lot of people together. But yeah, it's just a challenge to think yes I do feel a certain sense of solace around other Viet folks. But how are we ensuring that it is a space that is, open to the different via identities that they're just also [00:29:00] different from each other. Yeah. I don't know if that made sense. That's a challenge that I've been chewing on and navigating as I meet more via people who don't have the same experience as me.

Yeah, I think Tao you were bringing up the future of Vietnamese or like the Vietnamese diaspora and how there's just gonna be so many, there already are so many different experiences in the same generation and even in every niche. Niche like you could say quote unquote, this is a group of Vietnamese progressive, right?

But even in that group, there's so many different ideas and so many different perspectives. And I think for me something like the future of community and organizing would be like, how do we have a radically non exclusionary politics? Which means like it comes from the book that I've been reading about called System Failure, like C I S T E M by Marqui Bay.

I think Marqui Bay took it from Fred Moton. I don't think Marque Bay, like made up made it up as a concept of their own. But it's like thinking about, cuz like a lot of people have conversations about [00:30:00] inclusion and exclusion and marginalization, but radical non exclusionary politics is not even about who's included. It's like how do we. Not exclude anybody, so that's like a question I've been thinking about for the future is like, how can Vietnamese not exclude anybody? I don't know if that resonates with what you're saying, tau, but that's what it made me think of

that is such a hard question.

Yes. Uh, you know, Will require some thinking. For sure. Yeah. And I think, I think honestly that includes a lot of people we don't like too,

Well, that, that also makes me think, I think a challenge that I'm also facing is What are the ways in which we are learning and making space to learn about conflict transformation and like democratic governance, as I feel like I've been in so many spaces where the values are there. Our histories are there, our intention is there.

And at the same time, we still haven't figured out okay, what happens when people disagree? [00:31:00] Like, how do you notice the difference between conflict and harm and actively engage in those tools or like just learning about those things so that we could actually have an inclusive space. And then the whole democratic governance thing is how do you make decisions?

What are like, what are the different types of decision making processes? Like consensus majority, like I'm nerding out about those things of yeah, like how do you do those things in a way that is in very intentionally democratic as a practice so that we embody our values internally, not just the work we're doing outside or with the community.

Because essentially, if that's what we're, if we're, if we want self-determination we have to be ready for it. We have to do that along the way too. And that's hard because I think like I'm at this stage where I'm learning about these things of what conflict transformation is or like democratic decision making.

But I'm still learning. And I think other folks are learning too. And it's just like, how do we put it into practice while acknowledging the urgency of [00:32:00] everything we're also doing? And that's hard. And then when conflict does arise, like how are we preparing ourselves for that as like acknowledging that conflict will always arise and budgeting that into our capacity, to be prepared to deal with that because it takes a lot.

And that's really hard for me to think about because I'm someone who's I feel like I'm constantly burning myself out doing a lot of stuff, which is bad. Like I, I'm working on it and I wanna make, I wanna give myself more and others more space to be able to, lean into that part of the work.

But I don't know how right now,

Yeah, I'm still thinking. So if I, if you have yeah, if you wanna share first. I have a thought if hi doesn't

I don't remember what indigenous tradition this comes from or this story, but one of my mentors told me a story about cuz I was asking her about like, how do we deal with conflict in communities? And she told me in this indigenous f like old story a man kills another man and they're [00:33:00] both in the same community and.

When that happens in that community, what you have to do is the per, so say the first man is person A and the second man is person B. If person A kills person B, that person B's family has to accept person A as the new father, as the new like leader of that family. And they have to accept that person as part of what happened of the killing.

So I think like in that story, it just made me think so differently about conflict cuz in a lot of the conversations I've had before that story that I've heard it was a lot about tending to folks who were harmed and then also like holding folks who were Like the person harming accountable.

It was like a lot of conversations about accountability and tending to, but I think this co this story just like completely shifted my ideas of conflict because it's like the amount of strength it takes to do that, to like just I don't really have a word for it. I'm like making the bodily movement of embracing [00:34:00] Yeah.

Yeah. Em, like embracing someone, like hugging them is what does that, like what does that do to your idea of conflict and resolution? You know what I mean? To openly accept this person who has hurt your family. Yeah. I don't have any solutions to that. I just thought I'd throw that into the mix of our conversation.

Yeah. Cause I, I find I, for me personally, like when I've seen conflict in fam in communities it seems as though there are still a lot of patterns of punitive ideas, of carceral ideas that is just very difficult to I don't know, contend with within ourselves.

Can I ask a follow up question, Paige? So what, in, in that tradition does peace come? I don't think that was part of the story. Yeah. Not to say that peace was absent. The peace was not a part of the conversation part of the story. Got it. Yeah. I think that the story was really more about strength.

Yeah. Yeah. I thank you both for sharing so far. I think yeah, it's making me, it's a it's a lot of it's a lot of ember and fire for me to think on. I think for me, some of the[00:35:00] some of the learning lessons that I've been thinking about is or are yeah, I think one one is I've just seen I've just seen the power of culture.

And as part of our resistance and our building. And so I think like when when we like returned to when we returned to figuring out like what yeah what was in our ancestral lineage. How did we make this what are the terms for this what is this in Viet? What would happen in Vietnam?

What are our elders memories around certain things? How do we like practice and live out the world that we wanna live? And I think that the more that we embody it and do it and we organize our culture around it and create either honor, honor our past culture, or create new culture as opposed to like feeling too heady or feeling too like in our minds about it.

I think that was, that's when I've experienced a lot of healing, not just for myself, but in the community. And when we do, when [00:36:00] we decide to. Get together for bed wing bang or or for our lunar New Years and our harvest moons. When we think about our, when we try to, connect our relationships with the lunar systems and we gather I think that a lot of magic happens.

That's where a lot of the magic and healing happens. And I think that's what I see in other brown communities, in black communities and native communities that are, that our culture are. The just who we are and how we gather is part of the power building, part of the resistance work.

And I think that when there are moments when authoritarianism or white supremacy or capitalism, and I think that there, there will be moments in at least for the movements around queer transient liberation around like food justice. I think that those like points where we have to contend with power I think there'll be more of them.

And for me, culture is part of the answer. So I think that's one learning lesson that I've been thinking about. I think the other learning lesson that [00:37:00] I'll share is that our lineage, our history comes from there's like a. I don't know if I wanna name it, but I think I think our culture our history includes like organized political regimes and especially in the homeland around.

Yeah. That I think that there's still, I'm still learning about it and I think I'm still wanting to better understand it. But it definitely, what I've learned is that it definitely triggers my parents. It definitely triggers my el the elders that I work with. And, but the thing is that as a younger person, as like the next generation as I'm unlearning a lot of our history and actually feeling oh, like our people as a general people like fought colonial power.

I'm like, oh, what, like what are the, like how do we, how do I like embody collectivism? How do I like live out doing things together? How do I like continue to like, care for and think about you[00:38:00] and think about our collective survival without having to like, use language that I think tr really triggers my parents or triggers our elders.

Cuz I, as I think about the land work that I do and think about like the organizing work that I do, like I thought of elders will be like, oh, so you're insert blank. Like you're, oh wait, so you're, in some ways I'll, I'm happy to identify and put myself out there.

It's it's not, we, we come from a history of activists and organizers, folks who've done this work before us who have definitely been redlined and I think the. What is the risk in doing this community work? How do I name things that are and be real with things but not get, but not get to a place where elders or our older generations will push us away because because of just our history how do we just live into doing things together where maybe yeah, where maybe it's not triggered by a past history.

And so I think a learning lesson in the second point [00:39:00] that I'm trying to share is similar to what you were sharing, Paige. I'm like, what is, I think that inherently I think it's important to even think about what is a new politic, like what is a new way of being with each other that maybe is informed by a lot of.

The ways that our people have been organizing around politics. But I do think that in this time of climate chaos, climate crisis, where, how you were describing just yeah, there's the conflicts of multiple, in my opinion, there's like multiple truths in the vie community.

Yeah. So much of the young people that I've been working with just have going through so much mental health things like how, what is the new politic here? And I'm not even, I'm not even, I'm not like, yet interested in how do we name it or like any of that, but what is that?

What is the new, what is the way of being with each other? What does that feel like? What does that look like? What does that smell like? And to me yeah, like it's like part resistance and part saying no to things that doesn't serve. How I wanna be liberated in the world. I think it smells [00:40:00] and tastes really delicious.

I think it's like very abundant and beautiful. I think it's very joyful. I think it's resisting the powers that are very forceful and authoritarian author authorit terroristic and white supremacist. But I think that I wanna yeah, I think words can be really hard to it's just hard.

Words are hard and I think it can trigger, but I think the ways that we continue to live and survive is maybe we need to create new language. Maybe we need to create new culture. Maybe we need to create a new politic that truly describes how we wanna embody the world. And so I've just been thinking about that.

What does that feel like? What does that sound like? What is the sense making around that? And I think that's why I'm so tied to the queer and trans vie like culture, cultural organizing and liberation work because I think sometimes I feel the healing more than I can describe it in words.

And I can feel the food and seed sovereignty work than I can maybe try to describe it. And I think I'm at an age where [00:41:00] because I'm meeting native people, because I'm meeting black folks, because I'm meeting other brown people, there's like sensitivity to language sensitivity to like the English language that I think that I've been conditioned and colonized to try to describe things.

But our native friends are native kin. Like they are very they're very, I'm learning that there's just like this colonial English language. It's just hard to, it names, it's rooted in colonialism, so it's like maybe I, The future means, that's why I'm interested in maybe there's ways of learning like a past language pre-colonial via what is our Vietnam language?

How did how does our Vietnam language describe the type of world that, that had, that had been living and then, and that we wanna live. And part of that means, I think just, even on this recent trip to Vietnam, I'm like, oh wow, I'm speaking like nineties via I, there's like terms that I don't even know.

And there's like terms that I'm like, a lot of these, like new friends that, I just, they're just like, what? What are you saying? And yeah, I think it just means continuing to [00:42:00] be, be observant here in the diaspora, but also be like be humble and be like be with it Also like in, with people over there in Vietnam.

I'll pause there. I feel like I kinda went around too a lot, but I hope that makes sense.

When you brought up language that really hit for me because around when the Covid pandemic started and there were all these mutual aid groups that popped up, I was trying to find out what's how do you say mutual aid in Vietnamese? And I talked to my aunts, my aunt about it and my dad, and they said, which is like taking care of yourselves and the community at the same time.

And I was like, that's very ha, that's hang vape. That's like haun vie it, if we said that in Vietnam right now, I don't know how many people would understand it. And like even me, I was like, what? And then. I my, my current job is with the South Bay Community Land Trust. The English words I use, I say cooperatives, right?

And in Vietnamese, that's . And if I say that my, my aunt, my mom, they will get so mad at me. And but I talked to my aunt about this and I [00:43:00] explained to her without saying what a cooperative is. And she was like, oh, I know what that is. There is this Vietnamese monk who, bought this this hotel that was like really torn, broken apart and they rehabbed it.

And Let a bunch of folks stay there for a really low price, and it's like a community. And I was like, so what do you call that aunt? And she's I don't know. And then she gave me this dictionary that Vietnamese English dictionary that had the the yellow flag with the three stripes, so some Vietnamese leg.

And I flipped to, it's actually right here on the dance. And I flipped to cooperative and it was like, hk. And I was like, wait, it's the same word. But the way that she, but the way that she experienced what a HK at is because she didn't come here until she wasn't a refugee.

Like she didn't come here in the eighties. She stayed over there for a while and she was like, no, cooperatives are very corrupt and da. And so yeah, it was ma like making me think we do need. A new language or like, how do we co-create that language a and co, do the [00:44:00] action at the same time.

And, I'm also part of this Urban Gardeners network in San Jose called La Mea Verde, and I got my aunt to join. So we're going to these. Yeah. I think on Saturday we went to this workshop about food as medicine and most of the workshop presenters were also members and most of them were Latinx and they were presenting their medicinal plans in Spanish and somebody would translate.

And my aunt was so into it, and she's oh, I wanna tell them about, this thing that I do with that plant too. Or, and it's just a lot of what that co-creation looks like doesn't exist just within the Vietnamese community. It has to be with, the communities that we're around.

And yeah, I think there's so many ways that we could all come together to to create not just that language, but this world. And it, yeah, just really resonated with what you brought up. High

for me, what I've been really simmering about is like, how, like what is the language of care? How do I able to even understand like the way that.[00:45:00] I want to be cared for. And then also like, how do I truly listen to someone and naming their care, right? And I think in that, like, how do we be with each other?

Yes. Like mindful of like triggers and also be with each other in a way that, like in, in the bit language. There's right? It's like right? Like, when you're like here, you're able to embrace like someone that is healing, right? That are like, currently like the wound is open, right?

So it's I think that this concept of care and like this also collective living has been like, it's, it is also one, I believe, I truly believe that it's one of our, like I. Like ancestral are like indigenous, like living, and there's so many different like ethnic group in Vietnam.

And I think just like throughout like different period of colonizations and just like the way of modernizations and, all these things, I feel like that our connectiveness to each other and the way that we're able to care for one another [00:46:00] has really shifted. And I think especially being in like a society now where it's mostly very individualized, like to practice community care is so hard and to practice that like longevity of it in community is so hard.

And I think like one of the. Challenges that I feel like first entering also like community organizing spaces. There is still that loneliness that is there, there is still that lack of feeling I can turn to somebody like at 3:00 AM for like something right?

Like that was like in the beginning. Like I felt like that was still like missing. And then also having conversation with other friends that there, that's oh, like that feeling is similar, right? Like the feeling that I'm alone is actually like it's like multiple feeling, multiple friends feeling that we're alone in a collective like space.

Like we're, like in a similar space with each other, like physically, but then there's also this, like aloneness or loneliness that is there. So I think like for me, like thinking about what spaces, what kind of yeah, like what [00:47:00] kind of spaces, what kind of gatherings can we really.

Oh, create, to really bring like different generations right together. And knowing that we're not alone in that process and what are arising in like the current moment that we can talk about, like cooking together or like sharing plants like medicine. And I know that like in the time where I feel like, oh, like where are like the queer and trans, like organizing spaces, right?

Like, how do I share with my parents? Like in term of the language piece too, right? I like didn't really know the language to communicate with my parents, right? And then just searching through and finding like some talk radio, which is like back in the day, they're talking really openly about the L G B T Q community.

Like on a real, like Vietnamese like radio in San Jose, right? But like that, they. Stopped like couple, like for a couple years until I think there's been able to find them through like different like websites or just like meeting vu. And I think, like for me, thinking about now where there's cycles and [00:48:00] period of organization going through, yeah, just I feel like there's like right timing and like durations of like organization shift and changes.

And so I'm thinking about what is relevant for the third and fourth, like Vietnamese, like American growing up here. What are the what are they seeking for? What is the connections that like young people are wanting to connect? Like how do re how do they relate to that fitness?

So I think in a way, for me it's like my. Personal, like aspiration is like wanting to feel like build that bridge of acknowledging that there's so many different iterations, like of our work that, has been through like Yeah, like different ancestors and stuff like that too. And there's been gap.

So like thinking about how do I, and like the friends around me, right? Like how do we create like this bridge that like, That is like visible and also allow for the flexibilities for like younger Vietnamese generations to come into. Like being able to find a little bit like of what they're looking for and also using that to create their own spaces or [00:49:00] like to create a dish or to create like whatever like whatever ingredients I feel like that, maybe they're searching for.

We're like able to provide some of it and then that come up with, their own like recipe of like how do, how they want to feel connected, how they want to feel and inspire and be in connections and, with each other. Yeah, those are some things that I've been like thinking about.

And a lot of I feel like that care language is also in actions I feel like, like that's so grounded in like the way that I feel like our v parents like also show care and love and like also expanding to different ways, right? Like also acknowledging like language is beautiful and there's some like limitations and also in actions, like sometimes that's not like mutually understand, so it's like that multiple ways of communication or different pathway that yeah, like we can feel connected or at least like feeling like we're not like alone or yeah.

So that's like simmering thoughts.

Sim that was like hot and boiling.

Oh my gosh. Yes. Any last thoughts or responses to [00:50:00] what Ma said? We're almost at time.

Yeah, I think I'll just, I think I'll just share that. Yeah, I think that similar to my journey around healing, I think that My healing on my own can only go so far. And I think that what I felt and experienced is the healing, the equity, the justice that I'm think I know that all of us are trying to seek.

It is, it happens so much more exponentially when we come together. So just reading, thinking about yeah, what are the current spaces that we can cultivate? What are the shifts that need to happen in our current spaces? What are the new spaces that would be helpful for us to think upon? And like coming back into, yeah, just like really centering, like what is what am I needing?

What are you needing? What, yeah, what is the what is, yeah what is that caregiving and receiving? What does that look like and feel like? And yeah, just, it's just really thankful for the spaces for me to reflect because it's so often it's so easy for me to just be in practice, just be [00:51:00] practicing it.

But it's really rare and I think I'm in a time in my life where I wanna be reflecting more often. And hope that yeah, the next iterations, the next phases of how we gather. We can all try that on together. Yeah. Yeah. I'll, but yeah. Thank you.

Just wanted, Paige for um, space for this.

Yeah. Yeah, Paige . Yeah. Thanks for agreeing to sign up for this three hour radio commitment. Yeah, I really appreciate all of you.

Oh, okay. I'm curious maybe as a checkout like question. Yeah. Like how, yeah, how do you receive care? Like gray, like for example, like t like how can I care for you?

I don't know how to answer that question. I'm being honest.

I, yeah, I don't know how to answer those. Seed sharing honestly. Seed sharing like you want us to send you seeds. I wanna send y'all seeds too. I have too many seed. I'll take some seeds. Yes, I'll take some seeds. Maybe preferably a seed [00:52:00] that can be cared for in a plot in an apartment. Okay. When I'm very far away in New York.

Oh, yes. Here let me stop recording. Oh, wait, did you want this to be part of it? It's up to you. Okay. I'm gonna have to cut on a lot of stuff for it to fit an hour then. Hi. Did you wanna answer that question? Yeah. Hi. How do we, how can we care for you as a, like a massive, like caretakers? Oh.

I like this question. Someone asked it a very similar one not too long ago in the long covid community. It was like, who cares for the caretakers? Yeah. It's important. Yeah. Aw, yeah. I'm loving this question. I think maybe I'm having a hard time because I, that is the case. Like I, I definitely do give a lot of care, but I think that the ways that I give care are the ways that I like to receive it too.

Yeah, like I love a good, some sad love, a good like steam bath. I love a good meal. I think this happens, it doesn't even have to be like any elongated amount of time, but I love just reminders to To breathe reminders to think about something differently. Cause I [00:53:00] think I can get in my head a lot of the times and more more often than not, like there is another way to think about something or that maybe I seen a chill or maybe I don't have to do the 10 things that I think I have to do.

So I think for me, care means like saying Hey, hi. Like I know that you're thinking about these 10 things, but actually maybe we just need to do one of them and like, how can I help you with this one thing? And I'm like, oh, okay. Those other nine things can happen later. Yeah. And probably more often than not, I just need to sleep.

So maybe just reminders to sleep.

Yeah, dude, you only slept five hours when you were at my house, so I can't even imagine. I don't even know, bro. I was at my house for two days, like literally slept like four and a half or five hours, like each night. I was like, what time are you waking up tomorrow? Like 7, 6, 5 40 5:00 AM It was insane.

Yes. How about you, Jane? I think for me I'm recognizing just like invitation to things. Like even if I can't make it

you. Yeah. But I think cause you have fomo or [00:54:00] because you just I think, I think it's like the idea of yeah. Being Yeah, like how I say it I'm like being thought of, oh. Yeah. And I think yeah, just like friends, one-on-one time I think when friends like invite me over and just I don't know, I just come over and they just like cook and we just cook together.

Just like having that one-on-one time is like really nice. But yeah. Yeah. Okay. Paige? Most of the time, honestly, whatever I need, I'll ask for it. In terms of care, I'm pretty like I think I'm pretty good about asking for what I need. Yeah.

[00:55:00] [00:56:00]

[00:56:44]  **Miko Lee:** Thank you so much for joining us. Please check out our website, kpfa.org backslash program, backslash apex express to find out more about the show tonight and to find out how you can take direct action.

[00:56:58] **Paige:** We thank all of you listeners out [00:57:00] there, keep resisting, keep organizing, keep creating and sharing your visions with the world. Your voices are important.

[00:57:05]  **Miko Lee:** Apex express is produced by Miko Lee Jalena Keane-Lee and Paige Chung

[00:57:10] **Paige:** tonight's show was produced by me Paige Chung. Thanks to the team at KPFA for their support, have a great night.

[00:58:00]