



The Lives of International Students, March 3, 2015

Title

“International Student Perspectives: Colombia and Malaysia”

Date

March 3, 2015

Location

Valley Library, Oregon State University.

Summary

Urbina and Yeang respond to a series of questions concerning cultural differences, impressions of the United States, and the international student experience. They both discuss their upbringing, family background, community life, early interests, and progression through the educational systems of their home countries. They likewise reflect on the importance of religion in their lives, their perceptions of the United States growing up, and the role that the internet has played in their lives. Urbina speaks of her early research experiences and her graduate studies in the Netherlands, while Yeang shares his thoughts on the cultural and ethnic divides that exist in Malaysia, and his active participation in *chanbara* martial arts competitions.

Both interviewees trace the path that they followed to OSU, and remark on their academic work at Oregon State, their living circumstances in Corvallis, cultural adjustments that they have needed to make as a result of living in the U.S., and the social circles that they have developed at OSU. Yeang notes the pressures that have been placed upon him to follow an educational track that will lead to a high paying job. Urbina and Yeang both speak of their involvement with campus groups, share their thoughts on major issues faced by international students as a group, and talk about their ambitions once they have completed their tenures at Oregon State.

Interviewees

Jenny Urbina, Kong Zheng Yeang

Interviewer

Chris Petersen

Website

<http://scarc.library.oregonstate.edu/oh150/international/>

Transcript

Chris Petersen: Okay, today is March 3rd, 2015 and we are in the Valley Library and this is the first in a series of interviews with international students at Oregon State University for the OH 150 project. We have two international students here and we'll talk a lot about their upbringing and their academic experience at OSU and then sort of their perspective on life as an international student in the United States and at OSU. So I'd ask you first to please introduce yourself with your name and your home country and your situation here at OSU; so your major and your academic standing, that sort of thing.

Jenny Urbina: Okay, my name is Jenny Urbina, I am from Colombia and today we are here in the Valley library. I am a PhD candidate in the Environmental Sciences grad program. Right now I'm just continuing with my research and probably in a couple of years I will have my entire result, PhD.

CP: Okay, terrific.

Kong Zheng Yeang: My name is Yeang Kong Zheng, I'm from Malaysia. I am currently an undergraduate doing mechanical engineering. I'm in my second year and I transferred credits from another college in my country.

CP: Okay. And do I understand that you go by Titus?

KZY: Yeah.

CP: So should I refer to you as Titus for the-?

KZY: Titus is good, yeah.

CP: Okay, terrific. Okay, so Jenny let's start with you. Let's talk a bit about your upbringing. Where were you born?

JU: I was born in a tiny town in Colombia that is called Pamplona, as Pamplona in Spain, and that is close to the frontier with Venezuela. It's around fifty thousand people, so similar to Corvallis, and it's really similar because it's up in the mountains, so the weather is also kind of cold. Not as cold, although I hear around that Corvallis is not cold at all in comparison to other places in United States.

CP: Yeah. Is that where you were raised?

JU: I was raised there and then I moved to study my undergrad in a big city, Medellín, one of the capital cities in my country, completely different. And then after finishing my undergrad I moved to the Netherlands to do my masters in science at the University of Amsterdam.

CP: That's interesting. What's your family background? What are your parents' employment and...

JU: My daddy was, his entire life, a teacher. My mom, she studied but she stayed at home taking care of us. It was me and my two older brothers.

CP: And tell me a bit about life growing up in the city, in Pamplona.

JU: Life in Pamplona was awesome, it was like tiny city, so tiny town really, so everybody knows each other. It was a really safe place, secure, no problems, relaxed, no traffic jams, just going from my house to the school and then to extracurricular activities; the theater or being in the chorus or practicing some sports, and that was it. And they played with their friends outside in the streets, like no problem at all.

CP: So you mentioned sort of what you were interested in and I was just going to ask the next question, is what sorts of things were you interested in growing up?

JU: When I was a kid I was always like having a lot of experience with the outdoors, and it was probably because of that that I decided to go and study biology, because I was like—I have like really wonderful experiences with that and

I love all the time being like out in the field. So I think that that was one way that pushed me to sciences. Also because my daddy was a teacher in chemistry, soil sciences and all that, so we were like all the time talking about that at home. My older brother is in fact, he's an organic chemist, and my other brother is a technician, like in environmental sanitation, something like that.

CP: So it sounds like education was a big point of emphasis in your family.

JU: Definitely, yes. They always were, like my parents were happy to help us going through school. So for them it was like a support that they gave us all the time. They were like "you go to the university, you study what you want and you're going to be happy," and yes, I'm happy.

CP: Did you encounter any resistance being a woman in science?

JU: That is a really good question, and it's like personally, haven't been like that hard, but as a group, women in science, we are in the fight, like we are of course outnumbered by guys, but I think that we are showing to the world that we are good academically and scientifically and that we can just be in the same level and do also awesome research.

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CP: Where did you do your undergraduate work?

JU: My undergraduate work was in—my thesis was focused on the impacts of fragment size of forests [?]in amphibians; that is frogs and toads, and I started in the northern part of the Andes, the mountains in Colombia. So that was my field of work, and it was the study, like my school classes and everything was in Medellín.

CP: That must have been a great experience doing the field work in the Andes.

JU: Yes, it was awesome, it was amazing. We were able to go to certain places where nobody was go before. At the time that I was doing my field work it was, the security, it was better at the time, so it was possible to go to those places, because before, due to the war in Colombia, we couldn't be able to access those places. It was amazing. We were also working with people working with bears, and they even found new species. We also found new species of froggies. I was not the one that discovered the frog, but we were the ones bringing the vultures like the animals, and somebody else made the description. So it was amazing, terrific.

CP: You mentioned the war; that was my next question. Was the political situation in Colombia growing up; what was that like for you?

JU: That was hard. I was recently talking to somebody else from my generation and I think that I would consider myself somebody from the war generation. It was tough. We were in the middle of the conflict all the time, and despite the fact that I was raised in a super safe place, that was not the situation for everybody else. But now we have some light and some hope with the dialogues, with the peace dialogues going on in the Havana in Cuba. So we'll see what happens.

CP: Was religion an important part of your life growing up?

JU: In Colombia most of the people are raised Catholic and a lot of schools and everything is like a hard part [?]. In my house for certain stories with the Catholic church, we were raised under those, like let's call it principles but more like the do the good thing to your neighbor, behave properly, don't do bad things, do the other ones, more than imposed a certain faith or a belief in God or Jesus Christ. So it was more like what is important and fundamental from the Catholic ideas, but not just to impose certain things.

CP: What was your perception of the United States growing up?

JU: It was like, when I was a kid and people are going here, it was just like the huge country full of opportunities with just a lot of awesome things to know about it. So it was always like I want to go there and see for myself.

CP: Did you consume a lot of American media growing up? Films and TV shows, that sort of thing?

JU: Yes, that is like all the time. When I was growing up, not too much, but when I was a teenager and then at the university level it was like all the series; *Friends* and all the series at the time. It was like a lot of influence, and then we were wondering about like, oh what else?. And movies also yes, not only the Hollywood movies, and I have been always a fan of the independent movies, and here in the states it is also a good place where those kind of movies are being produced. Also music, of course, like groups of rock. It's like a lot of influence, because the culture here in the states is rich. So that was a part. And I really don't know how that goes to, you know, like how it travels, but that's the experience.

CP: So tell me about how did you decide to go to the Netherlands, and then the experience of being in the Netherlands.

JU: So I decided to go to the Netherlands because I was trying to get a spot as a student in the University of Puerto Rico but it was really difficult, the application, and it was not completely sure and easy, like to find the funding. I saw then the opportunity to apply for a grant in the Netherlands for people coming from countries undeveloped. So I went okay, I can apply. It was super easy. It was the most, the easiest application in the world, for like write your name, date of birth, where are you coming from, why do you want to come to here, that was it.

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In Colombia there is a strong story between the Dutch guys and the Colombian scientists. Dutch was like they were the first people going and describing an important ecosystem that is called Paramos. It's up in the mountains, the Andean, and it's called glacial systems over there. So there is a really good school to go there, learn from those guys. Now it's like a big family, like you know who is your brother or sister academically and who is your daddy, who is your grandfather and your great grandfather. And my life in the Netherlands, no complaint. It's a wonderful country. I love being able to bike everyday everywhere, super safe, super fair. It's an amazing society.

CP: Very different, I'm sure, from what you were used to.

JU: Yes, entirely.

CP: Did you feel like you had to go to a different country to find the opportunities that you wanted for extending your education? Or was that going to be available to you in Colombia too?

JU: Is it—it's possible to have a really good level of education in Colombia, but I think that it's really important to go abroad, to change your perspective and to enrich your life. So it was more about that and also for the college opportunity to learn a second language. I know that is all a process, and even now after years and years of trying to speak English properly I know that I'm not that successful, but I do my best every day. So that is also different. And just enjoy the culture, the exchange of everything, customs, like why do you think like this or that, and that was more what I was looking for. Not only to enrich myself academically, but personally.

CP: Okay, let's move over to Titus. Where were you born, Titus?

KZY: I was born in the state of Penang, which is the top left corner of Malaysia, and it's a really tiny island, really small population, and I was raised there as well and I went through high school and part college there as well.

CP: How do you describe this region that you were in?

KZY: Penang, it has its own culture and we were recently named one of the top food destinations of the world by [*Lonely Planet*]. So we have really good food there. And we sort of rival all other states and all that, and a lot of tourists come to our areas just to have the food, so yeah, we're really good for that. Culture-wise it's very isolated, it has its own thing going on, as opposed to the other states, and yeah, it's really good being there.

CP: What is the climate like?

KZY: The climate all around is usually rainy and sunny, so it's very different to the four seasons here, especially winter. It doesn't get as cold as this. I was really hoping snow, but then, so it either rains a lot or it's just really, really hot.

CP: So it's sort of a tropical environment then, it sounds like.

KZY: Yeah.

CP: What is your family background?

KZY: My family background, my dad is a manager and my mom is a teacher in high school, and today, we're originally —my dad was originally from Penang, my mom is actually sort of from the center of Malaysia, but during university she moved to Penang, which is my state, and that's where she met my dad. And after that they stayed there ever since.

CP: So tell me about your upbringing in Penang.

KZY: I started off, as a kid, going to a Malay school, and in this school we were supposed to be taught Malay as a main language, so my second language is actually Malay, and when I was brought up, it's always more of a discipline kind of thing; scoring A's, academy was a really main thing, and then after that we went, I moved on to Penang Free School, which is my high school. And over there things got a bit different, because it's high school and I was exposed to a lot of different things that you don't normally see in primary school, and so my freedom expanded as well. My parents allowed me to do a lot more other things. So I got exposed to much more things.

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CP: Anything in particular you want to talk about?

KZY: It's very...it's very, I don't know how to say it but it's very discipline-focused. Being in high school it's not, even being in kindergarten, primary school, for example in primary school they don't exactly train your creativity as what I see in the shows here in kindergarten; they actually make you want to ask questions and then they give you a lot of problem solving to build your creativity. In my education system it's all about memorization. In high school we had seven subjects to focus on. The first three years was five and then after that the next two years we had seven subjects and it's pure memorization. There's hardly any critical thinking. Everything it's just remember, remember, remember, and then you answer it. So that's how they trained us, and if you can't memorize it you can't score an A. It's all the book, you just need to—that book, you just need to remember that. It doesn't even matter if you understand it or not. Their answer's always "just memorize it," that's it.

And discipline's always been very strict there. Caning's allowed, as I don't think it's allowed here, but it's very common there. You will have in high school, even in primary school, you'll have discipline teachers walking around with canes of all sorts of sizes. I've been caned multiple times. The canes can go up to like walking stick sizes, which is really painful. And my high school life is pretty rough. I skipped quite a lot of classes, actually. So it's kind of adventurous sort of a way. People try to go against the rules, like if they put a rule that says "you can't have hair this long," they're going to make it all the way, they're going to just grow all their hair out, and they'll try to skip meetings and those kind of days where they actually check the hair. So it's like a mischievous time and I feel like it's very controversial to the way my parents raised me. I feel like in my country, especially in Asia, they raise you and if you don't do it right they punish you really, really badly. And once we grow up we realize that we don't get those things. So, and we don't get those things, we sort of try to get it in a mischievous way sort of thing. So yeah, that was my high school life.

Plus I was exposed to only like five good friends throughout my high school. My high school's the worst years of my life. Like everyone says that, "oh I wish I was back," I was like "no, I do not want to go back there." Five years wasted because of one guy, he's the headmaster of my school. See when I moved in he came in at the same time, so everyone had high expectations of him. In my school, when you're in Penang Free School, your headmaster is an ex-Free School student who was there before; this guy was new. No one knew who he was. And so when he came and he started doing his own rules, he set everything and it just went upside down. He, I don't know, there were a lot of problems going on with him and people just started skipping classes and the whole grade, the level, the name of Penang Free School just dropped, and for five years I just didn't want to stay. I didn't even want to be in there, and that was just horrible.

The only thing that kept me going was my sport. When I was in kindergarten I was introduced by my best friend; Chanbara, which is a traditional Japanese martial art, and we use airsoft weapons so it's pretty safe. It's sort of like sword fighting. And throughout my years I actually went to represent my country in the world a few times, so I went in Japan and Yokohama and I competed and I got a gold medal, which is the highlight of all my years. That was the only good time

in those five years, and then after that it just kept me going. And then my friend, my best friend who introduced this, he left for America. He's actually in Utah now. So yeah, that was my high school life. It's been really rough and there's really nothing good to say about it, as much as she has to say about it. I really didn't really enjoy it at all.

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CP: Yeah. Well you must have been very devoted to your sport if you were competing internationally.

KZY: Yeah, I was devoted. The amount of training, I have scars on my back to prove how much I went through for the worlds, and what's worse; when I went through worlds I ate Japanese food and I got sick. So you have fever and you have diarrhea and you go in to fight, it's like the worst two things you need to have, with a headache and all that, but I tried my best. I wasn't just used to anything. I ate some noodles which had white soup in it. I didn't know the colors and it seemed familiar. So yeah, I focused on sports a lot. And I had to drop it out at some point, because I had to focus on my studies. And really it's not even studies, it's just memorization. If you can memorize a paragraph you just go in the test and just write the whole essay down by word by word. Chinese schools are amazing at doing that.

In my country we're multicultural; we're Malay, Chinese and Indian, so you can have like Malay, Chinese and Indian schools, and the Chinese schools are amazing at math and memorization. I have a friend who can memorize books, like word for word. She memorized a whole dictionary. When she wanted to speak English she just read the whole English dictionary day by day, and she tried to memorize the words. Yeah, that's crazy, how they get trained. And they do math like insanely quick.

CP: You mentioned that Malay is your second language, what is your first language?

KZY: My first language is English. I was raised to speak English even though I went to a Malay school. I learned English with my dad and my mom. My mom and my dad have two separate languages; my dad can speak Cantonese as well as English and my mom can speak Mandarin, which is a standard Chinese language, but when they speak to each other it's Hokkien, which is a typical Penang dialect, and I know that too but I don't consider it as a language; it's more of a dialect. And I needed to know that because our food that we buy there, the people over there speak Hokkien, which is native, the dialect. And you need to learn it to buy food, so I had to learn it. I started off by learning a few words, like do I want one or two and do I want it packed or eaten here and do I want chili in it, do that kind of thing. And it slowly grew from there. The worse things are the numbers. Like they will say it really fast and then you're like oh my god, is it a dollar twenty or is a dollar twenty-five, or something like that. So I learned Hokkien just by listening around. English is my main language. My parents never taught me Cantonese or Mandarin, so I sort of have like three main languages.

CP: A question for both of you; what role did the internet play in your upbringing? Why don't you tell me first, Titus.

KZY: The internet, like I said, the discipline was amazing, so when I discovered the internet my parents just took it away straight away because they knew I was going to get addicted to it. I sort of think now that's not a right way to bring it up, because it means that I will want to use it more. So in primary school I hardly had the internet, I was so confined, and even in high school I never had my phone, I never had a laptop. Only when I completed my high school I got a laptop for college and a phone, a solid phone, and then I got my first number and I didn't even know how to use it. So I was cut off. And of course I went to—I actually skipped classes and I went to internet cafes and I used the internet. So internet didn't really play a big role, even educational wise. We just did everything by the book. So the internet was actually relatively nonexistent in my high school life and in my primary school life.

CP: How about you, Jenny?

JU: In elementary school, forget about it. Middle school; forget about it, high school forget about it. There was no internet. Probably because I'm older than him, so like for me internet was more as an undergrad, but at the time it was super slow.

KZY: I can imagine.

JU: I remember like the modems, it was like the [makes dial-up sound effect], it was like that strange noise. So if you think about nowadays, it's a huge tool. You can just reach a lot of databases in a second. That is amazing for your

research. Also it could be overwhelming, because it's super difficult to be up-to-date with all the scientific papers. It's like every single week you are just reading and reading and reading. But just at the time when I was young, it was not at all like a tool like it is nowadays. I got my first laptop as a master student. So it's like fourteen years ago. Yes, it's different.

CP: Titus, did religion play any role in your upbringing?

KZY: Religion, religion is all about the talk in my country. We have three main races, and as you can imagine, everyone likes to think that we live in harmony, but we really don't. It's three main races. The first thing that you can think about that comes from my race comes in as racism, and our government tried to combine it by having One Malaysia, that's what they call it, combining the three main races, and race just plays a huge role. Things were supposed to calm down but I think they're slowly escalating a bit more now, and it's actually supposed to be, I feel like it's getting worse and worse. Back then, based on our history in my country, when they had a peace treaty the Malays had the upper hand, because supposedly it's their country, and so the Chinese and Indian are actually one step below the Malays. And so Malays always had the advantage in everything, and when the Chinese tried to step up or the Indians try to step up, the Malays just bring back that one little piece of paper where these three guys signed it, and this one Chinese guy, whom I don't even know now, agreed to all this.

So that's how the culture is right now, but it's changing slowly. Back then everybody followed tradition, followed by the rules, and it's like "oh, we're better than you" and that kind of thing. It's changing now in a way that everyone's becoming open minded, even the Malays are. They're just being brought up to be open-minded, like gays and lesbians and those kind of things, it's slowly saying like what is right and what is wrong, what is based on culture and tradition back then. Now it's just opening up a bit more. And so back then in my high school you'll have groups of Chinese, groups of Malays, groups of Indians here and there in your own gang, doing that kind of stuff. And they—there are fights that actually come up every once in a while with the races, and their style of socializing is very different as well. Chinese people, they always like to go into their, they call it *alongs* [?], which are sort of like mafias kind of thing. They start really young in high school. It's not really that crazy, but people, they want to be like that because they think it's cool, and they will try to smoke, they would try to do drugs, they would try to ride motorcycles even though they don't have a license, and that's what the Chinese people are.

And for the Malays they would smoke as well and they would go around and hang in groups, and they're style of conversation is very different. They would always try and dominate each other in conversations. And the Indians, they would always try to make things look really big, like "oh my god, he's a [mumbles]," then their friend's like "oh my god [mumbles]," that kind of thing. That's how they act, at least that's how I saw it. And they just, I don't know, I feel like the Indians are really strong in presenting themselves. They're really good, they're really confident as well. So that's how culture affected me.

Food-wise as well, oh my god. The amount of foods that just the variety is huge because we have three different cultures, and you have three different cultural foods which combine itself. Once in a while you have Chinese and Indian, so it spreads out. You have just a wide array of amazing foods that we have. So culture played a really big role.

CP: Now is your family background Malay or Chinese?

KZY: It's Chinese, but recently my family had, we have a little family tree and we had one really old picture and when we looked at it, my great, great, great, I don't know how many greats, grandmother does not seem like she was from China. She seemed from somewhere else, maybe Vietnamese or something like that. So I might have a mix somewhere on the inside. But yeah, mainly it's all Chinese.

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CP: And what was your perception of the United States growing up?

KZY: My perception of the United—well the grass is always greener on the other side of the hill. I have always been a fan of the US. My family goes against it, my friends were just like "oh it's just normal, it just looks better." I've always had a brighter perception of the US, mainly because the opportunities and the freedom that it has. See when you grow up

being held down, like a leash, you just want freedom to be able to do your own things and make your own choices. So because of that America just seemed brighter and brighter and brighter.

And I went to a lot of American movies; mainly my English accent, you don't get this in Malaysia. We have our own accent, the Malaysian accent, which is not like mine. So when you go there don't be surprised that everyone speaks in sort of a Singaporean accent. It's really similar. But I got mine from watching a lot of movies. And it just happened instinctively. I didn't train for it. Well, I thought it was funny at times, like you know Johnny Depp when he says that, his own style, and I just try to follow it. It sort of became after that I felt like, personal experience, the Malaysian accent is very hard to speak quickly and it's a non-flowing kind of thing. They will have a lot of la's and ma's inside, which are like [in Malaysian accent] "don't do this-la," which is sort of like the end of a sentence kind of thing. And it just didn't seem flowy for me and when I did sort of the American accent, it just flowed really easily. I can speak a sentence really quickly without stopping and all that kind of thing. So it just happened naturally. That's how I got my accent in my English, basically, watching movies and listening. Ryan Seacrest was on quite a lot of the times in Malaysia. From that.

CP: So you mentioned you finished high school and you went to college for a while in Malaysia, is that correct?

KZY: Yes. I went to in the International College Penang. It's sort of like a global international college, and I did American degree program, which supposedly is supposed to work, but it didn't. So let me explain it. This American degree program, after I finished my high school my dad was like "oh, you need to go overseas." Well actually he just said that and he's like "we need everything cheap," that's what he wanted to say. Everything is discipline and money when it comes to my life. And so it was like cheap, cheap, cheap, and I was like oh my god, I'm never going to go anywhere. And then my friend, another best friend, I only have like five so you can imagine these people played such a big role, and it was like "hey, there's an American degree program. You do this and then you apparently can transfer credits to another country." So I showed my dad and he's like "oh, it looks like a good idea." He's, my dad's been to American, he studied at Washington State and Saint Louis and he's been there for like seven years I think, and he did his engineering, he got his degree there and then he came back to Malaysia of course. And so I—my dad said yes, my mom said yes and I went into the degree.

And apparently what happens, what they say anyway, business, it's like two years here and two years in the US. So I complete two years' worth of transfer credits to the US and then I complete my other two years in the US. That was supposedly the plan. So I did two years in my college, and the amount of credits that I could transfer was like maybe three quarters or one half. So I wasted one year in my country. That's why I'm supposedly older than the rest now. And the problem was that the transfer credits didn't work for a lot of the universities. They claim like "oh, you can transfer the credits there," but a lot of universities don't accept it, mainly because our educational system is just not up to par.

Our English is like kindergarten's here and our math is like elementary level. So a lot of the transfer credits are like "oh, this covered like only two of our chapters" and I'm like "so what do I do?" You got to take the whole thing again, and the amount of money you waste—of course a lot of them transferred, maybe three quarters, but I always say one year. And my dad, he just said that "oh, I thought the two years would be covered," and I'm like "yeah, I thought that too but it didn't work." And so I'm here now in actually my sophomore when I'm supposed to be in my junior year.

CP: So were you studying engineering in Malaysia, or was it just sort of a base curriculum?

KZY: Base, yeah. The first two years. They didn't even have subjects for engineering, that's how sort of not up to par the degree is. The degree just covered the most basic things; chemistry, physics, biology, there's your sciences. I think a lot of art subject, even there's no engineering, there's no major stuff, you just do whatever you're supposed to do in freshman, sophomore, and then you transfer over. But yeah, that's all they had. So that was my part-college life.

[0:35:43]

CP: Okay, back to Jenny. Did you come straight from the Netherlands to the United States?

JU: No, I finished my masters and then, I don't know if this is the experience everybody, but after finishing a master you think like "that's enough," because after writing a thesis and go through your dissertations and everything, it's like "I'm done. I'm not going to the school anymore." So I went back to Colombia, I was working for a couple of years and then

I saw a terrific opportunity to come to the states through the Fulbright Program. I applied despite the fact that I thought I was not going to get it, because it's just hundreds of people applying for the program. At the time I was working, so I knew my application was not as good as I wanted to work on that. I couldn't explain that, I didn't have time because I was working at the same time, but anyhow I just finished the due date and I sent it and then I was called for interviews and everything. So it was after a couple of years.

CP: So the Fulbright Program was specifically to OSU, or was it just funding to go to someplace in the US?

JU: The Fulbright Program is really good in how does it work. So they gave you the opportunity, like you are the one that pick out five different schools, and then they try to connect to the five different schools and they are making like okay, how are you going to offer, this is going to offer this and that and that. And then sometimes it's like no, the professor cannot accept you because there is not enough—that he or she has already a lot of students or things like that, or this school is not giving you anything, things like that, or that is not the program that you want at the end. So the Fulbright Program helps you going through the entire process.

Oregon State was my number one, that was it, so I was able to go here through the interview. It was really hard, with my two professors that are now my supervisors. At the end of the interview I thought they were not going to pick me out, because it was a really hard interview. But no, then later they called me and they said like "we are accepting you to Oregon State."

CP: Was the interview over the phone?

JU: It was Skype, video Skype. So it was hard. It was really hard.

CP: How did you identify OSU as your first choice?

JU: For the professors. That was the first element, is like the people that are working here, they work as specialists in the topic. And I have been following their work all the time and I was like, I didn't want to go and train myself with this. So that was the first thing, and the second one is the weather, because I knew it was a mild winter and I would be able to survive the conditions.

CP: So when you got here, what was your first impressions of the university and of Corvallis?

JU: I think that I just loved it, because it was similar to my hometown so it was like being at home. You know, I arrived in fall so there was just beautiful; the colors, the buildings, Oregon State has a wonderful campus. It was easy to find yourself in town enough activities to have fun, not crowded, like it's not a city but it's not a town, it's just this fantastic academic place where you can be. So I just fell in love with Corvallis as soon as I came in.

CP: How did you go about finding a place to live?

JU: A place, that was hard.

CP: Yeah [laughs].

[0:39:57]

JU: That was hard at the time, and I was so fortunate. So through the school there is a program where people from Corvallis, they act as hosts, they host international students for a couple of days, and that was the option that I used. So for an entire weekend I spent, at that time, with a family here in town and they walked me through the entire town. They helped me to see where the grocery store was and everything, and then they were also helping me like "okay, these are possible places where you can go and live," because I was a little bit afraid of finding a place in advance and without checking the place. In Colombia it's completely different, you go and check the place and then just decide if you want to stay at that place or not because of the conditions. Far away you don't know if it is far or near to school. Now with Google Maps it was easy to know, but that family helped me a lot. And that is for free. It's amazing that somebody from the community—and it's just because they want to host an international student. So that was much—but it was hard. So I stayed a couple of months with a family that they were renting a room and somebody else was graduating, somebody else

from Ecuador. She was graduating at the time, so I just transferred from that unit to her apartment. But it's, depending on the time of the year when you are arriving, could be difficult to find a place.

CP: Yeah. Now was this 2013?

JU: That was 2011.

CP: 2011, okay. Well tell me about becoming a doctoral candidate at OSU and sort of settling into that life.

JU: That, like the first two years a lot of classes, hard. You are stressed all the time, because I'm coming from a system that it was semester system, in the Netherlands and also in Colombia, and just coming here to acquire a system where you have not an entire quarter is just like it was super stressful. But then that was like—I think the most stressful quarter was the first one, because I didn't know how to try to equilibrate my time with everything, so then later with discipline you're able to do that. You don't have time for a sport, have time for your friend, for your family, for your academic activities.

So becoming a PhD candidate, I think that it involves a lot of discipline and also trying to maintain your mind, like be happy with what you're doing and enjoying all the time. So it was two years of classes, then a year of research, then couple of months is studying for the qualifying exams, going through the exam. It was not easy, but I passed. I passed, I was like, it's supposed to be like a dialogue with the committee members, but it's a challenge. But have been, was a good time, a little fun going to the—so I have to, my research involved experiments in the lab but at the same time field work, and just having the opportunity to see all the different sides in the mountains here in Oregon is so wonderful, peaceful and so pretty outside. But I'm just happy.

CP: Yeah. Did you feel prepared when you arrived at OSU, or was—I mean you mentioned the quarter system was difficult, but from your previous training, did you feel prepared for the classes that you were taking?

JU: I think so but in the load it was way more than I was expecting. So I guess I was, and I think that as an international student I get a little bit, like the language and I need to spend a little bit more time, I mean a little bit but it could be like two hours more than the normal people use to do something. So I did, but the training was good. The training in the Netherlands was very good; the training back in Colombia was good also but it's your native language, so it's in Spanish. So that is something completely different.

CP: Yeah. Was the training in the Netherlands in English?

JU: Yes, yes. Thank God, because Dutch I can't manage. I just learned a couple of words to be able to go to the stores and ask for food or for something to drink, something like that.

CP: Did you have a good idea of what you wanted to research before you came to OSU? Or did you establish that once you got here?

[0:45:01]

JU: No, like as I told you, I have been following these people and they are working on amphibians and kind of a focus, and I have been all, like since I was an undergrad, working with frogs and toads, salamanders, all those guys, so I just love them and I knew what was the training that I wanted to receive here, and I just go for it.

CP: Have you done any teaching?

JU: Yes.

CP: How's that going?

JU: I'm going to—the first time that I taught was last quarter and it was only half appointment and it was through the grad school, and I will be teaching this coming quarter biology, like general biology. So hopefully it's going to be fine and hopefully the students are going to understand my accent.

CP: Okay Titus, so you've finished a couple years of school in Malaysia and then you were intending to come to the US. Was it—how'd you decide on OSU? How'd that happen?

KZY: Definitely OSU was my number one choice. Well, technically Oregon the state was my number one choice. I applied to eight universities, something like that. I applied to OSU, I applied to University of Portland, I applied to Linfield College, those are all in Oregon, and I had University of Maine, which isn't the right side.

JU: The right side [laughs].

KZY: And I had applied one, two, three, maybe four California states; San Jose, Long Beach, I'm not sure what the other two are, as well as, I'm not sure what was the other one, but yeah I applied to a lot of universities. Basically I ruled down on prices, as well as scholarships and location. I picked Oregon or California because it was on—it was relatively, supposedly safe. And Oregon was my number one choice because of the nature. I just love trees and flowers, and I feel like the environment, it's really suitable for my preferred style, and when I applied I was worried because Oregon, supposedly tax-free, kind of expensive as compared to the other universities. You have California State; standard 28,000 dollars per year for an international student. Oregon State is 40,000. That is a lot more. And University of Portland's 50,000. I'm like how am I going to ever get into this state? And I really wanted to come here and my dad was like "okay, you can come here if you get a scholarship." That's where I joined ICSP. I was really fortunate to get it. I was even late for the due date of the application, which I apologized to them and all that, but I was really fortunate to still get it.

CP: What is ICSP?

KZY: It's an International Cultural Service Program where we, me and her, me and Jenny, we actually volunteer to give speeches about our culture and our country and we talk about all those kind of things. And through that we get a scholarship every term and it lowers the prices by a lot, so we're really fortunate. Without that I don't think I'd be able to come here at all. And at first my dad actually went to a temple to pray and ask whether it's suitable or not to come to OSU, and they said no, but my dad was like "just go ahead." And back in my country it's sort of a big thing when they say no. These are like fortune tellers; you pray to a god and a stick falls out and you read the stick and it's like oh, it's bad. And then it's like "don't try to get here and try to pick out the universities," but dad, since Dad was—this was the only year, you see, where I got a scholarship, so my dad said yeah, then my mom said yes, so I came here.

And when I came here there were a lot of surprises. The quarter system is a wreck, it's just destroyed. The semester system is so much better. The amount of load here, oh my god, of work that you have to do is just humongous. And back in my country we get copied and do a lot of fraud to complete our homework and all that. We do group studies a lot. Like here everyone's like the culture is a bit different. In my country it's more collectivist, and here's more individualistic. So to meet someone it's very difficult, and for them to get comfortable and want to hang out in a gang is just so tough, and I think people just give up after that. It's just the style here. And very few people are very open. So when I came here the quarter system was just really, really tough. I wasn't used to it at all, and the homework load.

[0:49:59]

Even the teachings were different. I took math here and I took math back in my country, and my country's really simple. They'll just give you "here's a list of all the formulas by chapter. You just need to remember this and we'll give you a question and you try to apply that." Here they explain it as if it's Einstein's theory, and it's like "oh to get this you need to go through all this," and after like fifteen minutes of teaching they'll be like "you just need to remember this." And the test, they don't ask you about the whole theory, they just ask you that one formula. So the style of teaching is just so hard sometimes, when sometimes it's just easy to get the formula and you learn it backwards or something like that. So the style of teaching here is different, quarter system's just crazy.

And I came here thinking that I could enjoy the environment, the four seasons as well. It's supposedly more controlled since it's closer to the beach as well, less snow and all that. But it's just so tough with the quarter system half the time you're just running to class and coming back. You don't want to go anywhere because you just want to rest after all the huge loads of work, and it's very different from semester systems because every week there's homework. So it's like you can't rest, so you complete one, it's like oh my god, I got to wait for the next homework to come out. It's like there's a constant run. It's like jogging instead of running and then resting and then running again. It's just like a constant jog and

you just want to wait for the system to end, the term to end. It's just how tough it was. When I came here I expected I would enjoy the scenery more, but this is tough. It's a bit more different than what I anticipated, definitely.

CP: Did you know you wanted to be mechanical engineer before you came here?

KZY: Uh-uh, no. I actually—

CP: How did you settle on that?

KZY: I was actually interested in environmental engi—environmental science. I like biology, I like chemistry and I just love learning about animals. I had a dream of discovering my own species so I could sort of put my name in it, kind of thing. I don't how that works, but yeah, I just love—I'd rather discover than learn engineering. I don't know, I was just into it. And my dad was actually not really comfortable with it, because he was in biology as well when he came to America, but he swapped to engineering because he thought of a more long-term goal. He said that "if I finish my degree in biology and I ever go back to my country," which he did in the end, "I'm not going to get a job," because in my country biology is not up to par yet, it's not—research there is hardly anything, and engineering was the only thing. In my country you can either be an engineer, a lawyer or a doctor. Those are the three main things. You aren't that, you're going to have big trouble. So over there in my country everyone talks about those three. Anything else is like hardly anything.

So my dad did engineering and when I said that I wasn't sure what I'd like to do but I liked biology, which was sort of like in the genes, because my dad liked it to, he was like, he put it down flat, he's like "I'm investing in you, so when you go to America I'm going to spend a lot of money; I expect to be getting a lot of money back, so I hope you get a professional degree and not a standard degree, because if you're getting a standard degree you might as well do it here in Malaysia, way cheaper." So it's just hard. A professional degree I can either be a teacher, an engineer, lawyer, doctor, architect, and all those just didn't seem like a secure job, something everyone was looking for. But I had no choice but to go into mechanical engineering. I didn't, I still don't like it. I'm just going through it right now. I think even if an engineer likes it they'll probably still say it's tough, which I hardly see any engineers like "I love this so much," but it's just tough as an engineer.

CP: Have you had conversations like this with other international students that are facing similar pressures?

KZY: Surprisingly I—as an engineer, or like what they pick as a major?

CP: Well this, your father saying he's investing in you and you needing to select something that's going to be a good return on the investment.

KZY: Yeah, surprisingly here I don't see a lot of that.

CP: Really?

KZY: People come in here, if they want to be an engineer they do as an engineer. I've only met one or two, as opposed to quite a lot of them that says they're doing what they like, and if they don't know what they want to do, they usually go undeclared or they go into business. My dad didn't want either of that, so I had to go engineering either way. I thought there'd be more. But when I was back in my old college in Malaysia, there was a lot that said they're just going into it because it gives me money, because my parents want it. Over here they're doing a lot of things that they want to do, surprisingly.

CP: Did you live on campus when you arrived?

[0:54:59]

KZY: Nope. Being a sophomore I had the privilege of picking off-campus, and you can imagine how hard is it to find a house from halfway across the world, so I actually—we have Malaysian, a few Malaysians over here and I contacted them and they told me to use Craigslist. And I did use Craigslist; it helped but it didn't really help, because the style and the culture here is a bit different. You call a lot; in my country you don't because it's just, I just wasn't comfortable with calling and asking. We're not built to do that. We're built to write, we're built to maybe ask but not call face-to-face, and

I got a really mean call from some person when I called them. When I called the Craigslist number it was some house and he just called me and he was like "oh, are you an OSU member yet?" and I wasn't even sure whether I was an OSU student yet, because I haven't gotten my ID and all that. He wanted my ID and he asked me when I was graduating and then he asked so many questions, I just kept saying no and he's like "look man, I can't rent this to you because you don't have anything, and I don't know how to help you. Bye." And that was the first call that I did and it was so bad. And I can't remember his name but it was so tough.

And I got lucky, I got an off-campus apartment which is around five minutes from Kearney's and is really cheap as well. When I reached here I had to stay at my friend's house. Thank God there were Malaysians here, so I crashed their place and then the next day I ran everywhere, I went and looked for houses and I found a few but none of them were that good. And thankfully I found one that's close and it's really thankful, because I always run to class like five minutes before. Like I live five minutes close, so I run five minutes before class. So if I picked anything further, it's hard. I don't even have a lic—my license doesn't work here because I drive on the right side, the right side? Yeah, I drive on the right side and they did driving on the left side, so my license doesn't work here.

And when I got here the rules were just so confusing. I didn't know bikes had to ride a path as well, I didn't know pedestrians have—if you walk in my country, you better be careful because cars will hit you. They don't stop for you. Bikes will get hit as well. So it was just so weird they stop for you, because I stand by the side of the road waiting for cars to cross, then only I cross, but they stop and then I'm like okay, so when you going to go?

JU: [Laughs] they are trying to kill me.

KZY: And they're like they're shoing me to go and I'm like "okay, I go." It's really scary when you're so used to waiting for cars to cross, because they drive and a lot of people will just walk and they will stop, but I will stand by the side and wait until they stop. So imagine in my country if you walk and they just drive and they continuously drive, they'll hit you. They don't stop. They will honk the horn at you and say that "oh, what are you doing?" So it's really scary because when you just cross and the car's like in the middle of slowing down, I'm just not used to that because it's just so scary. They can just move, continue moving and they hit you. So culture-wise, I wasn't used to the rules.

And the food here was not the best, because I grew up in a state where we had really good food, so I wasn't used to the food here at all. I expected it to be good, because you watch a lot of movies and the foods are really high class, and I realized that to be high class you have to pay a lot. So the food here wasn't exactly the best. Things here are dollar for dollar. That's the one other thing that's really pricey. McDonalds in my country is about five ringgit. Here it's five US dollars. Convert five ringgit to US dollars, that's one and a half dollars. The change is times three. So everything here is like a meal in a restaurant. Ten dollars, it's like ten ringgit, it's like three dollars in my country. So, and we get food even better or just as good. So here it's like [sighs]. And I saved so much in my country, like I don't go out to eat. So coming here and forced to spend that much, I just regret saving so much back home, because I could have ate so much, but I go this is so cheap, and now I'm spending so much. It's just crazy. Yeah, so it's this huge difference in a lot of things and it took some time to get used it.

CP: Yeah.

KZY: I didn't really have culture shock because I watched a lot of movies; I was pretty use to it. But I learned about lots of things.

CP: Yeah. Well food's something I'll ask both of you about. So how do you find food that's palatable to you? Is it still an ongoing process?

[1:00:02]

KZY: It's still an ongoing process. I usually try to find the most average kind of; nothing too expensive, nothing—I avoid organic because it's just crazy, like ten dollars for a bag of flour. I'm like no way. And several things; when you go to a supermarket here, and a supermarket in my country's different. Our supermarket has a cinema on the top floor kind of thing and we have many floors and you have all the clothing and then you'll have one section where it's just grocery. Here

it's just all grocery kind of thing, and they have—it's more wide. My own is more high. We have lots of floors. But here it's like so wide you got to walk around, while we take escalators.

So the arrangements of foods as well are very different. Here you have like ten billion companies selling the same product and we just have one thing in my country, or maybe five, half of what they have here, and we just pick what we want and we just move on. A lot of things changed, like we had button mushrooms. We always eat like watery kind of mushrooms which are in cans; here you have like the dry mushrooms. And I wasn't used to picking the products. I was like, I spent hours in the shopping mall when I first got here, scanning all of the products. I'm like "what am I supposed to buy here?" And you know when you get here, I want to get my toiletries; shampoo, bathing soap, toothbrush, toothpaste, and the way they arrange things it's like very difficult to find. For my country it's just like face wash: one section, and then you'll have all the products. Here they have like face wash, the body soap, all in one aisle. So I go look really hard and then actually find my product. And here they have "four dollars" and then "oh, buy it now for three dollars," and like why don't you just put three dollars in the first place? And in my country we have none of that. It's just that price.

So the food-wise I—the milk here is different. I'm not sure whether it's supposed to be any fresher. It tastes more like skim milk. I don't know, it feels more diluted. The taste of the vegetables are even different. It's very strong. There's like a flavor to the vegetables. My country is like tasteless. Our carrots are ten times bigger than the carrots here. So I just wasn't used to the flavor, even after I cooked it. And after I did it still tasted weird. So it took a while to get used to the food in the US.

CP: Yeah. How about you Jenny? Your experience with food.

JU: So the experience of food, from the point of view of Colombians, we have a lot of fresh things over there, like all the foods are fresh, for the fruits especially. I miss them so much. It's like we don't have here a lot and when they are here it's just super pricey, so it's like buying a mango for I don't know, one dollar fifty, it's like oh my gosh. And to just think about the conversion—

KZY: Yeah, it's ridiculous.

JU: It's probably going to be like twice or more the price. So it's like, it's insane. So I miss sometimes fresh fruits, especially the juice. Like we are used, in Colombia, you go to one's house and then they are going to offer you a glass of some juice; guava, pineapple, and that's like the rule. Or they can invite me for a cup of coffee, of course. But the rest of the time it's like—it's okay for me now, after three years, I'm able to find the ingredients to cook, for example, Colombian food. So it's easy, but at the beginning it's hard to get used to the food here. I just miss the fruit so much.

KZY: It's just kind of weird, you came here expecting that you'd be eating western food but you end up cooking all the Colombian and Malaysian food.

JU: [Laughs] well I may do—and it's awesome, like last week I went just to Portland and I spent like an entire week in a conference and I love that place. It's like when you have the cart food and it's—those are not that expensive and you can enjoy the entire world in those blocks. So that was amazing, but here it's a little bit pricey, so I guess we have to save.

KZY: Yeah, I was surprised by the price here.

JU: But in Portland, in Portland the carts are an okay price for good food.

KZY: I was surprised by the price here. I didn't know that it will be much, expensive here, as compared to Portland. I didn't know it'd be so pricey. Maybe because it's a university, it's that area. But not cheap.

CP: Tell me about social life, making friends and finding a community as an international student.

[1:05:07]

KZY: When we first came here nobody wanted to talk to us. You're like an outland, I don't know. They're much more friendlier but they have like this cloak, like you can only talk this much about me and then my deep attachment feelings are not for you to talk about. In my country it's none of that like that. They're really friendly in my country. Of course

it's sort of like the opposite, like over here when they really say "hi, good morning," but you don't really know anything about them. But they're just really friendly to you. In my country they're like very shy and they don't talk, so it's the exact opposite, but once you get them to talk they get really close. You know their personal feeling, personal self more. So it's like here you don't really need that much effort, I feel, to talk to people; I know you need a lot of effort to know them more. In my country you just need to talk a bit and then once you start that people get really close to you.

So social life-wise here, like we go to classes with a hundred students, two hundred students, three hundred students. My country, it's like twenty students, and I make more friends there than in here. The people here, they just focus on their work so much. They come to class, they stare at a wall, a teacher teaching, and it's hard to converse because you're so focused on studying here. And after class ends everyone runs away. I don't know where they go. And you can hardly converse anything. They try to make things more conversational, they do a lot of group discussions, but people just talk about what they're supposed to talk about, they don't branch out of it. So it stays within there. And it just doesn't, it doesn't work. Group discussions, it's not, it just doesn't work that way. So they try to do that but it doesn't work. I don't know.

CP: Have you found that you're gravitating towards other international students as your social circle?

KZY: It depends, because I have a few—I know a few people who—those who actually try to help international students, they're really friendly, because they're open and all that kind of thing. I honestly have no friends at all here. I go to class, I come back. I can hardly talk to anyone, not because I don't try; I don't have the time. As an engineer you take five subjects a term. The amount of study and the homework that you got to do after, it just takes your life away, basically. And I can't even make friends during class because everyone's so busy writing down and focusing in class. So I have no friends, even though I want to make friends with Americans. Asians are much more easier to talk to basically, I don't know why. I am not necessarily branching to international students, but I'm not branching to Americans either, so I'm like a loner at this point.

CP: Is there much of a Malaysian community?

KZY: There is a branch of Malaysian community, about forty or so. I just, I came here to have an American experience, so I try not to mix too much with the Malaysians because I know once I do I'll probably stick to them for a long time and not branch out, and I see that. When I went to a few group events and meetings, I noticed everyone just sticks within themselves and it's hard to branch out, so I try not to do that. But we do have, I have a safety side I guess. If anything goes wrong I can go to them, so that's a good thing, but I really want to make more friends. And I think maybe it will work in graduate?

JU: I think that it's different. Like it's for me, have been a little bit different. I understand at the point where you were talking about the classes, like classes, my general classes on statistics is like a hundred; I don't know, more than a hundred, and it's difficult. But then I don't know if it was because I was always sitting in the same spot and the same people, then you begin to talk to the people. Don't know if it is for the level, but I have pretty good friends. Like the people in my two different labs, they are amazing.

KZY: But do they stick to you after your subjects?

JU: Like the guys from the classes? Yes, we continue writing emails or chatting, or we exchange—

KZY: That's cool.

JU: phone numbers, and from time to time, because we are super busy also—grad school is like, I don't know, it's we'd love to have a day of forty-eight hours instead of twenty-four. So from time to time you're like "hey, let's go and grab a coffee and let's see what, how is it going with everybody else." But yes, like I have good friends in my lab and also from outside, from the classes. Not a lot, I'm not going to say like "oh, I have hundreds," but no, but there is a number of people that now I can count as friends. So it's—

[1:10:27]

KZY: That's really good.

JU: I guess, I don't know, probably it's the level. I don't know if the interaction is also different, but for me the social is hard because in Colombia we are just probably super friendly and we are just like, just kissing each other, like hugging each other, it's a lot of touching.

KZY: We don't do that.

JU: Yes, exactly. Like I know you guys, you don't do that. But in Colombia we are like, that's the normal. That's the rule, it's like you say hi and you kiss the other on their cheek. That's normal. And here it's not like—here you have to talk like [holds arm straight out] an arm of distance. If you cross that it's like you're crossing that barrier.

KZY: Stay back.

JU: Yes, yes, yes.

KZY: Like whoa.

JU: They are like "oh, why are they so close to me? What am I supposed to do?" But other people, for example, my friends from the lab, now they know like if I hug them and everything, it's just like we are just friends, it's nothing else involved, but for them it was difficult, like they say "why are you so close?" So—

KZY: She's probably more super friendly than me. So that explains why she's [inaudible].

JU: And I just love that, like I just love—I also have like a, people from different nationalities, like other international students, I just love them. Like I just love sharing with them and exchanging experience and just laugh about our experiences here in the states. I'm all the time telling my friends in the lab like "okay, how to"—I think that it's important to have American friends because then you know how to proceed in certain moments that you are not completely sure what to do. So yes, it's just—for me have been just great. It's all eventually, just the way that it is. So you have to enjoy the process I think. But it's just, it's different, different the way that you establish a conversation of everything and then you have to be aware of what topics are you going to talk about. So I guess you have to be just careful with certain topics, do not talk.

KZY: This is very different, like I don't actually think about topics when I talk, especially in my country. We just talk away. So it's like here it's a bit more systematic, like people try to find things to talk about. When I talk in Malaysia, we just talk. It just comes up naturally. We don't think, it happens instantly, you know; "oh you want to talk about this" and then "let's talk about that" and we'll have tons to talk about. My college is a, probably because it's like a lot of things, "oh you guys want to go to the cinema today?" or like "oh, where do you want to go eat?" It just happens, but here I feel like I have to think a lot to talk with Americans. A lot of times there's nothing to talk about. That's the hard part.

CP: So you both had plenty exposure to American popular culture before living in the US, but now that you're here and surrounded by it, are there aspects of popular culture that you've found captivating or surprising or interesting? Sports, holidays, that sort of thing? Anything interesting come to mind?

KZY: Movie-wise, yeah. I went to LA, I went to the Universal Studios and they took me through those buildings where they do a lot of shows like *Ellen DeGeneres*, like *CSI* and all those kind of things. I was shocked; it's very simple. I thought it would be like a bigger building and a more grand kind of thing but it's all very systematic. You just go in there in this big black box and inside it will have a little set and then you just film. And it's just not something that I thought would look like. As well as they film LA like it's a big grand place, only when I went there and I noticed the only good places are like—even the Hollywood's Walk of Fame is not the best place to go to anymore. It's just rundown. I feel the, what do you call, the Hollywood Universal Studios is good, Disneyland is good, only Beverly Hills area, those kind of places are really well off, and really those are the things that you see in the movies. But you don't see it once you go there, and it's just really kind of shocking, as well. You don't expect it to—you thought it'd be better and it turns out it wasn't, kind of thing.

[1:15:06]

CP: Yeah.

JU: For me I think that it's sports, like just after the World Cup and being able to understand that Americans are also like they want their team to win, that they are cheering—

KZY: Right, I hear that a lot.

JU: --and they are super passionate about that. So for example, here just cheering for the sports here at school, like at basketball, our women, we are the champion now and the guys that we'll be playing the war, the civil war against us, and those are also like the spaces for me where I have been cheering with the Americans. It's like "let's go to the basketball game, do you want to go?" "Okay." Or "let's go to gymnastics" or something. And then I really like being able to identify with that passion, like for, like in the American, for sports. It's like yes, we have something in common, let's go and cheer for the team that we want to. I think that it's also interesting when you are trying to understand, for example, how the football, like the rules and everything. And so I ask everybody like why are you so passionate about it? I don't understand anything, what is going on? So have your friend sitting with you for hours and hours explaining you how does it work. Or hockey, and sports that we don't have. That is really nice. And my supervisor, he is also a fan of basketball games and baseball. He knows everything about that so he's like really nice, and then you have a topic, to talk about it. So that's really nice. I really love that exchange in sports.

KZY: Yeah, I think sports actually combines international students. The passion, as long as you root for one team everyone's like "oh, we are all family." When I saw the sports I was kind of surprised as well. I wasn't used to it. In my country if you lose, you lose, whether you're in the same team or not. We don't actually cheer after we know that you're going to lose, kind of thing. Like, if it's so far ahead, I don't know, we don't really go all out anymore because we know that it's not going to work anymore. So the passion for sports is a lot more than in my country. In my country we do a lot, we do a lot of cheering but we also do a lot of foul play, I feel. Like in badminton we have Lee Chong Wei is the number, or number two, I'm not sure, badminton player in Asia, and whenever he hits we cheer, and when an opponent hits we boo. And they do that a lot. And I'm not sure whether that happens here, where people are paid to go there to watch, to be cheer, to be cheering for Lee Chong Wei.

CP: Wow.

KZY: Yeah. That's how. I'm not, I'm not saying that the whole crowd is but I'm pretty sure quite a few are doing that. So they boo a lot. I think it's just rude to do it. And when they're losing they just keep quiet. But when the guy, our Malaysian player, scores a point they just cheer so much and they start booing the enemy and that's how it goes there. So that was really a surprise here, like the team isn't, like when I see teams that are not that strong, people still root for the team. Like here, in my country, if you're not that strong you don't really get a lot of fans. You don't get it just—if you're good, you're good, everyone likes you. If you're not that good or you're bad, no one hardly ever stands by your side.

JU: No, you're not that good you have to receive the support.

KZY: Yeah.

JU: It's more important at that moment.

CP: American football, I'm sure, is the most popular sport with Americans, and it has to be completely mystifying to the rest of the world.

KZY: Yeah.

JU: It is. It was like a mystery.

KZY: Like I can, I see some games where it's just far off, like zero to fifty, and I still don't know why I'm cheering for them, like just go home. I don't know how is the game going to change. A miracle or something. But yeah, that's how it's like surprising they stick to it, to root passionately.

CP: Are there any places on campus or in town that have become important to you over the course—

KZY: WinCo.

CP: WinCo [laughs].

KZY: It's the cheapest place that I can actually get without—Fred Meyer's is just ridiculously expensive. I've been brought up to be money-minded, so the first thing that comes is I notice the prices, and I can tell you they amp up their prices by so much. Like a lot. I guess Americans don't notice it, but me being an international student, like a bag of chips you can get, they sell it here like 2.75; in WinCo you can get it for 2.30, two dollars, and it's like those little things you keep buying, you're just going to get more and more and more. And the only downside I feel is that WinCo doesn't accept credit cards and Fred Meyer's, they do, but you get cashback for fuel. That's the thing, is I don't use a car. So none of those benefits benefit me, and I think it balances out. They amped up those prices so that they can give you money for fuel. That's all a trick to it. But it's like expensive at Fred Meyer's. Everything there is pricey. Only certain products are cheaper.

[1:20:50]

So WinCo is one of the buildings that I kind of like. Dixon is another that I go to a lot. The postal office, those are the main things I usually go to, for mailing and all those kind of things. Bank of America. Sad that it's kind of far, but I chose Bank of America because I thought I could use it even in other states, as compared to the other banks. So yeah, those are the few main areas I go to. I normally go to Petco, I like to see pets.

CP: You go to look at the pets?

KZY: Yeah, I just go to look at—I almost wanted to buy one, it was a guinea pig and it was really cute, but I thought about the problem was if I did buy it, how was I going to take care of it if there were summer breaks; who's going to take care of it? This is the downside of not having friends, really. So yeah, I can't buy it yet. Those are the few places.

JU: I love all the parks around town; Avery Park, McDonald Forest, Bald Hill. It's like I just love to go. You know, they are super close to school, they're both huge. Like if you are pretty stressed, just fifteen minutes, ride your bike, you walk and it's amazing. It's like you have the forest just there, like in the backyard of your house. I love that possibility here. And from the school I really like the quad in the MU. I just be there in the MU. As it is, I just love that place with all the options. You have the food, you have a place to study, you can take your friends there, we have the meetings from the Latin American Association, so it's like those places.

CP: Are either of you familiar with the INTO program or know people who are in the INTO program?

KZY: Yeah, I was actually introduced to it.

CP: Any perspective on that program?

KZY: I think it's a good program. I have people go in from—in my country they go in after high school. For me I went for the partial degree program. I think the INTO program is a good idea for students who are not so well developed. I feel that they're that; there's a high chance, because they cannot cope with the education system. Like in my country it's pure memorization. You can't do that, you fail, even though you're creative, even though you are critical-thinking. If you can't memorize a book, you're dead. So I feel like the pathway gives people a chance to be exposed to a different educational system. And they also learn English. I think it's a better place in America to learn than in any other Asian country, to learn English as well, and they can actually discover what they like. Yeah, so I thought the INTO pathway's a, it's a good idea. I was actually told to go in there at some point but I had enough credits to actually go in as a sophomore.

JU: The experience, I have met Colombians through the INTO program, some of them to learn English, because they don't know anything, like zero, so they come. But nowadays, like with the possibility of INTO programs, of half-credit classes, and then for some students that they are a little bit well-prepared, like in English level, and that they want to pursue a master or something, it's an amazing opportunity, because they are able to go to have a better level of English. And then at the same time they are able to interview themselves and to meet prospective professors and everything, so it's the perfect way to go. It's a really good, it's a really good program.

KZY: The other thing I don't get is the honors class. Why do you have to pay to be in an honors class?

JU: I have no idea what the honors system.

KZY: That's what I heard; the honors class, you have to pay to be inside of it, when I thought by right if you're in honors you're supposed to get like a scholarship sort of thing. I have a few friends from other universities; they get scholarships for being in an honors program, and you need to maintain your GPA to be in an honors, so it's like privilege. Why would I pay to be in a privileged section? I don't understand why OSU is doing that. And the bookstore is so expensive, it's ridiculous. And they sell you books that you can't sell back. I don't know why they do that.

[1:25:25]

CP: What sort of involvement have you two had with different campus groups? You mentioned the Latin American Student Association. I'm interested in campus groups and if either of you spent much time with the cultural centers at all, either.

JU: So in my case, a lot of my—not a lot, but I have been work with different groups through the Intercultural Service Program, and that's so great, like you can be able—you are able to meet the different associations and everything. And then I also have a role in the—right now I'm the secretary of the Latin American Student Association, and that is a little bit different from the rest of the associations here at the school, because we're mainly grad students. So we are like super busy, but at the same time we are like we want to show everything in a really high level. So we are really competitive and we really, all the time we want to have the best cultural night, to offer the best food, just have an amazing idea, an amazing story to tell. So that is what I've been mostly involved. Also outreach activities through the—so I am a student in the Environmental Science program, but my supervisors are from the Fisheries and Wildlife and Integrative Biology, and in those two different departments they have outreach activities with the community. For example: summer camps, and there is a pre-one in Integrative Biology that is called Winter Wanderings, and then you are able to share your science and your knowledge with kids, and also teenagers and everything.

So I just love to share my knowledge with the people in the community and, at the same time, to let them to know like "okay, I'm from Colombia, and change a little bit your mind about my country," because apparently the only thing, or most of the information that comes out is like the bad news, as always. So it's just good to let them know there is a different country than the one that is showed up in the media.

KZY: I watched a video of that, so it was nice in engineering. What was the question again?

CP: About student organizations.

JU: We have a MYSA, it's a Malaysian Student Association. It's probably connected to LA as well, I think. There's one in LA. So we—it's a pretty big group because we have around forty students, we're so—and it's hosted by Shane Reezal. He's also the secretary of ISOSU. Yeah. So a lot of times he tries to incorporate activities and he would invite from the Malaysian gang to go participate in the ISOSU as well. So him being able to be in both groups, it opens up a lot of activities for us to do. We basically participate in a way that there is a cultural heritage. That's where the Malaysians decide oh, what food are we going to make, what are we going to explain to them about our country? And those kind of things. So in general we—I just have those two groups, basically.

CP: Well as we start to wrap up a little bit, I have a couple more questions. I guess I'm interested, and I'm sure we've touched on some of these already just in our conversation, but about your sense of some of the major issues that are faced by international students here at OSU, or just in the US in general. I mean clearly finances are one, adjustment to different cultures is certainly one as well, but is there anything else that comes to mind that's prevalent in the community of international students here that you've—

KZY: Probably certain rules, like things you do and you cannot do. It varies. Like the roads is one, that's I think a major thing, and being, I feel like people need to be aware that the money thing is really high. So one of the things that they could do probably be like if they know Fred Meyer's is more expensive, they should say it. Like things to avoid and things they should possibly go to, whichever's cheaper, that kind of thing. Other problems, there are quite a few troubles that I've been through. I can recall a few of them. Probably campus housing as well, how to get a house. A lot of times people here, they go through their friends and all that, but international students will come and they don't know what to do. I feel that

they should help in that way. Not just give everyone the GEM. It's an apartment hosted by—I just think it's ridiculous, the prices there, and I've been in there. It's just not worth the money. They should have helps and all that.

[1:30:33]

A lot of times they just say "oh, go to Craigslist and do it yourself," kind of thing. And it seems okay to do it now, but when you're an international student and you're fresh from another country you don't know how any of it works. It can be really stressful when there's no one there to help you. Yeah, probably have like one person there to answer questions, kind of stuff.

JU: I think that we have a really amazing support from international students, like through the International Program, the office here at school. Sometimes it's like you have to deal with things like taxes, like you are clueless. Like seriously, it's like no idea, and you are—you see all the different forms, all the different numbers, and then it's like you are panicking about it. But for sure in that office they are going to help you. Also with visa issues and things like that. And I don't know, I have been talking to my friends also from Colombia, but I'm all the time being stopped at the Latino—like in customs, when you are coming to the country, but it's only me. It's an issue for all the international students. But if you know that that happens, just you know, be calm, nothing's going to like, they are just checking on you. But the first time it's like "oh, why I'm here?" like you don't understand what is going on, if there's something wrong. They don't give you to use your phone, so it's not possible to use your phone at all so then it's like you are just waiting, waiting there, waiting there, and you'll be stressed, have to deal with stress. But it's nothing, it's just a procedure. But then it would be great to know in advance that you are going to go through that, possibly.

But the rest is like when I have been facing any problem I just called the International Programs office and they are always, there is always somebody that knows, that has an answer for you. So I will just go and use the resources of the school, because we have people here for us all the time.

CP: Yeah. Well the last question I have is just what do you hope for yourself for the future as you finish up at school here in a couple of years at some point, and what ideally is going to happen to you next? Are you going to go back to Colombia and Malaysia, are you going to stay in the US if you can, or you want—what do you want to do? Or have you not figured that out yet, which is perfectly fair?

KZY: Personally, since I still believe that America is a land of opportunities, I know Malaysia isn't, and at this point it's just not up to par yet. I feel like I hope I can get a job here, or at least when I go into graduate I can find some research which I like. I heard OSU is better at research in being an undergrad, so I hope that I get to learn and explore more. The future, I don't know. I prefer researching other than just constantly looking for money and business-wise kind of thing. I'm just not really familiar with the job prospect yet. Like I don't know when you get a job what do you do. Do you make the same thing over and over again, do you constantly look to find profit, sell this, buy this, sell this, buy this, or do you actually try to find a cure for cancer kind of thing. So I'm in for the cure for cancer kind of thing, so I'm hoping to find some job at some lab, or even outdoors, since I like biology.

JU: I'm planning to go back to Colombia.

KZY: Really?

JU: I really want to go back there and do research there. But after being here, something that we are already planning with my lab mates is just create, like follow the network, just being able for them to go back, go to Colombia, know the places, know the system, and for me just to come back here and do research also with them, just improve, that kind of motivation, and support each other. For me it would be amazing just try to create a network when students from Colombia can come here, and I go visit the lab where my lab mates are working now or something and train themselves and just try to improve both sides. So that is my plan, but you don't know. I have finish first.

CP: Yeah. Well I want to thank you both for this, this has been a lot of fun for me and I really appreciate you sharing your perspectives and your backgrounds and your experiences here, and I wish you both the best.

KZY: Thank you, I had good time.

JU: No, thank you very much.

[1:35:15]