

FHS Oral History Project – Shally Wong

Description:

Shally Wong was born in Kowloon, Hong Kong, in 1969. She recounted her upbringing, particularly growing up in a single-mother household as the youngest of four. She mentioned how the Cultural Revolution in China affected her family, particularly her father's absence during her early years. She recalled the financial difficulties her family faced during her formative years, highlighting how her older sister had to work at an early age to support the family. Educational and professional opportunities prompted her to leave Hong Kong and emigrate to Vancouver, Canada, in 1986. After graduating with a bachelor's in business administration, she returned to Hong Kong to officially process her immigration visa. In 1991, Shally arrived in Orlando, Florida, reuniting with her oldest sister, who had lived in Central Florida for over a decade at that point. She quickly realized how work provides stability in the US and the lack of Asian cultural knowledge in Orlando, mainly when she worked for her sister's Chinese restaurant. This limited understanding of Asians inspired Shally to create Asia Trend in 2005, an online magazine that provides news for Asian American happenings in Florida, thereby promoting Asian American culture. She also explained how the magazine functions as a tool to preserve Asian American culture, especially for future generations. Before joining Asia Trend, Shally worked in the for-profit world, outlining her experiences in several companies, including Toys R Us Asia, from 1996 to 1999. Since 2019, Shally has served as the official liaison to the Asian American community in Orange County as the special assistant to Mayor Jerry Demings. She discussed her role in detail and how she has reinforced her broader mission to preserve and promote Asian Americans in Central Florida. She outlined how the Asian American community in Orlando has changed over the past twenty-five years, while also detailing the region's broader cultural evolutions and the continuous and contemporary challenges it faces.

Transcription:

00;00;04 - 00;00;22

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: This is Sebastian Garcia interviewing Shally Wong on May 25th, 2025, at the Orange County Administration Center building in Orlando, Florida, for the Florida Historical Society Oral History Project. Can you please restate your name, date of birth and where you were born?

00;00;22 - 00;00;32

SHALLY WONG: My name is Shally Wong. November 25th, 1969, in Hong Kong.

00;00;32 - 00;00;34

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Where in Hong Kong, specifically?

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SHALLY WONG: In Hong Kong, Kowloon.

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SEBASTIAN GARCIA: And can you tell me a little bit about your childhood growing up in Hong Kong in the late 70s, early 80s?

00;00;45 - 00;02;06

SHALLY WONG: Yes, yes. I have three other siblings. I am the youngest. I lived with my mom and my father [was] in China. Due to the Cultural Revolution, he stayed in China till 1981. So I actually kind of grown up in a single parents family. And I actually most of my life, we live in my uncle's house. And I remember when I was nine years old, I start to have our own house, which is a public housing in Sha Tin, which is more closed by New Territories. And I have my elementary school, secondary—we call it elementary [and] secondary in Hong Kong because it was under British. I was the youngest one. We had a pretty humble beginning. My sister had to kind of start working very early age.

00;02;06 - 00;02;12

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: What did your parents do for a living? I know you mentioned your father was in mainland China, but what did your parents do?

00;02;12 - 00;02;35

SHALLY WONG: My mother, since she has to take care of four of us, she was a sower. She would do all the clothing at home and provide meal for my uncle's family. So that was why we can stay over there. So basically, she was [sowing] day and night.

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SEBASTIAN GARCIA: And your dad?

00;02;36 - 00;03;07

SHALLY WONG: My dad did not work until he came to Hong Kong in 1991 he start working as a warehouse keeper, kind of in a restaurant that actually owned by his sister. He started working in that. But he was really late already, he was in his 60s.

00;03;07 - 00;03;18

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: You mentioned how one of your sisters had to work really early. Were there any other particular challenges your family faced during this time?

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SHALLY WONG: Financially probably it was just because my dad was not around. And every year I remember when it was a summer holiday, we had to travel and visit him at least once a year. And my mom of course, travel more than that. In the summertime, I remember that time when you talking about 1970s, China is still very poor. We had to bring a lot of stuff up there. Even oil, daily things. Not talking about money. It was just material. You know, kind of necessity. So I remember that.

00;03;58 - 00;04;01

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: How was your schooling experience like in Hong Kong?

00;04;01 - 00;04;5

SHALLY WONG: It was good. I [went to a] Catholic school. Very good. In Hong Kong, people emphasize education a lot. So we use bilingual, we using English in the lectures. So, it was very good, but opportunity wise it was very limited just because the population there. In

order to go to higher education, it was very competitive. So that was the reason why my sister brought us to US get a better education.

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SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Did you have any other family in mainland China besides your dad?

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SHALLY WONG: Yes I do. My father's side still have sisters there and recently, my mom, even [at] ninety-six years old, she just visit there, too. We do.

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SEBASTIAN GARCIA: And you were around twenty years old when the event at Tiananmen Square happened in '89. Can you just recall sort of your experience from that moment?

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SHALLY WONG: Yeah, 1989. That year I studied in Vancouver, Canada. Before I came to Orlando, Florida, I actually studied in Vancouver, after my high school graduation. I still remember I was at in the campus and vaguely we saw all the TV. I still remember that since we were in the college, so we have people come together to protest. I think at the time, I forgot, it was like a ribbon, you know kind of that. Yeah I remember that.

00;06;05 - 00;06;10

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: So what year exactly did you leave Hong Kong to Vancouver.

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SHALLY WONG: To Vancouver is 1986.

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SEBASTIAN GARCIA: '86.

00;06;13 - 00;06;17

SHALLY WONG: Yeah. '86 is actually after my high school.

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SEBASTIAN GARCIA: After high school.

00;06;18 - 00;06;44

SHALLY WONG: Yeah I tried to get into the what we call is "Form Six," which here is probably college. I would not be able to get on it. I have to kind of do the night school kind of repeat the grade. And I think halfway through by December, I actually got a chance to go to Vancouver because I have relatives there.

00;06;44 - 00;06;53

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: You mentioned education, were there any other reasons why you wanted to leave Hong Kong?

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SHALLY WONG: Education probably is the main factor. And also, I am very close to my sister. I have two sisters. The eldest one left first and then she apply my second sister there. So I had two sister already in Orlando, so it was pretty much in reunion. And I could tell now that you ask is really for the living because I remember my sister send every month 400 USD to us in Hong Kong and that 400 meant a lot.

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SEBASTIAN GARCIA: How long did you stay in Vancouver?

00;07;40 - 00;08;01

SHALLY WONG: For roughly four years till 1990. The reason why I left Vancouver is because I know my visa, which my father and my mother apply me, is almost there. So I need to prepare to get my visa in Hong Kong.

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SEBASTIAN GARCIA: So, after Vancouver, you went back to Hong Kong briefly?

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SHALLY WONG: Yeah, I went back to Hong because in order to get the immigration and everything, you have to go back to your birthplace, which is where you apply for. So I went back to wait for the visa because it was pretty complicated. After you get the visa, you have to get, health check, everything and get ready. And that year was 1991, I believe August, was the time that I actually travel with my brother. We apply together through my father and my mother.

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SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Yeah. And in Vancouver you attended college?

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SHALLY WONG: I attended college and then university. Simon Fraser University in Vancouver.

00;08;51 - 00;08;53

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: What did you major in?

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SHALLY WONG: Business administration.

00;08;55 - 00;08;57

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Why that field?

00;08;57 - 00;09;09

SHALLY WONG: You can tell. It was like you can get the fastest way to graduate and then make a living.

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SEBASTIAN GARCIA: And how long did you stay in Hong Kong for that visa process?

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SHALLY WONG: Probably three or four months. I still remember I worked. I worked as a so-called a census department in Hong Kong, statistics. So I was calling people to get statistics as a summer job.

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SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Yeah. And then after those three or four months, you left to Orlando?

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SHALLY WONG: Yeah. After I got the visa, then we flew from Hong Kong to Orlando, Florida.

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SEBASTIAN GARCIA: And that was 1991.

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SHALLY WONG: 1991. Yeah. I visited Orlando two years prior when I was studying in Vancouver to visit my sister.

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SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Because your sister was already here for a while. In what ways did your perceptions about the United States change once you started settling here in Orlando?

00;10;13 - 00;12;09

SHALLY WONG: I think when we were young, I would get from my sister perspective. She had been working, working, working. So we know we need to work. And we had a feeling that if you work, you will make a living. We would have no problems. So work come very first. And then of course, you follow that. You went to school, but then you worked two jobs on the side to purchase your car and things like that. But after I graduate, I work briefly with Darden Restaurant, and I got to know a lot more in the real world now. [I saw] kind of how little people [knew] about Asian American. And you will say, "Oh, that is a lot you can do." And then you still do not think that what you can be a part of it, right? So not until that I got into the nonprofit, the magazine part, but why I got to that part, I think is by experience, by working at my sister's restaurant that you talk to a lot of people, they tend to ask you a lot of questions that you kind of surprised that they did not know. And that was the time that the internet was not popular yet. People usually just learn from each other. So that was kind of shock me. And also, yeah, I think the reason why I like to do that is I want to keep the culture. But if you do not have enough people to appreciate, it was very difficult to keep that. So that is why I really want more people to understand, more people to appreciate.

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SEBASTIAN GARCIA: What were some of the questions that these people would ask you?

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SHALLY WONG: A lot is related to food, health and also the living. I believe you brought a very good point. When the Tiananmen Square or the Communist square, China, Hong Kong were all in the headlines, people get their information through their media only. They always will say how the people in China did not have human right. But so often I remember I told them that "if you do not have enough to eat, human rights is really not an option." Yeah. That is something I always told them.

00;12;58 - 00;13;05

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: And what year did you transition to the nonprofit world that you mentioned?

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SHALLY WONG: I think in between I have to tell you, after I graduated 1994, I worked for Darden for couple years, which funny enough, Darden have a branch you probably do not know is in China coast. I work there as a purchasing. And after that I actually went back to Hong Kong in 1997, okay, 1996 to be exact, to 1999 for four years for Toys R Us Asia. I actually went back. The reason I went back is I graduate; I work couple years; I think I was still young; I never work in Hong Kong as like a full time. So I would say during the 1990s, I did not even think about what I can learn, but I would just think, I should go at that time. So I went back and got a job. Just one job through all those years is Toys R Us Asia. I learned a lot from there. Just try to get an experience before I settled, I did not marry yet, so that was what I was thinking. And then I came back to Orlando in 1999. That was the time that my sister purchased another restaurant. And I happened to kind of co-own with her after I came back from Hong Kong.

00;14;28 - 00;14;42

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Okay. Yeah. I am glad you clarified because that was an important time period for you personally but also things going on in the world. Yeah. Okay. So backtracking a little bit, you said you graduated. Where? Here?

00;14;42 - 00;14;55

SHALLY WONG: UCF. Business administration miss, to be exact, MIS. Management Information System. And then after I graduate, I was a Darden restaurant as a purchasing.

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SEBASTIAN GARCIA: And this was 1994-95.

00;14;57 - 00;15;00

SHALLY WONG: Yeah. 1994-95. And then I left 1996.

00;15;00 - 00;15;02

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: '96 to work for Toys R Us Asia.

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SHALLY WONG: Yeah. And in between actually, China Coast closed down. I was the person to help selling off all the merchandise and then I work for Red Lobster, but it was still Darden, so I did not need to mention it. So the last position that I was doing actually was Red Lobster.

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SEBASTIAN GARCIA: And so you returned to Hong Kong in '96. And of course in 1997 British rule ends, transfer to China.

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SHALLY WONG: I was there that exact day.

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SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Yeah. Can you just recall your memories from that day?

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SHALLY WONG: Yeah. I was actually not in Hong Kong surprisingly, because you can imagine that that week is actually like a holiday. So I think I went with another sister with some friends. We go to China. We actually went to Zengcheng area to have a resort to stay couple nights, I cannot remember [if] I was watching the ceremony though. I remember, as you can recall from the video, was actually raining. I did not think that I watched TV. We were just there for leisure.

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SEBASTIAN GARCIA: How did people process that event? Were people excited, confused, scared. From your perspective, what was the atmosphere?

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SHALLY WONG: I did not we call. I think it depending on the age you were and then what was your friends thinking. I did not feel anything. One thing that is actually a positive sign is the advancement of the job, because a lot of people left, especially administrative level. So you have a lot of gap, that you can advance, opportunities, a lot, I would say at that time.

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SEBASTIAN GARCIA: And you said once you started working for Toys R Us Asia, you learned a lot from that experience, can you please share what you mean by that?

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SHALLY WONG: Yeah, I learned a lot. At that time, Toys R Us Asia is a joint venture with a company in Hong Kong, I learn a lot as we manage five country Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia and Taiwan, we purchased for them. I learn a lot to see even they are all age Asia country, they act differently. The products that they like, the kids like, is totally different. For example, Singapore, you will have people very emphasize on education. All the educational toys go really well. So, this is something that I kind of know. Even people look at you like the same, but actually we are different.

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SEBASTIAN GARCIA: And how long did you work for Toys R Us Asia?

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SHALLY WONG: Good full three years, at least. Yeah. And I really enjoy working there just because on that age, you have a good pay job. I was single and then I was able to travel a lot of different places in Asia because it was so close.

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SEBASTIAN GARCIA: You travel to all those countries that you mentioned?

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SHALLY WONG: Yeah. And then also like for leisure you go to Indonesia, Singapore. Yeah. All those areas. Yeah.

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SEBASTIAN GARCIA: And I know you just mentioned that all these regions and cultures are very different. But either can you give more examples or just generally what else did you learn from traveling those different places during this time?

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SHALLY WONG: Yeah. It was just the character you will really kind of understand, for instance, Japanese you know, they are doing things very accordingly. Very polite, very in spiritual. So you can see they are clean everywhere. Their food is great. You know, those stuff. And then you will go to a little bit less advanced country like Indonesia. People work ethic is totally different. Different management. And they have different language that they use. Singapore, they primarily using English, so have no problem with that. I think it was a lot to do with their history of course and then I think probably education played a big role of it.

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SEBASTIAN GARCIA: So in 1999 you returned?

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SHALLY WONG: 1999, I return. Yes, and I had a reason for returning at that time. I actually experienced my first anxiety hit at that time. I remember I was in my thirtieth. I got kind of like a minor depression. I went to see Doctor. That was my first hit of anxiety. And I was so glad that I got that in my early age, that I was able to recover. I kind of know maybe Hong Kong was too fast piece for me because I left Hong Kong for too long, I did not have a supporting system like my friends being distant for so long. Even you still hang around with them, but it was just different. And my lifestyle was different too. So that was a hit for me that I did not realize until I told myself that I have to stop and change my lifestyle a little bit in order to recover. So I kind of return to Orlando.

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SEBASTIAN GARCIA: I am curious, mental health awareness has expanded significantly for the past twenty five years since—

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SHALLY WONG: Not until lately because of the COVID and everything people really emphasized. But I think—

00;21;19 - 00;21;32

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: That is my point. Yeah. In '99, how was it for you experiencing mental struggles like anxiety, did people sort of ignore you, pushed you off?

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SHALLY WONG: You are right. The age that I got anxiety is kind of early in thirtieth. So my friends did not understand at all. Even I told them. So I remember, fast forward, they finally will call me and say, now I understand what you had because everybody got that, after they married, they gave birth, they have children, they all got that. They kind of understand. I am kind of like, I think I would just [had it before] them. Yeah, that was not understandable. Even myself I would not be able to understand, but I got to read more because of that, I tend to concentrate on "Why is that? How you can change it?" So I know that I can get help.

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SEBASTIAN GARCIA: And what about culturally?

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SHALLY WONG: Culturally definitely it will. This is something that we tends to put a lot of responsibility on ourselves. We do not blame on others too much on that. So that is a culture that we always want to be good. Anything that bring out has to be good and then you do not want to bring shame to your family. That is a very, very typical idea. But I was probably a little bit different because when I was sixteen, I already moved to Vancouver. So I have a little bit more Western influence too. I think that helped a lot. I mean, until now when I openly talk about my anxiety and depression, a lot of people that I hang around, which is majority of them Chinese American, they still do not meet or recognize this is common or normal. They still think that they do not have. And I have to tell you, everybody has a certain level that you do not realize.

00;23;35 - 00;23;49

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Yeah, absolutely. Yeah. Thanks for sharing. So in '99, what was sort of your outlook? Did you return to the restaurant business for a little bit, or did you go straight into a new profession?

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SHALLY WONG: I did not do it. I actually gave myself a whole probably a year off, resting and kind of just do part time doing food delivery, kind of doing nothing for a while. And then at that time, my sister purchase another restaurant which was bigger, which needed more people to manage. So I start helping her to manage, probably utilize my knowledge being major in business administration, doing my marketing, that was the time that I was doing full time, starting to expand, do more promotion and that becomes my career at that time for quite some time, before I got to the Asia Trend.

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SEBASTIAN GARCIA: And when did you get to Asia Trend?

00;24;42 - 00;24;52

SHALLY WONG: Asia Trend [was] twenty years ago. 2005. And so there was at least five years, I was full time managing the restaurant.

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SEBASTIAN GARCIA: And sort of just explain what was the purpose of Asia Trend.

00;24;57 - 00;26;27

SHALLY WONG: That I have to mention my husband. I met him in 1999, which was the year that I returned through a common friend and at a festival. That was the time that I was with him. And that was 1999 September. And I actually married in 2000 February, within less than six months, I married. So that was something I always tell people about that. Not even my mom, my parents met him. Yeah. So we married in, I still remember I picked February 22nd. Easier to remember. So it was 2000, February twenty two, like two, two, two. The reason I got this is actually he was the one to [get] involved first because he is a graphic designer. He do magazine in Hong Kong. So I think for him to do something like that as specialist for his own business is easier because a lot of language barriers and cultural barriers. I do nothing he can do, the same career in here. So I think having your own will be something good to do.

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SEBASTIAN GARCIA: And you continue to be involved with Asia Trend or no?

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SHALLY WONG: Yeah. The Asia Trend, at the beginning, it was not a nonprofit. I think the first few years it [was] a magazine, a marketing magazine to target Asian American, put it in English, and then circulate in Central Florida. Actually, the whole Florida, including Miami. But then after few years, we get into different community and kind of learn there was a way that you can actually file this as a nonprofit organization. So we just study a little bit, kind of get a hold of it, and then we just open another company and then we just move it as a nonprofit. I never really involve that as a full time. I [had] to [work]. This is more like my side things for me. So I have been still working in the restaurant and then I have two more jobs I think I was doing a company, and then I settled in a CPA firm as a front house to help them get clients and then do bookkeeping. That was the longest time. But people know me from Asia Trend, but I actually did not really get salary from the Asia Trend magazine. It was more like a volunteer.

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SEBASTIAN GARCIA: And why do you think it was important or still is important to have a magazine for Asian Americans in Florida?

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SHALLY WONG: It is very important, I think, that at that time when we did this, we [were] the first. I cannot say first—before us we [did] have some doing it, but not in our scale. And I think that was the time that the population was growing. People want to know more. And then especially the internet, people tend to even you have not traveled there before, you kind of read a lot of, people curious. The newer generation has a lot more open mind to accept and then to try new things. And one thing that you have to mention is the cuisine, is the food, that people

will always first [want] to know about your country is the food, and then it is all kind of interrelated.

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SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Did you all ever receive letters from your readers or any sort of reactions?

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SHALLY WONG: Yes. The best example is we came across a couple that trying to find a place to move from New York and they always travel down to Orlando, and they pick up my magazine every time. And then after they move here, they [called] me and said they really think that Orlando is really vibrant, especially in Asian community. So he really want to move down. They really want to move down here because of the magazine. And we have sometimes, some people sell business. I have an example that people from California got to buy a business from one of our advertiser that plays an ad in the magazine.

00;29;56 - 00;30;14

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: For the past five years or so, you have been a special assistant to Mayor Jerry Demings for Orange County government. Why did you feel the need to be involved with an Orange County government?

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SHALLY WONG: Oh. It is like a dream job for me. Six years ago, when I heard about these opportunities. What I am feeling is now I have been doing fifteen, sixteen years of Asian American outreach. If this can be done or can be lead from the top, which a government can do that, I think that will help me really increase the exposure. I would say I would not believe I can be in that position to promote, but then now I look back and think, why not? Because this is part of the community. If you miss that part, you will be hurt. I cannot tell you any better example than COVID because 2019 June I start working in the mayor's office and then six months [we] get into COVID. And I find I always tell people this is like a silver lining for me. You will not have a time that people would love to hear from the government that badly, right? I utilized that, I create my own list of contacts, people telling me, I push out weekly email . So that was why I [established] so quick, within three years, four years, I got like over 800 contacts in my email list, and many of them are community leaders that have members in their organization. So my goal is really work closely with those thirty some organization. Of course some of them are from my previous connection, but nothing more than telling them through the government, right, connecting them with the government, which is really needed at that time. Not too many in the government level. There is really a lack of Asian-American representation.

00;32;43 - 00;32;54

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: What other examples would make you consider your position here in Orange County a successful tenure?

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SHALLY WONG: Say again.

00;32;55 - 00;33;03

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: What other examples from your six year experience would make you say, “oh, this has been a successful endeavor for me being in Orange County Government”?

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SHALLY WONG: I have quite a few proud moment. Leading the Asian American celebration in May here definitely is a plus. Having the first Orange County Diwali in October was another thing that people would not think that would happen. Even the Indian American that in a supervisor level would not see that coming. But I think one thing I am really proud of is the Asian American employees number. When I first start, I was given an Asian American employees statistic is around 3.6% is pretty low, and I kind of keep that as we transitioned every year I ask for, numbers. And we get to 4.3. So I see a significant increase on that. And that is something that I put it under my belt saying that this is something it is proven that it works. If we can make the workplace more inclusive and diverse.

00;34;13 - 00;34;28

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: And to that point, in what other ways since 1999, since you have been here now for over twenty five years, has the Asian community changed in Central Florida?

00;34;28 - 00;36;22

SHALLY WONG: Number wise change, like we can see, the visibility, especially the cuisine, the food scene change a lot. Other than that, I still think we can do more. We still have a lot of things we can improve especially social service. We do not have any organization focusing social service for Asian American. So often we are overlooked just because people do not think we need that social service. But I think sometime [that] is wrong. I think this is two sided. You connect an organization or connect a community is not in one sided. You can also connect them so that they can help. Let's say we have so many restaurant owners. We have people doing business. They can probably partner with different community to work together to solve the problem that we are having. So I think people whoever put the policy out did not think that part. And that is a lot that—I will also blame on ourselves not being vocal enough. So there is a lot of change that we would like to see, particularly [the] political side, elected officials wise, running school boards, different things that really close to our life that we have not been target, I would say, like, we never really have people come to us, that invite us to be part of it.

00;36;22 - 00;36;38

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: We have been talking about this throughout our conversation, but I want to ask more explicitly, why is it important to increase the awareness of your culture?

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SHALLY WONG: You say why? I do not have children, but I have five nephews that is American born. I see enough kids that [do] not want to be recognized as Asian American, particularly Chinese American. They did not feel proud. I think not feeling proud will make your life a little bit difficult. Only by embracing your heritage and recognize your roots, you can [have] a better attitude towards your journey. So that is something I wholeheartedly would like more Asian American, especially American born Asian feel that because even they told me

that I am not Asian American, I want to be called American. But the problem, the fact is that when you go out, people still see your face as Asian, so you cannot change it.

00;37;57 - 00;38;1

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: And to that point, over the past quarter century, do you think people outside of the Asian community have a better understanding of the Asian community in Central Florida?

00;38;10 - 00;38;56

SHALLY WONG: Oh, definitely. Definitely. I particularly appreciate those non-Asian who may marry Asian American. They are more sympathetic about that, especially if they have kids. Their kids is half Asian. You know, they want them to be recognized and appreciated. I think that make a huge change. And within this twenty years of Asian trend, I have so many alliance which have no relationship with Asian American. Some of them have a hobby related to Asian, but they are so respectful, like they are really a great alliance.

00;38;56 - 00;39;00

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: What challenges does Orlando face today?

00;39;00 - 00;39;53

SHALLY WONG: I would not think Orlando has any problem. I think Orlando is still one of the best inclusive city in the whole Florida. I still think people are nice, they are accepting. But the thing is, I always encourage people to not just rely on media, kind of really need to do face to face interaction. I think that kind of break the stereotype sometimes. You cannot judge the people from the cover. So that does something that I would like to see more. And I still have lot of hope, I still love Orlando. I think we can of course still have a lot to do, but it is getting in the right direction, I would say.

00;39;53 - 00;40;03

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: And speaking of lots to do, from your perspective, how will Orlando change in the next twenty five years?

00;40;03 - 00;40;39

SHALLY WONG: I mean, looking at the population, looking at the way people engaged, I really think that more Asian American can lead in their professions, no different from any other people. If we can collaborate more, work together more, I think that definitely is going in a great direction.

00;40;39 - 00;40;52

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: How has your heritage, your Hong Kong heritage, Asian heritage more broadly influenced your perspective on life generally and living in Central Florida specifically?

00;40;52 - 00;41;41

SHALLY WONG: I think particularly Hong Kong. Hong Kong has never been a country. But we are in the map. I think the reason why I am so proud to be Asian American, I think, is Hong

Kong. So we are on the British—we have the best of the West and the best of the East. So I think that part really I have [kept] that in my mind. I always tell the American born children that you have the best of both. So I think that is something that I would always—I think it is Hong Kong, it has really changed the way I live and the way I see things.

00;41;41 - 00;41;46

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: You think that has influenced your approach in Central Florida with everything you have done?

00;41;46 - 00;42;04

SHALLY WONG: Exactly. Yeah. Always have to be not judgmental like you have to be not judging in a way. You have to know everything, have a reason for it. And I think it was a little bit Buddhist theory kind of helped me a lot too.

00;42;04 - 00;42;17

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Absolutely. Lastly, if someone is listening to this recording fifty or a hundred years from now, what do you want them to know about Hong Kong and the state of Florida?

00;42;17 - 00;42;43

SHALLY WONG: Wow. I would say for Hong Kong, I would say everything is possible. For the place I am living here, I would say, be yourself. Live your life.

00;42;43 - 00;42;54

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Thank you very much, Shally, for taking some time out of your schedule, your work schedule, to talk with me and share a little bit of your life story. I really appreciate it.

00;42;54 - 00;42;55

SHALLY WONG: Thank you so much.