

FHS Oral History Project – Gauen Lee

Description:

Gauen Lee was born in Cheongju, South Korea, in 2001. She recollected memories of her upbringing, particularly her fascination with living abroad and her frustration with adhering to cultural norms, such as respecting elders. The combination of these factors prompted her to leave South Korea and emigrate to Florida in 2018 through a student exchange program. She recounted several cultural shocks she experienced upon arriving in Spring Hills, Florida, from students brazenly disrespecting teachers to looser parent-child relations. She particularly remembered her struggles with the first American family the agency paired her with, as the grandmother refused to let Gauen speak Korean in an effort to strengthen her English. After completing high school, she attended Valencia College in Orlando, Florida. At Valencia, Gauen joined the Valencia Intercultural Student Association as a way to widen her cultural experience and avert boredom. Additionally, while in Orlando, Gauen joined the Orlando Korean Cultural Center (OKCC) and explained her reasons for joining, the organization's mission, and her expanding role over the past three years. She has taught Korean classes to non-Korean speakers, detailing her methods and takeaways. Gauen discussed her visions for OKCC's future, particularly maximizing the increasing influence of K-pop and K-culture in the United States as a way to expand the organization's reach. Gauen attended the University of Florida in Gainesville, finishing her bachelor's degree in Information Systems in December 2024.

Transcription:

00;00;05 - 00;00;20

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: This is Sebastian Garcia interviewing Gauen Lee on May 24th, 2025, in Mills 50, in Orlando, Florida, for the Florida Historical Society Oral History Project. Can you please state your name, date of birth and where you were born?

00;00;20 - 00;00;32

GAUEN LEE: Hi, my name is Gauen Lee. I was born in 2001, September 2nd, and in a city called Cheongju, South Korea.

00;00;32 - 00;00;35

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Can you tell me about your childhood growing up in South Korea?

00;00;35 - 00;02;50

GAUEN LEE: Growing up, until elementary school, there was not much special. There are not many special stories during my elementary school years, but since middle school year, I think that was what has started impacted my life. I was a very stubborn child and thinking about the Korean, Asian culture, you have to respect the elders. I was not so good at that. So like one of the stories I remember was, I did not think the teacher was right, so I told the teacher, I do not think that was right. But the teacher was scolding me about how I talked back to her. And then I just did not think it was fair. So I cried and everything, and I just hated my life that day. And I told my mom about that story of course. And my mom got a call from the teacher saying, "Gauen is right. But she should not talk back to an adult like that." And then my mom did not understand that either because she knows that I am not the type of person who would obey to that kind of culture. So she was like, I think you are the type of person that should live abroad,

not in a country that has to respect the elders like, so much to the point that it does not make any sense.” I also had a dream of living abroad in my life instead of living in South Korea.

00;02;52 - 00;02;52

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: And why do you think that is?

00;02;52 - 00;03;11

GAUEN LEE: Why? It was like a fantasy of my life. I just had it for no reason. I just saw people. If I saw people living outside of their original country, I just felt envious. So I guess I was born with that.

00;03;11 - 00;03;14

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Were you an only child?

00;03;14 - 00;04;35

GAUEN LEE: No. I also have a younger brother. He is like three years younger than me. And then my high school life, I guess, is the most important part of my life. So when I got into my high school, my high school was for smart people. So the people who had scored a certain amount of grade can go to that school. And I was lucky enough to be able to get into the school. But the first exam I took changed everything. During the middle school year, when I try my best to get the best score, I was able to do it. But that was because, I guess, the average was not that high of the students, how do I say...can you help?

00;04;35 - 00;04;35

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Like the average score?

00;04;36 - 00;06;48

GAUEN LEE: Yeah, the average score was not that high. And then the level of the exams were not that crazy. But when I got into that high school, the level of the exams were just insane. And even if I got the good score, I was not ranked in the high part because there were so many other students that scored higher than I did. So it was important to score really good during the high school year because that decides which university I get to go to. If I do not score well, I have to study super hard to do really well on an exam called Suneung, which is like Korean SAT, but I did not want that. So I decided to achieve my dream earlier than I expected. My parents were too scared [to] let me go study abroad because I thought they thought I was still too young. So they promised to let me study in America, starting the university years. But I told my parents about how I do not feel like I have any hopes in Korea considering my score in high school, and I was just so stressed out of getting the good scores, so I thought it was time to go to America and then start fresh and live the life that I been dreaming about. So after persuading them, I was able to go to the US after the first semester of the high school in Korea, and that was the point that changed everything of my life.

00;06;48 - 00;06;50

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: What year was this?

00;06;50 - 00;07;39

GAUEN LEE: I remember exactly what year and month that I came to America. I was January of 2018. So it has been about how many years? Seven years. Yeah. And then when I first came to America, everything was very just shocking to me. I thought I knew a little bit about America. I tried to learn by watching the Netflix dramas and shows, but watching everything that was happening in person was different, like the traffic light was different, the car license plate was all different, the cultural differences and all that.

00;07;39 - 00;07;55

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: And I have more questions about the cultural differences. But before we get to that, why America? There are so many different other countries to study abroad. Why did you want to be in America?

00;07;55 - 00;09;06

GAUEN LEE: I know. Okay, so I originally wanted to go to Canada because I heard Canada is very safe and it got good health system compared to America, I think America has a very bad health system. And then it is kind of dangerous because guns are allowed here. So my first pick was Canada, but when I went to the agency that arranges all that, the school and stuff, they highly recommend going to America instead of Canada. If I am aiming to go to university abroad, they said, I do not know if it was true, but even though the university is ranked the same between the university in Canada and the university in America, the university in America has more reputation. That was what they were saying. And I do not regret choosing America over Canada, actually. But that that was basically the reason why because he was like, “No, you have to go to America.”

00;09;06 - 00;09;46

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: You sort of mentioned a little bit how you, when once you got here, you were shocked by many things, especially since you watched Netflix shows about American life, so to speak. I asked this question to other people, if in what ways do their perceptions, about the US change once they got here, but I am curious for you since you are a child of the twenty-first century, you grew up with the internet—did you have more understanding about the United States because of things like social media and Netflix?

00;09;46 - 00;10;43

GAUEN LEE: That was what I thought I did. That was what I thought, so. But I like I said, when I came here, I did not know anything about America. The only thing I knew was the internet would be slow here, a lot slower than South Korea. You know, South Korea [has] the best internet speed because it is such a small country. So it is very well developed about the internet there. The only thing I got to know was the high school life because I watched Gossip Girl. I just imagine the environment of the America, but not anything else.

00;10;43 - 00;10;46

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: You arrived to Florida specifically? Where and where in the United States?

00;10;47 - 00;12;48

GAUEN LEE: Spring Hill. It is a city above Tampa. It is not an urban city. It is a little suburb. The school was very different from the school that I [attended] in Korea. So, the high school and middle school, usually it was in one building mostly, or the most buildings they would have [been] two. My high school had two buildings, and it was usually up to fifth floor. But the high schools here was just like a college, college looking building. I do not know if it only applies to the high school that I went to here, but I think watching the Netflix drama and shows, I think that is how it is most of the time. So that was a shocking thing. And to be honest, I was also shocked by the behavior of the American high school students because, like I mentioned earlier, in South Korea, you have to show respect towards elders. But I saw students cursing right in front of the teachers and burping really loud in front of the teacher, and those kind of things really shocked me. But in the end, I accepted. I accepted, that is how it is in America. And there were obviously things that I really loved about America as well, like the teaching style and how students are so free, like they are not so obsessed with studying. Stuff like that. But there were obviously pros and cons between the American high school and Korean high school.

00;12;48 - 00;12;51

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: And what high school did you attend specifically in Palm Springs?

00;12;51 - 00;12;54

GAUEN LEE: You mean in Spring Hill?

00;12;54 - 00;12;55

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Spring Hill. Sorry.

00;12;55 - 00;12;57

GAUEN LEE: Central High School in Brooksville.

00;12;57 - 00;13;16

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: In what other ways did you acclimate to America besides school? Were you alone? Like, how did the study abroad thing work? Were you paired with a family?

00;13;16 - 00;13;51

GAUEN LEE: So the first year I was here as an exchange student. So the first year I had a host family that was arranged by my agency. The host family I was assigned to was just me and the grandma. She had a husband, but the husband was a truck driver, so he was not at home often. So most of the time it was just the grandma and then me.

00;13;51 - 00;13;52

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Was she American?

00;13;52 - 00;15;34

GAUEN LEE: Yeah, she was American. White American. And then those months that I had to stay with her was the most challenging part of my life because she would not let me talk to my friends in Korea and then even to my parents, in an effort of her trying to help me learn English in faster. But I have never experienced anything like that before because my parents were just not the type of people who would restrict everything I do. They would usually let me do what I

want to do because they trust me. But because that was like the first time experience those kind of restrictions of my life, I just had a really challenging time, and I missed my families and friends, of course. And I was not speaking English very good at the time. I was like a toddler speaking English. Apparently. I stayed with her for three to four months. She had a medical condition in her heart. So it got worse. So she reached out to one of my friend's family, asking if they can have me as a host child. And then they thankfully said yes.

00;15;34 - 00;15;36

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: And this family was also—

00;15;36 - 00;15;37

GAUEN LEE: American.

00;15;37 - 00;15;37

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: White American?

00;15;37 - 00;16;17

GAUEN LEE: Yeah. White American. And starting that point, everything changed again because I was with my friend. Compared to not having any friends in my house and having my friends in my house, the environment changes a lot. So I was able to speak more English, and I was able to have more fun with my friends. And I got to make more American friends. So everything got better starting that point, my English got so much better. Learned a lot of bad words as well.

00;16;17 - 00;16;27

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: What did you learn about American culture or even Florida culture, to be more specific, through your experience with those families?

00;16;27 - 00;17;20

GAUEN LEE: It was more like friends between the parents and the kids, I noticed. It could be just specific to that family, but I noticed the daughter and the mom, they just talk like actual friends. They curse at each other. I am very close to my mom, too. I am very close to my mom, but I cannot curse at her. I am not saying it was a bad thing because they seemed like very good daughter and mom. And I think that was what I liked about the family as well. And then they treat me like an actual daughter too.

00;17;20 - 00;17;24

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Did you teach them anything about Korea?

00;17;24 - 00;17;24

GAUEN LEE: Yeah.

00;17;25 - 00;17;26

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Like what?

00;17;26 - 00;17;55

GAUEN LEE: Korean words, of course. And the daughter who was my friend, she was very into K-Pop. So, she would ask me if one K-Pop idol says anything that she does not understand, that she would ask me something. She would ask me about it. And then like the Korean words and stuff, like the differences of some words. Those kind of things.

00;17;55 - 00;17;58

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: And so you graduated high school in 2019?

00;17;58 - 00;18;12

GAUEN LEE: I think it was 2018, if I remember correctly, because I was put into a sophomore year at first and then they moved me to a junior year.

00;18;12 - 00;18;17

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: After you graduated high school, did you go to college? What was sort of your life path then?

00;18;17 - 00;18;33

GAUEN LEE: After graduating high school, I went to a university. It is a two year community college called Valencia College, which is in Orlando. And then after graduating in the Valencia College, I got transferred to UF [University of Florida]

00;18;33 - 00;18;39

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: What major? [**GAUEN LEE:** Information systems]. Why did you pick that major?

00;18;39 - 00;19;29

GAUEN LEE: I actually first picked finance because I heard the finance major is stable and then makes a lot of money. And then I thought I liked finance because I do investing and stuff like that. But when I first took the business finance class, I realize it was not for me because I am really bad at math, and they made me do a lot of math, like remembering the formulas and stuff. So I finance was not something I expected. So I had to think quickly and switch my major to information systems, which was my second best choice that I was considering between finance and information systems. And I do not regret choosing that major until this point.

00;19;29 - 00;19;34

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: And talk to me about your college experience at UF.

00;19;35 - 00;19;35

GAUEN LEE: At UF?

00;19;35 - 00;19;38

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: What cultural shocks did you experience there?

00;19;38 - 00;19;52

GAUEN LEE: At that point I did not have any culture shocks, to be honest, because at that point, I have lived in America for a good amount of time to observe this American culture, but—

00;19;52 - 00;20;03

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Do you think you saw more people from other cultures, especially since you were telling me how, Spring Hills was not urban?

00;20;03 - 00;20;50

GAUEN LEE: Not really, because before that, I was also living in Orlando for a couple of years during the Valencia college time. And then I was a vice president of club called Valencia Intercultural Student Association. So during that time, I met a lot of people from different backgrounds. So I think that was the time that where I met the most diverse people in my life. And during the UF time, I was just solely focused on my work and my school academy. So I did not really get to go outside and experience a lot of things during my UF time.

00;20;50 - 00;20;56

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Why did you join the club at Valencia College? The intercultural—?

00;20;57 - 00;21;04

GAUEN LEE: Because I was bored and I just needed something to do.

00;21;04 - 00;21;05

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: But you could have selected anything else.

00;21;05 - 00;21;06

GAUEN LEE: Oh, because—

00;21;06 - 00;21;08

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: So why the intercultural club?

00;21;08 - 00;21;31

GAUEN LEE: Because I like to experience the diversity. Diversity of culture and that was what I have liked for my whole life, experiencing different cultures and different languages and hearing other people's perspectives. That really helped me do my job right now.

00;21;31 - 00;21;34

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Were there other South Koreans in that club?

00;21;35 - 00;21;56

GAUEN LEE: No, I was the only one, but I have heard that there were South Koreans in the previous years as well. That was why because I like to experience the diversity of the cultures. That is why I love to travel around the world and meet different people.

00;21;56 - 00;22;00

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: What year did you graduate from UF?

00;22;00 - 00;22;08

GAUEN LEE: I graduated last semester. So last year, December 2024.

00;22;08 - 00;22;10

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: With information science.

00;22;10 - 00;22;11

GAUEN LEE: No, information systems.

00;22;11 - 00;22;18

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Sorry. Yeah. Information systems. So after you graduated, you return to Orlando?

00;22;18 - 00;22;27

GAUEN LEE: Not yet. I am still in Gainesville working, but I do plan on moving out of Gainesville by July.

00;22;27 - 00;22;40

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Nice. I met you at the Asian Cultural Festival about a week ago. And you were representing the Orlando Korea.

00;22;40 - 00;22;40

GAUEN LEE: Cultural center.

00;22;40 - 00;22;48

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Cultural center. So, talk to me about that organization and why you joined.

00;22;48 - 00;24;35

GAUEN LEE: Well, the organization that I am a part of is obviously to promote the Korean cultures in the Orlando community area. As to why I joined the organization, it was not intentional, to be honest. I go to a church called Sunlight Grace church, and I am not Christian, to be honest, I went there just because my boyfriend is Christian and was forced to go to church. So I just follow him. And then I ended up going there until now. But the pastor at the church was the founder of the Orlando Korea Culture Center. And he asked me to be an instructor of Korean language classes. So I am glad to say I can because I was so bored at the time, again, because it was after I graduated my community college, my busy time was all gone, so I needed something to do in my life. So. So it started from that. And then I guess he saw my potential in working. And so he started giving me more work, starting the registration process and advertising the classes. It started from those small tasks until I took almost everything over.

00;24;35 - 00;24;38

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: So what year did you start in the organization?

00;24;38 - 00;24;45

GAUEN LEE: I think it was. I do not remember exactly. 2022, I think.

00;24;45 - 00;24;45

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: 2022.

00;24;45 - 00;24;47

GAUEN LEE: Or 2021.

00;24;47 - 00;24;58

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: And can you be a little more specific about how you advertise the classes and how did you reach out to people?

00;24;58 - 00;25;34

GAUEN LEE: The majority of the promotion would be through Instagram and Facebook, running the ads. Actually, we do not really run ads on those classes because we have enough followers for the classes. But for festivals, we run ads. So the promotion is usually done through the social media accounts. And then by having the festivals like the ones you met me at and yeah, I think those two are the big two.

00;25;34 - 00;25;47

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: And can you share any notable experience or moment you had in teaching and being an instructor of Korean language?

00;25;47 - 00;25;48

GAUEN LEE: I think...

00;25;48 - 00;25;56

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: What is your student group like? Are you teaching young kids?

00;25;56 - 00;26;02

GAUEN LEE: No, I am teaching the old, grown up generation.

00;26;02 - 00;26;03

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: So adults?

00;26;03 - 00;26;04

GAUEN LEE: Yeah, adults.

00;26;04 - 00;26;05

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: But, like—

00;26;05 - 00;26;15

GAUEN LEE: I think them recognizing me, the gratefulness. And then—

00;26;15 - 00;26;24

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: These adults are not obviously Korean, right? Can you just tell me their demographics. Like, who are these people?

00;26;24 - 00;27;17

GAUEN LEE: Some are Korean Americans who cannot speak Korean. I see all kinds of races. I see Hispanic and White, Black. So there is not really one specific race or ethnicity that I see. But I think my favorite part is when they come to me at the end of the class and say thank you and say something that [they] learned from the class. I think that makes me really proud of myself. That makes me want to keep doing what I do.

00;27;17 - 00;27;28

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: How do you create your classes? Can you just walk me through like if I was one of your students, what does your class look like?

00;27;28 - 00;27;30

GAUEN LEE: Like the class structure?

00;27;30 - 00;27;30

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Yeah.

00;27;30 - 00;28;22

GAUEN LEE: I first cover the grammar and then have a speaking conversation. There are two programs. One is the Korean language class which is like a cheaper option. And then there is another one, Korean group tutoring, which is more expensive, but it is a lot [smaller] setting. So for that group tutoring, I cover the grammar and then do the conversational practice. And then I give them the homework. And then I go over the homework and then I will write down what was wrong and why it was not right. And yeah, so there is a little bit of difference.

00;28;22 - 00;28;25

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: How long are your classes usually?

00;28;25 - 00;28;45

GAUEN LEE: The group tutoring one is fifty minutes online, and then the regular Korean group tutoring is two hours. But that one, the regular Korean class, would happen just once a week, while the group tutoring happens twice a week.

00;28;45 - 00;28;47

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: And for how many weeks?

00;28;47 - 00;28;50

GAUEN LEE: Four weeks for both.

00;28;50 - 00;28;55

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Did you ever see yourself teaching people Korean?

00;28;55 - 00;28;57

GAUEN LEE: For the rest of my life?

00;28;57 - 00;29;09

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: No. Do you kind of shock yourself that you are in that position of teaching people Korean? Like, did you see that at any point in your life?

00;29;09 - 00;29;25

GAUEN LEE: I never saw that at any point in my life. Well, at some point of my life, like when I was young, I thought maybe I could be something like a teacher, but I did not actually see it coming.

00;29;25 - 00;29;35

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: You mentioned how, now your role within the Orlando Korea Cultural Center has expanded to “everything.”

00;29;35 - 00;29;38

GAUEN LEE: Has it?

00;29;38 - 00;29;43

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: That is what you told me. Just how has how has your role expanded.

00;29;43 - 00;29;45

GAUEN LEE: Like my reward?

00;29;45 - 00;29;48

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Your role within the organization.

00;29;48 - 00;30;27

GAUEN LEE: Yeah. Oh, okay. I got the question. So just started from managing the Korean language program to managing the festivals by just taking care of the vendors and the logistics of the festival, which is almost everything of our culture does, and we are planning for more things to make the center bigger.

00;30;27 - 00;30;29

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: The center is at the [Sunlight Grace] church?

00;30;29 - 00;30;36

GAUEN LEE: Yeah, the center is at the church, but I would not really associate it with the church.

00;30;36 - 00;30;48

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Yeah, that makes sense. In what ways do you all anticipate changes? Like how do you see the organization growing in the next few years?

00;30;48 - 00;32;38

GAUEN LEE: I have to start with what shocked me the most when I first came to America. I did not know K-Pop, like the K-culture was this big in America at first. I knew the PSY was a very big thing in America, but I did not expect people to know BTS, BLACKPINK, those big groups and nowadays I see people knowing the K-Pop idol groups that I do not even know them. So I realize how big the K-culture, not just the K-pop, the K-drama, and I noticed how big it was in Orlando. And I think if we utilize the Cultural Center better to operate more regularly, right now, we are all volunteer based, so we cannot do much proper work. But once I put more effort and with people's help, I think we are able to operate regular programs and more activities besides the cooking. Right now we are doing cooking classes and language classes and operating festivals. But I think we can do like dance classes, definitely have more opportunities for people to experience Korean culture and, yeah, more festivals, of course. So I think if we start from that, I think it will just slowly grow up to the point that I do not even know where the end point is, you know, but you get the point.

00;32;38 - 00;32;49

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Why do you think cultural organizations like the Orlando Korea Cultural Center are important to exist?

00;32;49 - 00;33;08

GAUEN LEE: I think Orlando Korea Cultural Center is like the main hub for the Orlando community to experience the culture and gather around the people that have the same interest. So I think it is important.

00;33;08 - 00;33;15

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Do you think your involvement with the Orlando Korea Cultural Center has allowed you to maintain your own heritage?

00;33;16 - 00;34;16

GAUEN LEE: Yeah, definitely, a hundred percent. Before I joined the center, I was kind of disconnected from my culture. I almost had trouble speaking in my own language fully because I could not think of the simple words in Korea because that was how long I did not speak Korean for. I would only speak Korean when I talked to my parents over the phone, and I did not talk to my friends over the phone very often. So the only time I would speak Korean would be when I talk to my parents over the phone, and everything else was just English. So ever since I joined the Korean Culture Center, I was able to interact more with my people, with the Korean people, and then teaching Korean to people.

00;34;16 - 00;34;37

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: I know you were in Tampa initially and then you went to UF, so you Central Florida broadly, how has Central Florida changed since you have been here?

00;34;37 - 00;35;07

GAUEN LEE: Not very sure about that because since 2018 I was not living here. I only lived in Orlando just for a couple of years. So I cannot speak much about that to be honest. I think it was the same to me.

00;35;07 - 00;35;11

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: What challenges does Orlando face today?

00;35;11 - 00;35;30

GAUEN LEE: What challenges is Orlando facing today? I think not much. I love Orlando, I love living in Orlando. That is why I am trying to get out of Gainesville and then hopefully move to Orlando.

00;35;30 - 00;35;32

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Why do you love Orlando?

00;35;32 - 00;36;11

GAUEN LEE: It has a lot of great restaurants and theme parks. A lot of activities. And it [has] everything that I can enjoy. Whereas Gainesville, it is only about nature and [night] clubs, which I do not really enjoy. You know, the college towns always have all the [night] clubs around the city. But I am not a really club person. I am not a drinker either. So Gainesville has been a very boring city for me.

00;36;11 - 00;36;36

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: I am curious, a few months ago, South Korea went into martial law, and the impeachment of the president. And so there was a lot of political turmoil going on in the country. What has the reaction been like, if any, from the Cultural Center about that? Have people talked about it?

00;36;36 - 00;37;20

GAUEN LEE: Not really, not really. But personally, I have had people reaching me out about how Korea is, and I could not speak much about it because I was not staying in Korea when that happened. So all I could hear was from my parents saying, "everything is okay, everything is okay. Everything is the same." Maybe because they are not living in the capital. They live in Cheongju, which is in the middle of South Korea. That could be why. But I do not think there were much difference, at least for my family.

00;37;21 - 00;37;37

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Yeah. And I should have asked before, [if] your family continues to live in South Korea. [**GAUEN LEE:** Yeah]. You are still the only one here. [**GAUEN LEE:** Right]. Your brother still over there? [**GAUEN LEE:** Yeah]. Do you think they will ever come to the States?

00;37;37 - 00;38;08

GAUEN LEE: No. My mom was not considering to send my brother here, but it never happened because well, if my brother comes and I was going to be the one that has to take care of my brother. But I did not want that kind of responsibility. I am just kidding. Just kidding. Well, if my brother comes, I would obviously take care of him. But he does not speak very good English. Nothing is ever too late, but it just never happened.

00;38;09 - 00;38;15

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: From your perspective, how Orlando changed in the next twenty five years?

00;38;15 - 00;38;32

GAUEN LEE: It would still remain as one of the best tourist cities, especially with Epic [Universe] coming soon. Has it already come there?

00;38;32 - 00;38;33

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Yeah, it opened two days ago.

00;38;33 - 00;38;47

GAUEN LEE: Oh, okay. Cool. So with that and, as long as Disney World stays the same, I think it will be just like this with the sunny weather.

00;38;47 - 00;38;58

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: How has your Korean heritage influenced your perspective on life generally and living in Central Florida specifically?

00;38;58 - 00;39;14

GAUEN LEE: My Korean heritage. Well, I never thought of that.

00;39;14 - 00;39;22

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: You can take your time. It is okay.

00;39;22 - 00;40;32

GAUEN LEE: Oh, I think generally just running the cultural center. That is biggest part of taking my Korean heritage into affecting this Orlando community. But besides that, not much. Well, when it comes to how Korean culture has affected my personality, I am such an impatient person. Most Koreans are very impatient. So that is why when you are in traffic, you can hear people honking all day. But in America, I notice they do not really honk. They just wait. They up to like almost five seconds. If the person in front of you does not go at the green light when the light changes, during the traffic, because I am so impatient, I like to honk right away, but that was the only thing that I could think how my Korean heritage affected me.

00;40;32 - 00;40;37

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: You have been here now for almost seven years. What does America mean to you?

00;40;37 - 00;41;31

GAUEN LEE: America is like a second home to me, especially Florida. I love the sunny weather and then the sky is so beautiful. In Korea, it is kind of hard to see this blue sky. But I like the freedom I have—I of course had freedom in Korea, but the traffic is just crazy there. But in America, I have my car, and I can go anywhere I want without having to worry about taking the transportation, those kind of freedom and it is very peaceful here. My life is very peaceful here. And I enjoy the things I do, doing something for the Cultural Center and all those kind of stuff.

00;41;31 - 00;41;33

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Do you see yourself living here for the rest of your life?

00;41;33 - 00;41;47

GAUEN LEE: Yeah. Even if I have to go back to Korea, I would still enjoy my life. But I feel like I would live a more peaceful life in America. So much drama going on in Korea.

00;41;47 - 00;41;57

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

00;41;57 - 00;42;54

GAUEN LEE: If someone away like hundred years listens to this interview? Well, Korea is a very small country, started very poor and developed to this point that it spread its culture to this biggest country of the world. I just want them to know how Korea started very small and now it is very big. Not the geographical wise, but the culture.

00;42;54 - 00;42;58

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: And the state of Florida. And what about the state of Florida?

00;42;59 - 00;43;49

GAUEN LEE: The state of Florida? What I want them to know about Florida? It is a [state] that has a lot of cultures. Not much to be honest about the Florida especially. Well, I think it is a [state] where it combines a Hispanic culture and then all the other cultures too. But I have noticed that, ever since I came to America, Florida especially has a lot more Hispanic people because it is very close to the Caribbean. But I do not think it is related to your question anyway.

00;43;50 - 00;44;02

SEBASTIAN GARCIA: That is fine. I am not looking for any answer, that is totally fine. Gauen, thank you so much for taking some time out of your day to speak with me and share your life story. I really appreciate it.

00;44;02 - 00;44;05

GAUEN LEE: No problem. I was glad to share my story.