

Do _ Broomfield Out Loud interview (2023-11-21 14_05 GMT-7)

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Dave: < All right, so we are being recorded now. And thank you again, Kaleb, for meeting with me. So, I want to start just by asking you to share your name and just a little bit about yourself. >

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Kaleb: < Alright, I'm Kaleb Do. I'm first generation Asian American. So my grandparents and parents came directly from Vietnam to here and I'm the first generation who was born in the States. I'm an aspiring artist, I'm trying to go pro. And I go to Prospect Ridge Academy High School. >

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Dave: < Awesome. So Kaleb, tell me just a little bit more. What do you know about kind of your parents and your grandparents story about kind of why they ended up coming to the United States, and then maybe even more specifically, Colorado, that sort of thing? >

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Kaleb: < Yeah, so, um, essentially, it all boiled down to the Vietnam War. There was a lot of conflict, it was really bad for the common people there, so on and so forth. So it ended up getting really ugly really fast, and they knew they had to leave. However, with immigration stuff, it takes a lot of time. So a lot of like, I think my mother's side ended up coming here even after the war ended. So it took a really long while. But yeah, it was mostly for work and better opportunity and less conflict and stuff like that. My father's side ended up on the East Coast in Massachusetts. He first lived in Boston and then moved to Worcester. I think that's how you say it. But my mother's side ended up in Colorado, because we already had relatives there because my grandfather's things. >

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Dave: < Okay. Do you know why they ended up in Colorado, like your grandparents' connection? What was that? >

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Kaleb: < My grandparents' siblings. The thing is with it, I've asked him about it before because I was curious too, um, you don't really get a lot of choice when it comes to like, what places will and will not

take you and whatever, like you can say you want to go wherever, but down to the specifics and stuff like that, it's really like, kinda iffy. So, um, I don't think Colorado was like, the absolute end goal, dream destination, it's just kind of where they plopped down or where they settled. >

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Dave: < Got it, got it. Very interesting. So how does that kind of experience maybe/ How do you think it informs your life and your situation? You know, whether just in high school and meeting folks and going about your life and Broomfield or just in any other ways that you're thinking of? >

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Kaleb: < Oh, yeah, it's definitely impacted me in a lot of like, good and bad ways being first generation. Um, like, it taught me to work really hard really early because that's how my parents had to get by. They had to be like, really extremely practical and responsible and grow up really fast from such an early age. So it taught me responsibility and maturity a lot sooner than I think a normal life would. Um, which you know, has its ups and downs and whatever. Like sometimes it's hard to relax and working too hard to a fault. So on and so forth. But yeah, there's definitely like a lot of... it's very big, definitely to me. >

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Dave: < Yeah, I was thinking too...kind of thinking about Broomfield specifically maybe like, what's been your experience in Broomfield and as far as just like, feeling like it's a place where you kind of have community and you can fit in and those sorts of things? >

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Kaleb: < Yeah, it's actually been pretty nice. It's a very peaceful neighborhood. It's never like, super chaotic and bustling from what I've seen. It's very, like, very mellowed out, very chill. The people here are very accepting of all kinds of people, like people who are queer, of different race, so on and so forth. Specifically, with the Asian American experience, I'd say we typically tend to stick together. While it's not super obvious and out there, there's definitely, like, a more hidden side to the community that like everyone knows each other, so on and so forth. Like,

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for example, my mother and my mother's side who, coming here, opened a restaurant and working in the restaurant business, and you kind of know a lot of people and know a little bit about everyone. >

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Dave: < Sure. >

Kaleb: < So kind of being- just seeing that, it's helped make this whole experience of living in a mostly, you know, white country, a little less alienating. >

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Dave: < Absolutely. And so I guess I'm wondering too, it sounds like the restaurant's and your mother's involvement in running a restaurant; is that is that kind of like the gathering place too, or is it like a place

of worship, a religious kind of thing or what kind of- how does the community kind of get together or gather?>

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Kaleb: <Yeah. So, on coming to Colorado, it just ended up- how it worked out was that a lot of my mother's side of the family is here. Um, I remember back then we used to meet up on Chinese New Year to, like, celebrate and stuff like that when I was much younger, and everyone was less busy. But in a way, the restaurant is kind of its own community. Because originally for around like, 30 years or so that we've been here, it was run by our family, like it was all family run everything, all the employees cooks, whatever. So in a way, it was kind of like a little like, work meet up spot for the family. Um, and then obviously, those Lunar New Year celebrations that I've mentioned, but since then it's kind of like, diversified and like we've had other people who are non-family come in, so on and so forth. The customer base is actually very diverse from what I've seen. We're right by CU, or, yeah, CU. So a lot of the college kids come in, because we have the big servings. So really, anyone that goes to college is like that's the main customer base. But for the kind of, like, rendezvous point for the family, it's more like the celebrations like an important birthday or something like that. That's when like you see everyone. >

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Dave: < Yeah, that makes sense. So can you tell me just a little bit more about the Vietnamese restaurant? What's the name of it? And what kind of, I don't know, maybe pho, what kind of food is served? >

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Kaleb: < Yeah, totally. Um, so the restaurant is known as May Wah. M-A-Y W-A-H. We're up on Baseline in Boulder, and we serve Chinese, Vietnamese and Thai food. >

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Dave: <Nice, that's awesome.>

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Kaleb: < One of my favorite foods there is the wonton soup. It's honestly a personal favorite. I feel like it's a hidden gem. But we're really well known for our Chinese-style ribs and chicken and stuff. And, of course pho, which is good. >

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Dave: < That's awesome. Wonton soup, I'm really hungry now. That sounds amazing. So, tell me a little bit more about your kind of journey as an artist; and I just want to say, Kaleb, that you're a volunteer at the history collection and I get to see your art there in kind of little post it note form, which is super fun. You put it up on the ends of the shelves that we have of some of our artifacts. But just what's your maybe journey as an artist a little bit? Can you share that with me? >

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Kaleb: < Um, yeah, being an artist, it's definitely a big thing. I've taken a lot of my culture into it. Because growing up when I was raised, I was trilingual. I used to be able to speak Chinese, English

and Vietnamese, but going into a primarily English speaking school, I lost that ability. So I kind of lost that connection to my culture. And I'm already not from the country. So, not being from the country and not being able to speak the language was definitely kind of alienating for me and like my other older family members who did come from Vietnam. So I use my art over the years to kind of reconnect with that. I use a lot of things, like, from Asian beauty and stuff like that, like traditional Chinese makeup, Vietnamese clothing, so on and so forth. Even just doing simple things like making the characters have, like Asian features. That has been, like, such a major thing for me culturally. And it just really helps me kind of connect back to my roots. Like, even if I can't speak the language, I could at least do research and become educated and know the things that, like, make my culture its culture, and kind of portray that in a more contemporary setting with my own creative spin on it. >

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Dave: < I love that, that's fantastic. So tell me just a little bit more. You mentioned you kind of have aspirations and goals around your art and kind of what are you looking for in the future? >

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Kaleb: < Yeah, I want to go to Rocky Mountain College of Art and Design- that's like my dream school. Um, I have a lot of aspirations and the way that I'm, I have like a bunch of social media accounts and I'm, like, taking commissions and so on and so forth. And I'm just trying to work my way into developing myself as both a freelance and just artist in general, so I'm able to kind of like, get some footing when I enter the industry. I'm lucky that my school has like a really good art community because the thing is, it's so science and math focused so artists kind of carve out a space for themselves. Like I'm planning to go to AP art class next year, and I'm part of this little community called NAHS- National Art Honor Society. So it just, well, it's like a little hard because the arts aren't really considered an academic thing, and that's hard to support when you go to the school. You kind of find your place after a bit, and I am lucky to have found mine so early, so I can really, like, use that to bounce off of and like get momentum as I become an adult. >

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Dave: < I love that. It sounds, you know, it seems like that kind of collaborative piece or being able to at least have conversations with other people that are also interested in pursuing art and visual art and that sort of thing is really valuable thing. Kind of, what have you seen that play out kind of, from a relationship standpoint, like connecting with other people, maybe through art, or, you know, through talking about what you're working on, and that sort of thing? >

Kaleb: < Yeah, a lot of my friends are really creative people. Obviously, the vast majority of, like, the student body isn't super artistically inclined, which I can't blame them. It's kind of a more niche skill to spec into. But even just talking about what I'm making, or people watching me as I draw stuff, that kind of helps me feel closer, because I find that I communicate through art the best. So being able to just channel all my sentiment and thoughts into my art pieces, to just use that other than just words, I think really helps me. It's helped me meet a lot of people, both online and offline. And it just, it gave me something to do while I was at school, instead of, you know, just being logged up on all these, like, academics and stuff like that. I'm at least able to have fun in class. >

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Dave: < Yeah, absolutely. Yeah, it makes a big difference. Have- yeah, having it's like both an outlet and then it's also kind of a relief, or a break from those other subjects. Right. So yeah. Awesome. So, I guess I'm wondering maybe what other pieces maybe haven't we talked about yet, or that you wanted to make sure to share before we finish up here? >

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Kaleb: < Ah, let's see. Um, I'm trying to think. I find that the kind of Asian representation scene in Broomfield and Colorado in general is kind of like, it's more on the low key side of things. Um, while there's like, a lot of us, I feel like it's, we're not really ever at the forefront of stuff, because it's pretty white dominated. Um, however, I've noticed that there's been a lot more cultural diversity nowadays. Like a lot of people are more curious about Asian food, Asian culture, so on and so forth. Like, there's a Moon Festival over somewhere, that happens annually, which I'm so happy about, because it's one of those celebrations are less like, you know, out there and present. And even at my school, there's an Asian Student Union, where it's a combination of both Asian students and non Asian students looking to learn more about Asian culture, and so on and so forth. So- >

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Dave: < Oh, that's so cool, yeah. >

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Kaleb: < Yeah, people are a lot less, like, nervous around diversity nowadays, which I'm very happy about. It's very present in the art community as well, I find that obviously, coming from Chinese and Vietnamese descent, it's a very, very, very creatively inclined culture. And it's so cool to see that pop up and other people who share the same ethnicity as me. So it's really just kind of a new era, of just so much creation, and so much like new things being made new ideas being brought forth, and new ways to channel old traditional stuff from one's culture into this new beautiful thing using things like more modern tech, more modern social media, so on and so forth. So it's just really cool how things have developed I'd say, in and out of Colorado. >

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Dave: < I love that, it's awesome. So what do you see as- this is kind of one of the questions I try to end with, which is kind of how do you see Broomfield in the future? What would be, like, be the ideal Broomfield to you? What would it look like? Feel like? >

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Kaleb: < Oh, that is a really good question. Honestly, it's really nice right now, from what I've seen, but I've visited like older neighborhoods in Colorado, like Erie, for example. And it's honestly, I feel like Broomfield is one of those things that just get better with time, like beautiful, giant trees that provide so much shade. More like, walkable, like, kind of areas. Like I'm lucky I live so close to King Soopers and stuff like that. >

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Dave: <Yeah, yeah.>

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Kaleb < It's just, I feel like it's one of those things that are just gonna get better as time goes on. And as the newer parts of the neighborhood gets more broken into, it's like, it just becomes more familiar with the people and nature itself, so on and so forth. It's like...it'll I think it'll eventually become more entwined and more natural feeling. Because right now, while it is really nice. It's, I find, a little bit bare. >

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David: <Yeah, yeah.>

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Kaleb: < But- >

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David: < No, go ahead. >

Even just some more plants and stuff like that, maybe like more benches, so on and so forth. Just anything to really bring people together and bring out a little bit more natural development, I think is a great combination to really fortify the community. Broomfield.

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Yeah, I love that. And you know, just thinking about that I've talked to a couple other people who have said something similar, which is like, you know, I don't feel like there's like a whole lot of like, character or like, how can we have places where people feel like they just are able to be themselves in a different way, kind of, you know, that sort of thing. So yeah, I like that. I like that.

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Awesome.

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Kaleb, I really appreciate chatting with you. It's just a delight. And I really, really appreciate you and the work that you do with the election. You're fantastic. And your your art is just so beautiful. I mean, really is spectacular. And I feel like as we work on this project, you know, we're we've been thinking about how we can incorporate youth voices and make sure that we're, you know, having high schoolers Incorporated, which is actually how the project started was with high schoolers, apparently high schoolers and college students. So I'm hopeful we can continue that moving forward. So yeah, totally. It's been kind of a dream since I started volunteering is to archive something of my own creation, like either an art piece or I can transcribe this interview because I know that's been a project that's been going on.

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I'd be totally happy to chip in and archive a couple of my items too. Oh, that's awesome. I love it. Thank you so much, Kaleb and it's really a delight talking to you hope you have a great rest of your day. You too. Thank you for having me. Absolutely. Thanks, Kaleb. Take care. Bye.