

Interview

September 19, 2012

Interviewer: John Price

Interviewee: Charlayne Thornton-Joe

John Price: I was wondering if you could tell us about your mother and father and your family background. In terms of their stories.

Charlayne Thornton-Joe: Yeah. Well my father was born in Victoria's Chinatown. Where basically the Starbucks and CRD building is. So he was born there, lived in Chinatown basically all his life before he got a little older. So they had a place in Chinatown down by Store Street and that's where... When I talked to you about how he knew some of the Japanese community. He lived right next door to the Shimizu rice mill. So my grandfather was very much involved with the Chinese community and many of the associations. So my father continued since he was the oldest son and my grandfather decided to do some investment. So he had a shoe store and so my father, being the eldest, ran the shoe store and then my grandfather opened a grocery store. They were also involved with some of the gambling that happened in Chinatown. Just deep roots in the Chinese community and my father's mother, I believe she was born in China and brought over as a child although her birth certificate says she was born in Vancouver in Shanghai Alley, I'm told that she was actually brought from China and maybe adopted into a family. So not absolutely sure about that. But my mom's side, my grandfather came from China and was... Whereas my dad's side was more merchant class. My mother's side was very much a farmer. He had a farm on Cadillac Avenue, very much was involved in the farm. My grandmother on my mother's side, from my understanding and I'm still trying to do some exploration, my grandmother was part First Nations so her mother was First Nations and her father was Chinese. From my understanding, they may have been born in somewhere around Spokane and whether she grew up and married a Chinese man and they came up here and had children, lot of that history I'm still doing some search on. So my mother's side... Both my mother's parents passed away before I was born and my father's side, my grandfather passed away when I was very young. All I remember of him was a scary figure always sitting, not looking very well, could be quite grumpy. My grandmother on my dad's side I remember quite a bit. She lived with my aunt and my cousins, spoke mostly Chinese, so because of the language barrier I didn't speak to her all that often but always remembered she was always smiling and saw her at family gatherings. One of the difficulties is... I was the first grandchild to go back to China and my grandmother became sick just before I went and I was looking forward to coming home and telling her all about my trip and she passed away couple weeks before I left and I actually wasn't able to attend her funeral because I was actually in China at the time. And so the delegation in China took me to somewhere where I could put a flower into a river in memory of my grandmother. So the difficulty was I was the youngest of the family and so you know, I didn't get to... My older brother and sister had more of a relationship with the grandparents because of their age. So for example, my mom and dad were first married, they lived in the home of my grandfather and grandmother and the uncles. So my sister has quite a few memories of living with grandma.

John Price: So what year was your father born?

Charlayne Thornton-Joe: 1922.

John Price: '22 eh?

Charlayne Thornton-Joe: Yeah, and my mother 1924.

John Price: So did your father ever speak of his memories of the 19... of the war years?

Charlayne Thornton-Joe: Yeah. He does. He still talks about it quite a bit. The war ended when he was in Shallow, Manitoba doing basic training.

John Price: Really?

Charlayne Thornton-Joe: Yeah. So he was ready to be shipped overseas and they got the call that the war had ended. So in some ways my father never really seen himself as a veteran because of course if you say "I'm a veteran", people usually say "where were you stationed?".

John Price: Mhm.

Charlayne Thornton-Joe: So he always felt that he couldn't really say he was a veteran because of that he was ready to go. Fortunately, in many ways, the war had ended.

John Price: And in the 1930's, in that period from '37 on after the Japanese invasion of China was a period of ferment in the Chinese community and there was a lot of activity and support of China. Was he involved in any of that? Or...?

Charlayne Thornton-Joe: Yes. There was actually people that were doing fundraising. And one of the fundraisers I believe was a Chinese opera. My mother and father were asked to perform and this was way before they knew each other and were asked to perform opera as a fundraiser. Whether they were both opera singers at the time, I think what happened was my father was in the opera and during the scene changes, my mother was playing what you call the "Yong kum", the Chinese dulcimer and that's how they first met. And so they remember they first met for this fundraiser for efforts in China.

John Price: Mhm.

Charlayne Thornton-Joe: And my father remembers that my grandfather was very active in some of that fundraising through some of the associations.

John Price: There's a famous picture of the one big rice bowl.

Charlayne Thornton-Joe: Yes.

John Price: Right? And so big that people would collect money and put money in this.

Charlayne Thornton-Joe: Yes.

John Price: And I know that it was in Victoria but have you seen that picture?

Charlayne Thornton-Joe: I have. I think there was... not even a rice bowl but I think at one time, I think there's a picture that I have and my parents where they actually have four corners of a blanket and people would throw the money into the blanket.

John Price: Uh-huh.

Charlayne Thornton-Joe: So I do think I have a picture of that.

John Price: Yeah.

Charlayne Thornton-Joe: I remember going to an exhibit once and I don't even remember what the exhibit was... think it was Chinese, Chinese-Canadians history and it was at Robson Street I think it was at a gallery there.

John Price: Mhm.

Charlayne Thornton-Joe: And this was when I was younger and wasn't quite aware of... understanding my history. But I remember looking at the pictures and I think one of them had Chinese-Canadians in a parade or something for one of these issues and you know how you read the inscription and then you look at the picture and then the picture was my grandmother and I've never been able to find that picture again. I'm still looking for it but definitely my parents and grandparents were very much involved at the time.

John Price: It was a period where the second generation and particularly young Chinese-Canadian women became very active in fundraising. Like doing tag days and going out into the corners. I have pictures of demonstrations from that period right?

Charlayne Thornton-Joe: Oh, I will have to take a look at some of those demonstrations. You know, I think from my understanding, part [of] my family, especially my dad's sides seem to be involved. But I think that in many ways there also, my father being the eldest, was very much expected to work and help the family. Whereas my grandfather when he got a little bit older, did a little bit more involvement and got his sons to go and work and raise money for the family. It would've been the time when my dad was just getting married and supporting a young family. So he was working a couple of jobs. As soon as my dad returned back from, you know, when the war ended, the next year he married my mom and started to have children right after that. I should get you to interview my father on that.

John Price: I'd love to interview your father, you know, if he felt up to it. It'd be great. So, can you fill in the blanks for us a bit about your life? In the sense of your education, work, and family?

Charlayne Thornton-Joe: I was, uh... when I was born we lived on Quadra Street. And back then we were very much involved... you know, all the Chinese families all lived together on Green Street and Quadra, and Princess and Pembroke, all those streets. And actually that's one of the reasons why my older sister and brother can speak a little bit more Cantonese, it's cause they were brought up, uh, around Chinese families. By the time I was born, there was four of us living in a small house. If you ever go to the house across from the curling rink, which is now a coffee shop, that was our house. And by the time I was born,

the fourth child in that small house, my parents realized that it was too small for them. And at the time people were starting to move out to Gordon Head. And so my dad was able to buy a house there which he still lives in to this day. So the difficulty with that is, when I talk to my older brothers sisters they don't remember racism. Because they were in a diverse, multicultural community. Whereas I remember

<Break - Change rooms>

Charlayne Thornton-Joe: We were talking about....

John Price: Your family, racism....

Charlayne Thornton-Joe: So when I was going to elementary school, so I stood out very much so as a visible minority, there were very few visible minorities in Gordon Head back then. Kind of interesting because I had to go and speak at my niece and nephew's graduation I think, in the... what year was it... 2000. Just after 2000. And I looked at the faces of the audience and there was so much diversity. It was amazing because I remembered when I looked at the school pictures. It was always... I stood out as a visible minority. And I think in my years of school, there was probably, maybe, half dozen to a dozen of us at any given time in the whole school. So I dealt with a lot of racism and name-calling and I've always been known to have a, be very sensitive, so I took it very hard. And I wanted to quit school. And I think that feeling made me rebel against my Chinese culture and that's why today my journey is learning as much as I can about my Chinese history and promoting Chinese culture. Because it's something that I sort of missed, you know, I took it for granted. I almost didn't like it because it made me aware of how different I seemed to be amongst the people in my surroundings. Whereas my brother, older brother and sister always accepted it, it was part of their life that now they... I'm considered the one that knows the most about history, I'm the one that wishes I could speak Chinese and the one who goes to banquets and has been to China many times. So in a positive way, probably, if I haven't had this experience, I may not have been as interested in finding more about my family roots. So yeah, grew up... always went to school in the Gordon Head area and went to university and at the time was studying anthropology, and psychology, and started to be interested in some of the courses that was being offered in Asian studies. So I started to take some, and it started opening the door of me wanting to know more and more.

John Price: So when did you first go to China?

Charlayne Thornton-Joe: When I was in university, there was the exchange program in the summer of 1982, and so Dr. Bryant was the lead professor there, so I went there. Definitely was an experience for me, opened my eyes and was a culture shock in many ways. But that was the first time and it was an amazing, amazing experience. And so...

John Price: And you go back, fairly regularly?

Charlayne Thornton-Joe: Well not regularly. Mainly due to cost and... So I was able to go again, and I can't remember the years now, there was an opportunity for a delegation to go to China to do with the

sister cities. And at the time it was election year, so the mayor and council couldn't go so they tried to find some people to go on the delegation. And at the time I was on the sister city advisory committee, so I had the opportunity to go and so that was my second time. And the third time, the overseas Chinese hosted a delegation to go to Guangzhou in Guangdong province. And the CCBA chose me as one of the ones to go as well. So I've had the opportunity to go three times. The third time, when I went to, I tried to go back to my village.

John Price: Right, where is your family village?

Charlayne Thornton-Joe: In, sort of the, Taishan sort of area. So, as my dad always says, "you never know, they probably just take you and there you are. You're suppose to give somebody to thank them for it" and... but I have no ancestors in China left, and so there was no one for me to go and visit. Being three and a half generations.

John Price: And how about your father? Did he go to China?

Charlayne Thornton-Joe: He actually went to china the first time after I went. In '82 as well. And at the time we did have a few cousins left, that he was able to visit. But by then, they now have immigrated over to Canada.

John Price: So did the Cold War, that period where there was no diplomatic relations in China after the '49 revolution and the Taiwan/China split and all that, those politics, did they affect your family?

Charlayne Thornton-Joe: Not that I was aware of. My family is, as far as I know, were never, didn't seem to talk about the politics of what was happening overseas. So I think if we interview my father, he may admit some things that he's never even said to me. So I'll get you an interview with my dad.

John Price: That will be great. That will be great. And so, after you graduated from Pacific Asian studies from university, you started working....

Charlayne Thornton-Joe: Well I've always been in the restaurant industry because my parents were. My dad worked at Don Mee's restaurant, probably the oldest surviving employee of Don Mee restaurant. My mother, was what they called back then, a salad girl so worked at places like the Poodle Dog, the Strathcona Hotel, you know, she's worked in the Marina restaurant. So there was always the restaurant business. So when I was going to university, part of Chinese culture is usually your parents pay for university and give you room and let you live at home. And, but I found that by my parents paying for university, every day I got home, it was like, we're paying for university, where is your home[work]... I have to admit I am not a stereotype of a good Chinese student. I wanted to go out and hang out with my friends and have fun and I wasn't very studious, wasn't.... And so, my father said if you're not going to concentrate more, I don't want to be paying for your university. And I said fine I'll pay for my own. So I actually started to work in restaurants, and you know, be able to pay for my own education. I still got to live at home. But I love the restaurant industry. I love the food and wine and I love the energy and I'm a night person. Mainly I think because of my parents. Instead of getting a babysitter, they use to take me to all their mahjong games. I'd be sleeping in the chairs of the Chinese Freemasons and when they

finished their mahjong at 2 or 3 in the morning they would take me to Paul's. And I would be sleeping in the car or in the booth while they were eating at Paul's and by the time I got home, you know. And then I had to wake up to go to school. I was always too tired to go to school. So I've always been a night owl so I worked in the restaurant industry up until I was elected. And after...

John Price: And you're also involved in the ICA, Inter-Cultural Association?

Charlayne Thornton-Joe: When I was going to university and working, after that, I decided that.... I think someone said to me, we were talking about what we wanted written on our tombstones. And I said I wanted it to say that she made a difference. And I realized I had to do things, so what was I going to do to earn that expression. And so I wanted to get to learn more about my Chinese culture and history. So I joined the Chinatown Lioness and I started to realize, and talked to my parents, and I started to realize a little bit about immigration and the hardship. So that's when I joined the ICA. And I also was interested in women's issues so at that time I joined the Women's Transition House. So it was, with all those organizations then I joined the first Diversity Committee. And it was at that time....

John Price: So what year was it that you got involved in the ICA, the Inter-Cultural Association? Approximately.

Charlayne Thornton-Joe: Probably be, before 2000, so '98?

John Price: And what year did you graduate from....

Charlayne Thornton-Joe: University? '83.

John Price: '83?

Charlayne Thornton-Joe: Yeah. And I joined the Lioness... the Lioness started 21 years ago. Um, do the math...

John Price: '91 or something like that

Charlayne Thornton-Joe: So I joined the Lioness the year after they started. So it was just... you know, keep adding to my interest. I think that it could've been Alan Yun that got me involved with ICA. Because before I joined the board, I was involved a little bit with the Folk Fest. And then I was asked to join the board. So I think it was probably Alan Yun and some of them that got me involved with ICA.

John Price: Ok, and you were in the movie about Harling Point right?.

Charlayne Thornton-Joe: Yeah.

John Price: How did you come to be involved in that? What's your relationship with the cemetery?

Charlayne Thornton-Joe: Well, my relationship to the cemetery is my mom's father's buried there. And as the youngest, my mother was always very traditional and superstitious when it came to the afterlife. So she would go to the cemetery quite often. To both of them – the Chinese cemetery and Royal Oak cemetery for, say, Christmas, you know, Ching Ming, Mother's day, Father's day. And I guess as the

youngest I would usually go along with her and as I got older and the driver, I would continue to go visit quite often. So I guess when the person that was doing, from Harling Point, Ling Chiu, was putting together a documentary, my understanding is she interviewed a lot of people. And after interviewing everyone, she'd look at the interviews and decided what would make a great story. And I guess she decided to take the Edna Chow's version, perspective, of having relatives there that were being very much involved with the church and not, being told not to worship, ancestor worship. And my mother who looked at me as a third generation as someone who still continues it after three generations. So she chose from her interviews what her story would be. And that's how it all came about. Interestingly enough, I do have a relationship with Edna Chow in that her husband, Jimmy Chow, was actually the one who took my mother to the hospital when she was in labour with me. So it's a small world in that we actually have a connection in that way too. And I call her Auntie Edna just because her family and my family are very close.

John Price: Oh great, yeah. I've had two or three meetings with Edna.

Charlayne Thornton-Joe: I think her husband's brother, I think, was actually... dated my mom before my mom and dad met.

John Price: Well, yes, she was... her family was close.. her mom and herself, were close to Victoria Chung. The woman I'm investigating. The physician who went to China and came back....

Charlayne Thornton-Joe: Yeah, you'll have to ask my dad about Victoria Chung too.

John Price: Yes, yeah....

Charlayne Thornton-Joe: Auntie Edna is great too. She's such... so alert, and she's got such a memory.

John Price: She's uh, she's one of the, probably, uh, amongst the group of elders in the community who has the sharpest memory.

Charlayne Thornton-Joe: Her and my dad just chat a lot and yeah, extensively. The only difference is that Auntie Edna is more willing to sit and chat. My father is more, oh nobody wants to hear this story, and I tried to remind him that yes, they do. So, yeah.

John Price: Yes well, please ask him if he'd do an interview because we'd like to hear his stories. And we'll spend as much time as he's willing to give...

Charlayne Thornton-Joe: John Adams and others have interviewed him. It's just getting him in the right mood at the right time.

John Price: Yeah absolutely. So, um, why did you decide to get involved in city politics? And when was that?

Charlayne Thornton-Joe: That was in, about 2000. I was on the Women's Transition House and people started to come up to me, and say "you should run for council". And I said no, I'm not involved in politics, I'm not part of any political party. I just want to serve the community. And people said, those are the

people we want on council. And I was part of the group that brought, for a fundraiser, brought this woman from, this writer to town, and she said oh you should be in council. And I said you don't even know me you know. And she said oh you just have an air about you, you can give back to the community. And I said well people are asking me, but I'm not sure. And I just turned 40, and my husband got me a book on women who were successful after the age of 40. And the reoccurring theme was women after 40 are less afraid to take chances and aren't as afraid of failure. And I started to reflect on my life and I realized I always never reached for the stars because I was afraid of failure. And at the time, it was just perfect timing that people were asking me, and I said you know, sometimes, people have always said, I have less confidence in myself than others around me. People are always saying, you can do more, you can do this you can do that. But I've always been no, I've always lacked confidence. And so when I read this book, and this was happening, you know I said, well, you know, I'm willing to chat with a few people I'll talk to Helen Hughes and Bea Holland. They said go for it and I talked to Derek Chow, who was a police officer and a close friend of the family. And he said no you should go for it. And I decided to run and I believe in Chinese culture that if things are meant to happen it will happen. And if it wasn't meant to happen it wouldn't. So I ran that term, they told me I probably won't get because I was a first time. And my name recognition wasn't there. And I was elected.

John Price: And so how many terms has it been since?

Charlayne Thornton-Joe: This is my fourth term, so ten years that I've been there. It's been a great privilege and honour. And I still learn very much every day.

John Price: Are there particular issues, or particularly challenges that you face as a councilor of Chinese heritage in Victoria?

Charlayne Thornton-Joe: Probably the only one, and I think Dr. Lai wrote it in his last book that he wrote, I'm one of the first Chinese, and I'm sort of on the outside in that I don't speak the language, so that I'm not quite welcomed by the groups that believe I should be fluent in Chinese. Chinatown, Chinese communities still very much male-oriented so as a female, it's a little difficult, the doors don't open as easily as if I were male. I... probably the doors that have opened is because I'm John Joe's daughter. So I do my best in trying to make a name for myself because I know there will be one day where John Joe won't be there for people to say she's John Joe's daughter. So I need to get my roots into the Chinese community the best I can while the time is limited. And so there have been challenges in that there's... when people talk about the Chinese community, the Chinese community is made up of so many groups now. In my dad's day it was pretty clear what the Chinese community is. Now we have Victoria-born Chinese, we have how many generation- Chinese, we have new Chinese from Taiwan, we have new Chinese from mainland China. So whether there's Chinese coming from Singapore or other... so you can't even say, the Chinese community think this. I always say to people, well you gotta make sure you talk to many groups if you want to... good representation from the Chinese community. So I think part of my challenge has been always been... not quite an inner circle, and I would love to be out of it more in the inner circle but it's difficult because of my language and being a female.

John Price: And the Chinatown Lioness Club, was founded and has been very active in the community. How does that relate to... this discussion about women and

Charlayne Thornton-Joe: I guess it depends on where this interview is going to go and what's going to be published. But, it's interesting because when we first started off, I remember my dad saying, you know, everybody's saying that the Chinatown Lioness are a deadbeat group and are just a bunch of women there, because women groups all they do is, you know, gossip right? And I said, well I've been very involved in the club and trying to look at ways to raise the profile and do good work in the community. And I'm very proud to say that 20 years later we are in that people stand up and listen. We've won philanthropy awards and I would say, people hold us to high esteem, outside the Chinese community. Within the Chinese community, I think we are still, sort of I think, some of our members, are considered too outspoken for women, too involved in politics for women. And so, we still to be in the fringe so we are not like in the Chinese association, you know, the Toisan Association, the Shon-Yee Association. They are held more in esteem than, say, the Lioness or the Lions or some of the newer ones. 20 years is young in the Chinese community for some of the associations that have been around... celebrating 80, 90 years. I think what we try to do is do more work within the Chinese community, so that people, so we don't just do work with the city of Victoria or the capital region. We try to do a little bit more within the Chinese community, whether it's a scrub up day, trying to clean the Chinese community... whether it's investing in some of the murals, the lights, or being visible when it comes to the care centre fundraisers. So we try to be involved, but it is difficult.

John Price: And uh, in terms of the new Canadians, the people who are coming from the mainland who speak Mandarin, versus Cantonese and things like that, has that changed... is the community, you know, or the communities within the community, are they changing very much in the past years?

Charlayne Thornton-Joe: Oh yeah of course, once again, in my dad's time, everyone spoke Cantonese and it was the, Toisan dialect. But now of course, not only do we have different Cantonese, we have Mandarin, we have different dialect of those. So a lot of people are unable to even communicate with each other. You know, there was a day when... if you said my dad's name, everyone would know because of the family. Because you usually, of course with Chinese culture is, who your dad was, you know, what village you came from. I think we are not doing that so much anymore, it's because there's so many people from so many parts of China and of course overseas Chinese from other parts of the world. So it's a different Chinese community than it was in my dad's day. Even if you look at the Lioness, when I look at the membership, we got maybe a quarter of the members who are actually born in Victoria, then you look at the rest and they are either from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, and of course we have some non-Chinese that maybe have married Chinese husbands or we have ones that are of half... you know, one of their parents are Chinese and they're trying to learn more about their culture and be in touch with the Chinese culture.

John Price: Thank you for sharing that. You brought to council the motion around the "Too Asian" ... in MacLean's article and also the

Charlayne Thornton-Joe: Were you the one who brought that to my attention first? I know you brought the

John Price: It may have been... it was Ellen Woodsworth who was working on it in Vancouver....

Charlayne Thornton-Joe: Yes. But someone sent... Are you the one who sent it to me....

John Price: Probably yeah. Anyways, and then there was also the 70th anniversary of Japanese-Canadians uprooting right? And so, why did you decide to take those to council?

Charlayne Thornton-Joe: For so many reasons, um.... I think both of them just, you know, I have fought issues of racism in my work with Inter-cultural Association and building awareness and educating people of injustices. So... and I appreciate people like you who make me aware of things that have happened that may not be, that may be a little outside of my daily council work. And so, you know, although I may have known about the anniversary, I probably didn't know all the aspects of it until you sent me the information. When it comes to the "Too Asian," unless you... someone had brought it to my attention, the actual article and the implications of what was in that article, I probably wouldn't have been able to think about it so in-depth that I wanted to do something about it. So I really appreciate you bringing it to my attention. With the "Too Asian," I think it.... It offended me in so many ways you know. One, just someone saying that, and someone of high profile MacLean's saying something like that. The stereotypes... there's so many stereotypes, and inaccurate information in that.... In some ways I feel that I was discriminated because I wasn't Asian enough. I wasn't talented in playing the piano or I didn't study hard enough, you know. In a lot of my lifetime, people would say, you know, you're supposed to be Chinese. You're Chinese, you're supposed to be more of this. And I think it's difficult when you have stereotypes like that. And to have a magazine, in many ways very well respected, make that kind of comment... it's offensive. And it's something that I want to actively have my part in speaking up against. And it is, people bringing issues to me that I may not be aware of. I know, right now, currently I'm working very much to do with the shark's fin issue. On a personal level, I had made the decision 10 years ago that I was no longer going to eat shark's fin soup. But it was the group coming forward and making me see the greater implications of... the environmental issue, the humane issue... that has made me more outspoken about... about it.

John Price: So where are things... I know there is a young activist in Vancouver who I've met who did stuff around this. But in Victoria, have some of the restaurants taken it off the menu?

Charlayne Thornton-Joe: So the Fin Free group has asked council to put a by-law to prohibit the sale of shark's fin soup at the restaurants. I haven't got to that point yet and for me I think it's the practical sense in that, when you have shark's fin soup, it's usually a private banquet for a special, very special occasion. It's not something that's served often. Probably, I think over 10 years ago, I would go to a lot of banquets that would serve bird's nest and shark's fin soup. In the last 10 years, I think I was served shark fin or bird's nest soup once. My father who goes to a lot of banquets, I think in the last 10 years, he... I heard him say he had it twice or three times. So it's not that often, and it would mean that I would have to go to a function, have it served, and complain to the city of Victoria by-law department. For me to report someone... being a guest of a function, would make the host lose face. And in Chinese culture,

losing face is a big insult. So, then, the by-law officer would have to come to the restaurant and be able to prove that the shark fin soup has been served and either smack the business with a fine or you would have to close your business for a certain amount of days. So it's a penalty. So for how often the soup is served, for the steps it would take for anything, and the loss of face to someone having a function, I think is not as useful as educating the public. So it's usually the older generation that wants the soup because it's a form of prestige. Even at a wedding, as I'm told by many of the restaurants, the bride and groom say I don't want shark's fin but my mother insists that we serve it. So I think it's changing that perception of that prestige and is there some messaging that we can do and education. Finding some other... whether it's... people says it's the health, it's good for your health. If you say, eat this because it's long life, but you find out it's high in mercury, it's changing that mindset. Working with the restaurants and talking to the two restaurants that usually serve shark's fin and getting them to sign up to be Fin Free and getting other restaurants to sign up, I think is more important for their commitment to say that they're Fin Free. Supporting the national bill to stop shark's fin from coming into Canada... unless they're attached to a whole shark. In which case you're eating the whole shark, and not decimating the whole population and not cutting off a fin and leaving them to die an inhumane death. I think those are the things we're focused on right now.

John Price: So are there other issues... particular... concern for the community or for the multicultural community. Is there ... questions of domestic violence, specific issues coming up?

Charlayne Thornton-Joe: I'm not hearing a lot of it but it's something that I keep a pulse on. Especially domestic violence, elder abuse. When it comes to different cultures and ethnic groups and sometimes not being... speaking out.... I know in the South Asian community especially when you look at some of the things in Vancouver, there's definitely a concern. I know I've been involved with the Lioness recently in helping a woman who is dealing with some spousal abuse. We're trying to support her. My boss has spoken to the police and trying to... can you give me some information on what kind of signs I should be looking out for to make sure this woman is safe. So I'll be meeting with them and getting more information about that. But I'm not hearing as much about those issues about elder abuse and spousal abuse as I did in the past. And I think there is more education... we've got groups like ICA... there's more TV stations that people can access in their language that can give that kind of information. So I don't know if you... I've been working closely with the new OMNI station and giving them contacts with people in the community so whether it's hospice, they might want to do a clip, even the cemetery... Royal Oak Burial Grounds. Whether they can do some advertising... assisting and giving information to the ethnic community. So I think there is more opportunities to learn that this is not acceptable... you know, especially in Canada. In my parents' days, you know, there was a lot of talk. Auntie so and so may have been... was abused. Back then it was a hush hush thing. Even in today... it's a little bit more hushed. But there are more people saying no this is not acceptable – how can we help. You may not want to go publicly and say so and so abuses his wife. But there's more work to say, how can we help the woman get out of the relationship, or... yup.

John Price: You mentioned once about the dream you had, or the vision you had of, establishing a Chinatown museum at some point. Do you still have that?

Charlayne Thornton-Joe: Still there. I often say I wish I could win a lottery so I could quit work and work on things that I... whether writing a book or what to do with my family history. Or working on something like a Chinese museum. It's still a dream, being the oldest Chinatown in Canada, I think we are in the right location to have it and be able to have a museum that just shows a history of ... you know, Chinese ancestors, or my family and how they came and the journey they... and the sacrifices they made to give.... I always say those sacrifices give me a better life. When I think of... there's the Chinese veterans and that opportunity to get the vote. The sacrifices where there was... you know the first Chinese woman nurse or lawyer, or everything from my fam... my father always reminded me every time we go to the Crystal Gardens, that when it was a pool, he wasn't allowed to swim there. You know those are the things that... I think generations today don't realize. You now, when I look at my niece and nephew, they have no idea what it was like to not be able to go into a place because, you know, of their race.

John Price: So do you think there are ways that that... such a project might move along in the sense of... what would you envisage the ways that... to do that... to....

Charlayne Thornton-Joe: Well, I always thought getting a community together to work on it. And I backed off because I heard there was already a committee working on it. I thought Kileasa....

John Price: There was something... I don't know about Kileasa yeah.... I, you know, I know there was the committee that was set up in Vancouver to set up some sort of pacific museum and immigration centre. Something like the counterpart to the one in... back east right? The pier 49. And so, but I haven't heard its gone anywhere, you know... so....

Charlayne Thornton-Joe: No, yeah I thought there were some people working on it so I just said, well, you know, I'll let them work on it and I'll focus on some other things. But if not, I'd love to put a committee together and look at, you know, what it would take, maybe, you know, whether we need grants to work on some kind of a... put together a proposal, you know, look at locations. I think there are some opportunity because there are many properties in Chinatown which are looking at future development. Whether they can include a possibility of a museum of some sort in the ground floor. It's something that I'd love to have. I know council has talked about a Chinese garden, and as much as I love one, I know how expensive they are, the space it takes, but you need to continue to think of what opportunities there are. So yeah! Let's get going on it. Let's put together a committee and start working on it.

John Price: It sounds good. I would really like to go and do a, you know, take a tour to the Wing Luke Museum.

Charlayne Thornton-Joe: Yes, and I have been. But I haven't been for awhile. And I actually went to the museum in LA as well. I enjoyed the Wing Luke Museum, I like what they do. The one in LA is a little bit smaller but yeah, I'd love to. I'm due to go back to The Wing. Thank you. I use to be a member of it, but....

John Price: Yeah, well I was there, I guess a couple times in the past 5 years and yeah. It's pretty spectacular because they did it. And I think that's where the question of fundraising is important.

Because they got a \$25 million donation and they were able to use that to purchase a building and renovate it. It's become a spectacular site, so.... Um... alright, yeah so in terms of the educating people about the past and Victoria's Chinatown, what do you think is the future of Victoria's Chinatown? It has such a long history... do you have any sort of inklings of its future?

Charlayne Thornton-Joe: Well, I think it's imperative that the younger generation stay involved. And so, you know, when I look at... like my cousin Tony Joe who's... you know, started the night market, myself who tries to stay within the Chinese community. I'm actually working on right now to get a membership at the Dart Coon Chinese Freemason. So that, you know, I have some roots into some of the associations down there. I see the associations having a younger... some of the, you know, someone like a Thomas Chan, Alan Mar, some of the younger generation who are getting involved. And so I think that's going to keep it going and I think they are going to have to continue to looking at membership. Instead of looking at just the... the ones that have been there for many years. I think they need to show respect for the elders but I think they also need to be open to recruit some younger members. And they have to be willing to be... open up to diverse ideas, you know, doing meetings with ... and I think it's going to be difficult, but I think that if they are going to survive they need to start to open up and bring in some new membership.

John Price: And what about in terms of, like, Chinatown is... you know, it's a bit smaller than it used to be. There are pressures, obviously, in terms of property development and all that sort of thing. How is... how do you think Chinatown will cope with that is a big debate in Vancouver, right?

Charlayne Thornton-Joe: Yeah, I think it's a... what they were lucky is... our mayor and council and our staff are very much, as part of our OCP and our downtown plan to protect the unique and historical and cultural significance of Chinatown, so we always look at any development through that lands. What we can do to improve the Chinatown, not take away from it. So I think that's always a comfort that it's incorporated in all our policies. If you're building around it, you have to realize that there's a national historic site there. If you're building within Chinatown, what are you doing to animate the fact that you're in Chinatown. So I think that's important. So it's not like someone's just all of the sudden in the middle of Chinatown putting a high rise and it being supported. We have... we're always looking for ways to improve Chinatown whether it's in the last... even in the last 10, in 10 years, the murals, the lights, staff working to make sure that nothing becomes rundown. I think there's an opportunity to expand a little bit more now that... to move onto the Pandora side, to move onto the Herald side. But I think we just always have to stay vigilant and help people there keep an eye on it. But I recognize that some things have to change. I know there was quite a lot of controversy when the Hoysun building was being renovated and adding an extra storey. We got to realize that there are some things we need to do to make things work. Even in the investment... and I'm looking at things like the Silk Road Tea. When she first started, people said, you know, why do you want to move down there. And you look at it now and how that's part of the Chinese... our Chinatown is added to it. And if you even look at the Pandora side, even though it's not Chinese shops. When you look at shops like Habit or Mo:le, you know, people said to them, why do you want to move there? There's no one going down there. And you look at it and it's reinvigorated that street. With the union building being built, I think, you know, I think it's going to add population to that area density. And of course we need people downtown to support the businesses

down there. You now I've been working with the people there doing the market in the Hudson, and I said, you know, I can support 100% as long as you're not selling exactly what Chinatown sells and take away the business, you know. I think you need to be unique, have fresh breads, have fresh cheeses and things like that so that it adds to the Chinese ambiance. Not takes away. You know, when Hudson opened I said I would love a grocery store. But I don't... wouldn't support a T&T because a T&T will just take away from the feel of Chinatown. So it's making sure that voice is there.

John Price: Got it.

Charlayne Thornton-Joe: Yeah.

John Price: Well, um, thank you so much. I think we've covered quite a bit of territory.

Charlayne Thornton-Joe: As I said, what I'll do is I'll work on a time for you to meet my dad.

John Price: That would be great.

Charlayne Thornton-Joe: I know some of those questions you asked I think would be even more pertinent for my dad to answer.