

Asian American Studies Program Oral History Project  
Hemant Shah  
Interviewed by Lori Lopez  
2/23/2023

00:00:00:01 - 00:00:07:08

Lori Lopez

So let's start with you. Can you please introduce yourself and the roles that you've held at UW Madison?

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Hemant Shah

Yes. My name is Hemant Shah. I joined the faculty in 1990 as an assistant professor in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication. And maybe two or three years after that, I was asked to join the people starting the Asian American Studies program, and it was just, I guess we had a committee of some sort of that was on that I was.

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Hemant Shah

So that was in the mid-nineties. Most recently, I was director of the School of Journalism and Mass Communication. I don't know what years actually, but until I retired in September of last year.

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Lori Lopez

Okay, great. So we can talk about all of those things. And first, do you want to tell us a little bit about well, can you talk about how you identify your background?

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Hemant Shah

Oh, sure. Yes. I'm a South Asian South Asian American and my parents are Indian, both of them. So that makes me Indian American, I guess. And it was always when I was in Asian American studies, it was always sort of, well, our South Asians, actually Asian. Should they be an Asian American studies or not? And of course, I always took the position, yes, of course, we should.

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Hemant Shah

Yes. So identify a South Asian American.

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Lori Lopez

Okay, great. So where were you born and where did you grow up?

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Hemant Shah

I was born in India and in western India and moved to the United States when I was five. Well, I was brought here when I was five, I should say, to be precise. My my dad was in America already. He was doing a advanced degree in chemistry at the University of Iowa. And his plan was to complete the degree and go back to India and take up with the company that he was with.

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Hemant Shah

But while he was here, the legend is that while he was taking his final exam, his last final exam, that he was called out of the room and told that he had been given a job offer in New Jersey at a chemical company and at a firm in New Jersey. And he decided that he would take it. He didn't consult my mother, but later I wrote to my mom and said, okay, you're you ready?

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Hemant Shah

You and me, the five year old, are coming to America. So that's how I came to the United States. And we spent a year in New Jersey, one year in New Jersey that he was transferred to in that same firm to a to a branch in Palo Alto, California, which is where I grew up from age 6 to 18, I guess.

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Hemant Shah

And then I went away to college.

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Lori Lopez

Okay, great. And then where did you go to college and what did you study in college?

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Hemant Shah

Well, I went to my undergrad. Was at the University of California, San Diego, and I had a dual degree there in communications and sociology. And then I didn't really know what else to do. So I went to graduate school and ended up just really because of practical reasons. I ended up at Purdue University Department of Communication because they had given me a path to a position which wasn't easy to come by for master's students at other places that I applied to.

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Hemant Shah

So I guess I went there and then I learned about learned that I was sort of interested in reporting and writing for some reason and ended up at the School of Journalism and at Indiana University to do my doctorate, which was it in journalism, presumably was in the

communications studies or I'm sorry, mass communication and not the not the Comm Studies Department that I do, but that school of journalism.

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Hemant Shah

And so I did my doctorate there in mass communication and then ended up and then took a job at Iowa State for one year and and journalism in the school, in their school of journalism, and then the following. So that was for one year. And then the following year, I, I was married at the time, and my spouse had a I had a tenure track job at Iowa.

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Hemant Shah

She had a lecturer position. And the following year, we we had been applying out for jobs and we ended up in Madison in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication, where she got a tenure track job. And I had a lecturer position that was in 1989 and the following year I and they also happened to have a second position in my field that I applied for that got it the next year.

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Hemant Shah

So why not? So that's how I ended up on the tenure track job at Madison in 1990. So I don't know why indeed sort of trail, but that's how I ended up as a professor at Madison.

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Lori Lopez

Okay, Got it. Did you ever work as a journalist or in news media?

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Hemant Shah

Oh, I did, actually, yes. When I was doing my doctorate in Madison in Bloomington, Indiana, for those five years. I was there for three of those years. I worked for the local newspaper, the Bloomington Herald Telephone. So that was a tough, tough go. Actually, it was trying to do the doctorate full time and, you know, like they gave me like 20, 20 hours, 25 hours a week to work at the paper to do various assignments.

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Hemant Shah

And I was a general assignment reporter. They would fill me in when somebody I was just, you know, I would I had no beat. They were just throwing me into the deep end on different things. And I'd try to through that up, you know, But I did like it. I really did like it. And if I hadn't been already, so I had been committed to a career in academics.

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Hemant Shah

I mean, I probably would have done journalism.

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Lori Lopez

Well, yeah. And what kinds of things were you studying in your doctorate? And then can you maybe explain like a little bit of like your other research projects that you took on and the many years then?

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Hemant Shah

Yeah, well, my, my field of study was actually in international communication, so that's what my interest was. I was interested in the role that media of various kinds would assume or could assume in the process of of countries in and what, you know, what we called back then the third world how they would the role of the media and the economic and social development.

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Hemant Shah

So that would mean you know things like how could the press and enhance communication systems to get information out to people that was relevant for their well-being, whether it's health care, education, women's rights, human rights, whatever it might be? What was it? All the media and all of that. And it wasn't a well developed area back then. So I was sort of I wouldn't say just I was kind of floundering, actually, in some ways as to how to sort of approach the questions and the issues.

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Hemant Shah

But I did have a good a really good adviser who had done similar work in Turkey. Her name is Christine Ogan. And she really helped sort of help help you sort of think about the questions and issues and how to approach it. And I ended up using a lot of my sociology interests and trying to figure out how to organizations, how do journalistic organizations work, What's the sociology of organizations and who talks to who and how does sourcing get it determined and so forth.

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Hemant Shah

And I did a kind of a a sociological sort of approach to the questions of how the press and I just my my study was in India, how the press in India, certain newspapers in India thought about the topics of national development. And, you know, from the level of a journalist on a day to day beat to organizational policies, to corporate policies all the way up to what what the national level governmental policies were towards dark matter that sort of did a trying to figure out how all of those things work together to create content and I had planned to actually interview consumers of media, but it got to be so so Christine Ogan

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Hemant Shah

told me, okay, just stop there. That's enough. So I didn't do do the consumer part of it. So that was my training. And when I went to Iowa State, I taught a class in international communication at a class. So one year I taught four classes. I taught two classes in international communication methods, research methods, class, and a theory class.

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Hemant Shah

Because I was only there for a year. I did those four classes, then came to Madison and taught from that first year when I was a lecturer, I taught only news writing, introductory news, writing class, and then I didn't teach international stuff until I was actually hired in 1990. And I guess I should continue the story then. So how did I get into Asian American Studies and my interest in race and media and so forth?

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Hemant Shah

So that was kind of by happenstance. I mean, I was I was always interested in issues of race and ethnicity as being, you know, being Asian American and having a biracial daughter. By that time. So I was always interested in those kind of topics. And it so happened that I'm not even sure how this happened, but but guiding them, how Winnsboro, a name that might be on your radar, maybe not.

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Hemant Shah

Hal Winnsboro was a demographer and sociology demographic. He was the head of the committee that hired Amy. He was head of that committee and I was on that committee. I'm not sure how he how we connected, but I, I, you know, I don't recall how we connected, but but he was somehow aware of my interests. Maybe I was at an event or something.

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Hemant Shah

I don't know that. But anyway, I was on that committee and got got interested and oh, this is this is really I think Asian American studies is actually a academic thing. You know, Amy was an obviously English English. But I but you know, Hal and some others, some other people from ethnic studies drawn that committee, too. So I got to know that this was really a topic that you could actually study.

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Hemant Shah

But even then, I had kind of made the move into academic study, race and ethnicity, but that happened either concurrently or shortly after that. One of our the professor in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication who did teach the one class we had at that time, it was called mass media and minorities. We still have it on the books.

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Hemant Shah

I think she left the campus and that department, our department chair at the time in a faculty meeting. So there were I guess we'll have to take this course off our books because we don't have anyone to teach it. And I went to him after the meeting or shortly after the meeting, I said, I'll teach it, I'll teach the class.

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Hemant Shah

And I had. And he said, Well, can you teach it? I mean, do you know anything about the topic? No, not really. But I have her syllabus and I'll just I'll start from there and read stuff over the summer and then teach it. So that's how I got started to teach in the class. And over the summer and over the years in that.

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Hemant Shah

So that was how I got into it. Oh, the third thing that happened was I met my partner and he had he was doing things obviously on race and ethnicity in the sociology area. So you, you know, he pointed me to some things that he knew about that are media related, I think. And then but but essentially, I did a self-guided post-doc and and race in the city and kind of reached out to some people who I knew and and in an agency, the Association of Education of mass Communication who were in the mass communication and minorities division.

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Hemant Shah

So I just I just started pulling things from where I could and building on the syllabus that I had and just try to make my way. And, you know, it was a disaster. The first few first couple of times I taught it. I mean, it had to happen. I mean, I you know, I mean, it was kind of obvious that I was just, you know, flying by the seat of my pants at the first couple of times, like, like anyone would, I suppose.

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Hemant Shah

But but especially with someone who wasn't had no doctoral level training in this area at all. It was just kind of self taught in some ways. Anyway, so that's how I started teaching in the area. And then I tell the story and often my research started sort of by because people were actually students were asking questions in class that I didn't know the answer to.

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Hemant Shah

So I thought, Oh, well, I could do research on these questions and kind of figure out how how this stuff works. Like people are asking me about where did stereotypes of these certain stereotypes of Asians and film come from? I didn't know, you know, So I started just did a little research. I wrote a little paper about it, right.

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Hemant Shah

Where, you know, where I could gather some information. And so that became a minor publication. And another student asked me about roots and why the why the television show was so different from the book, the mini series Roots. So I was so I wrote a paper about that with that student, you know, So it just little things came up like that.

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Hemant Shah

And and they grew. I mean, and I also started noticing there was some similarities between my international communication work and my recent media work in the sense that we were talking about in the one this is really abstract, but the one race of media, race, ethnicity, media research, we are talking about marginalized groups of people and how they are depicted in media.

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Hemant Shah

And in my international work, these were like marginal nations, you know, in some sense. Third world nations. And how were they trying to make their own way? And as as part of the group of nations that were on the margins of of mainstream economics and politics in some ways. So there was those kind of connections that I was making and and also seeing that the way that the Western nations viewed people in non-Western nations was through a Western racial lotus, you know, so so that so I wrote a recently, a relatively recently my book on I wrote a book about that that American ways of thinking about race was the lens through which American foreign

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Hemant Shah

policy and during the Cold War era was it was guided by a racial lens, a racial lens, thinking about how American minorities reviewed they would be different people. But so anyway, so those are kind of a long, long winded sort of trajectory of my my thinking on teaching and research in the area.

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Lori Lopez

Okay, great. Yeah. It sounds like the Asian American Studies program had a lot of influence over the direction that your research took.

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Hemant Shah

Yeah, Yeah, it did. It did.

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Lori Lopez

So let's go back to you. Said you were on the hiring committee for Amy Ling, and then so do you have any other memories about that and what it was like when Amy Ling started. And then what is, what was Asian American studies at that time? So she came in and then, yeah, there were there was there like some class there wasn't a certificate yet, but like what?

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Lori Lopez

What did it mean to have her here at that time?

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Hemant Shah

Yeah, I mean, basically almost nothing. I mean, it was just Amy was the only faculty member, so she taught, you know, her two classes, probably a semester on Asian American literature. And there was a committee, I think we were called the advisory committee. I think I think it still is maybe called the advisory committee, but it was me, Mike Thornton, I think Peggy and Jan, I think those are that I recall the four of us, maybe Victor Yes, Victor was there and a lot.

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Hemant Shah

Christina Those are the people. And there were students at the time. Yvonne And Victor There were students at UW at the time. I think those are that that was the advisory committee. And Amy, Amy's job was to try to get faculty members. That was part of, you know, we all thought we've got to get faculty. We can't just get Amy Capitol in one.

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Hemant Shah

I don't even think we had any class listed courses at the time. It was just, you know, they hired Amy and said, okay, go figure this out. And as a group, we tried to figure things out. You know, we tried to get faculty. And of course, the dean at the time was, I'll just name Charles how would be in sociology?

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Hemant Shah

He was not very friendly to it, to us. His line, I'm just going to say it. He was very paternalistic. His line to us was, Your field is not mature enough yet to have have faculty. So just wait. Just wait until you get more people who are doing research and publishing in mainstream journals and that type of By that he meant sociology journals probably.

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Hemant Shah

So it was a tough to go. It was tough going. And Amy was very frustrated. I know that for a fact, because we we would talk at these meetings about, do I talk to the dean, I talk to this person, that person, and we're just not going for it. And then at some point, because their various



persistence, they did give us I mean, what they told us, that what they still tell us is that you have to have a department going with you to get a faculty line and you get to that.

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Hemant Shah

I know you you know, we I think maybe maybe as halibut, I'm not sure who under who's associate dean regime that was. But we hired somebody with psychology. And I am not recalling her name. Okazaki was during that time choose to choose the first person after Amy to be hired. The 50% appointment and an Asian American Sumie Okazaki. That was your name.

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Hemant Shah

She didn't stay, obviously, in psychology, but Sumi Okazaki I'm pretty sure that was who it was. So we had, you know, her. She talked to classes in Psychology a year about Asian American issues, and so that was it For a long time we had so we had one FTE combined with Amy is 50% and Sumi is 50%. And that I think maybe I cross listed my class eventually.

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Hemant Shah

Michael Class listed a class to us. But there have been I think Jan Miyasaki taught Asian American studies. One developed and taught Asian American one on one. I think I think it was Jan who did it, and Peggy took Peggy, I think, eventually taught across the entire course of dance. So there was courses, but there wasn't faculty. And then then Amy got cancer.

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Hemant Shah

I forget how far into it it was, but it was just a blow, a huge blow to the Asian American community, not only on the campus, but she had also done a lot of outreach with the Asian American community in Madison. And, you know, she eventually passed and I think Michael may have taken over for you might comment, I think did the rest of her term did he?

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Lori Lopez

I think you did the rest of her.

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Hemant Shah

Did I?

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Lori Lopez

Because you were doing it one year and you were supposed to be done. But then when she got cancer, you just extended your term.

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Hemant Shah

Okay.

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Lori Lopez

That's what Bridges told me.

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Hemant Shah

Yeah. Oh, well, Bridge, you can't I don't doubt bridges. So. Okay, so that. That. Yeah. Okay. So, so.

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Lori Lopez

I think you did maybe one more year and then that, and then Michael came back over. Yeah.

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Hemant Shah

And that. Yeah. So I took it over. Okay. Yeah. So. Oh that's, I do recall that now because I remember Amy's husband. I dealt with Amy's husband too, with a lot of the things about setting up that contact competition. And I think there was a scholarship in her name that I helped him do that. Yeah. Okay. Yeah. So that was, you know, so that was a blow.

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Hemant Shah

And then I remember well, I do remember other people joining Pam Oliver came on board at a point, you know, so this and I don't think there was any other faculty that I was when I was when I was leaving that we hired any other faculty. I don't think maybe Bridges could tell you.

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Lori Lopez

Yeah, it looks like I mean.

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Hemant Shah

We certainly.

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Lori Lopez

Excel Parentheses was hired into the rest.

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Hemant Shah

So. Okay, okay.

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Lori Lopez

But then nobody again until 2003. So then lastly, there's like a big cohort of Leslie Bo Victor, Busker, Grace Hong in 2003, but that was a little bit later.

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Hemant Shah

Yeah, Yeah. I think by that time I had been, I was much, I was not even active but Asian. I am, I think I was I had gotten called into administration in my department and just was doing much less, if anything, with Asian American studies by that time. Yeah. Rochelle I do remember Rochelle but she didn't stay long as I think maybe just a year.

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Hemant Shah

She Yeah, Who else was there for?

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Lori Lopez

Rochelle So there seemed to have been a big cohort of Leslie Bo, Victor Bhaskara Okay.

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Hemant Shah

Song Okay. Yeah, that was after You're right. Yeah, yeah, that was, that was after when I was much, much later than that, I think. I mean, I was sort of on the periphery at that point, but, but, but I do remember meeting Leslie and Victor and going to their job talks and all that, but much less involved regularly, you know, So yeah, so yeah, we had a hard time holding I think by that I'm assuming Okazaki had left too, so we had a hard time holding on to kind of folks assuming.

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Hemant Shah

And Marcel stayed. Rochelle stayed for one year I think, and me maybe for two, maybe three. Yeah. So. Mm. And yeah. And I mean it was when I was chair it was a head or I forget what we call the position, but it was always a struggle, you know, we had, you know, I was, I was doing the newsletter on my own, I was writing that news, got a copy, there was a, we had a student held post, a grad student named Sharon.

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Hemant Shah

I can't remember her last name. And of course, she graduated and left. And then our staff staffing was sort of come and go. And it Tom was a really great staff person, but she was also a student, so she left at some point. Atsushi Tajima, who was actually one of our students in

journalism, but he was great. And then and so there was a lot of good staff people, but they were always overworked, so it was hard to keep them on board too.

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Hemant Shah

So, you know, some of the things I remember starting the film festival was once that was always a fun time, and we would get to see the we would watch the trailers together or the US and they would send us that movie. So that was fun. And then we started the certificate at some point, which was hard to get through just because there were some issues with the certificate.

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Hemant Shah

And they called me over to I remember one meeting, they called me to the Academic Planning Council and there was a couple of people who insisted that you couldn't have an Asian American studies certificate without the requirement of somebody learning an Asian language. And I said, Well, this is Asian American studies. This is for people who are interested. And the experience of people of Asian descent in America and this country.

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Hemant Shah

And it's not necessarily necessarily true that they would have to know an Asian language to do research or study in this area. They couldn't get they did could not understand that it was just one specific woman. I can't remember her name, but she was so obstinate about it. This is just ridiculous. She got outvoted. But it was the kind of thing that just kind of, you know, sticks in your eyes.

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Hemant Shah

Like, if you don't understand, don't say anything. Just get out of the way. Please don't stay and stand in the way of something if you don't get what this is about, you know? So there was I think somebody else kind of spoke to her off to the side and said, you know, here's how it works. But anyway, there was a really that was a weird, weird moment.

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Hemant Shah

Yeah, we tried. There was. Yeah, go ahead.

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Lori Lopez

Yeah. I was going to ask if there were any other stories you have about like the conversations and the work that was going on within Asian American studies to get the certificate off the ground like we did. Were there disagreements within the program or were you all just like, Well, these are the classes we have, so this is probably what it should look like.

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Hemant Shah

Yeah, And it was it was there wasn't that much disagreement. I mean, I think we did have that many classes. I mean, I think it was pretty I mean, I'm sure it's I'm sure it's been tweaked since then, but but, but it was yeah, it was pretty clear that it wasn't going to be I mean, there wasn't that much to offer.

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Hemant Shah

I mean, and so one of the things we did try and a conversation I had with Mike Cullinane actually in Southeast, he was in Southeast Asian Studies at that time, the administrator, and we were trying to see if there was any kind of area studies component that would be built to and that kind of spun off into some into a different project, which I think got dropped because my term was up and I left to back to journalism and I don't know if that ever got picked up by it, but we talked about doing something that was area studies related, you know, area studies and ethnic studies kind of combined, but that never got off

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Hemant Shah

the ground. But as far as the certificate certificate goes, there was other conversations with the other ethnic studies directors to see if there's any kind of joint thing that could be done. I mean, that's as you know, that was that was a huge topic of discussion ever since ever since Amy was around to it. Should we have an ethnic studies department and of course, Afro-American studies would never was never interested because there were already a department.

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Hemant Shah

So there were it was always, well, no, not really. And then Ada, dear was the head of American Indian Studies at that point. And she was, she always said, resisted because she would argue it was or were not on ethnicity. So we're not going to be part of the studies department. We're ordinations. Oh, okay. So that was our so the only person that was really on board with that was that I would left at that time.

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Hemant Shah

I think they call themselves Latin. What are they call the Chicano studies. And that was Camille Guérin, I think Camille Guérin, I can't remember her whole name actually, and embarrassed to say, but she and I had a couple of talks about Marcella and we even had a meeting that we invited everyone to, and some people came, Afro-American says, and come, Ada dear, did come.

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Hemant Shah

She sent her know, she sent somebody and and we met and talked and I said, Yeah, great idea, let's do it, let's do it. And then of course, American Indian Studies never showed up to any subsequent meetings. So it was just me and Camille, and we couldn't do it without American studies and so that was a frustrating thing.

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Hemant Shah

But but things moved much later. I think the time wasn't right. I mean, I guess what I'm guessing is that everybody, you know, in a weird kind of way, Charles Habibie may have been right that we weren't we were there wasn't enough sort of support at the administrative level to for people to get behind us. You know, ethnic studies department, you know, even though they existed, I mean, at Berkeley, I think Berkeley already had an ethnic studies department and maybe other places, but they just wouldn't go for it.

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Hemant Shah

But, you know, part with the argument kind of kind of I suppose, racist arguments. Well, it's not a mature field. You guys don't have any scholars, you know. What do you mean you don't have any sociologists? You know, the I idea was until there's an Asian American sociologist of note, you guys have not mature or something that's reading between the lines.

00:35:06:14 - 00:35:33:09

Hemant Shah

That's what he was telling us, you know, So it was just going going nowhere. Yeah. Yeah. I think it really helps. When now when Pam became department chair in sociology at that's what that's what we got. I think the first sociology person I forget that may have been Rochelle Impact because her Ph.D. was in sociology I believe from on mistaken.

00:35:33:09 - 00:35:37:03

Hemant Shah

Okay. Anyway, yeah.

00:35:38:17 - 00:35:46:20

Lori Lopez

Did you feel like the experience you gained in Asian American studies helped with your leadership in journalism?

00:35:48:05 - 00:36:14:01

Hemant Shah

Oh, I think so, yeah. I mean, because I mean, I sort of knew in some in some ways how, how, how the for example, how the hiring process what what had to do to get, you know, get that paperwork done, who and what kind of what were the kind of politics of it and that kind of thing. So, yeah, I think I think that's true.

00:36:14:01 - 00:36:56:01

Hemant Shah

And then I met people, you know, I met people other than the NLRB. I met people like I met Elaine Klein, you know, so which was it was a good person to know. Not not for hiring necessarily, but just how things work. So, you know, inclined I met and a couple of people in in the mentoring program so I figured you know so I met and what's his name Sandefur who who is a really good I wouldn't say a mentor, but a good person.

00:36:56:01 - 00:37:28:20

Hemant Shah

I continue to sound things off of about about mentoring, about the U. R. S program, about different ways that our students and our faculty can get involved in diversity issues. I met Tessa Reyes, who was kind of instrumental in the end of the Plan 2000 back way back when she she was very active in those areas and brought me along and those things.

00:37:28:20 - 00:37:55:14

Hemant Shah

So. So yeah, it did. It did. It was a good sort of orientation to how things worked on the campus. The politics of it, I mean, especially in the area of diversity and mentoring and undergraduate research, those type of things. And of course the mechanics of how to get people hired and that type of thing as well. But yeah, so I think so I think that helped for sure.

00:37:55:14 - 00:38:08:23

Lori Lopez

Um, what were some of the you're talking about undergraduate research and stuff, but do you have any other memories of the Asian American studies students and the or the like, the, the communities of students that you worked with in Asian American studies?

00:38:10:14 - 00:38:49:01

Hemant Shah

Well, I remember mostly, you know, mostly it was it was the grad, the grad students who I remember because they formed the Association of Asian American grad student. AAAGS. They were called AAAGS. So I worked a lot with them. It was Lon Kurashige, Victor, Sharon, whose last name I don't remember. There was one other person who was less active, but also there was like, so there was like four and Victor.

00:38:49:01 - 00:39:18:22

Hemant Shah

Victor Jew was there too, like serving for people. And they really pushed us as a, as an advisory committee to get things done. And they had ideas that they would actually write verbiage for me because I was so unfamiliar with Asian American studies as a, as a discipline, as a field. So they were great. I mean, they were they were just fantastic, you know, competitive.

00:39:18:22 - 00:39:51:05

Hemant Shah

And they're activists, you know, and and so they helped me sort of understand the the political dimension of a lot of that. And I went to a couple of Asian American studies conferences, but just as an observer, I never presented anything there. But and so that was yes, I remember that, but nothing and nothing specific beyond that. But they were active.

00:39:51:05 - 00:40:23:06

Hemant Shah

They helped a lot, were very passionate about getting the field started. And so that was a very positive sort of sort of memory that I have of working closely with with those guys and those people undergrads. I don't remember too much because I didn't I never talked to one of the Asian American one or one. I was mostly Jan and Peggy and Victor.

00:40:23:07 - 00:40:50:00

Hemant Shah

I think maybe Ed had done that to when we worked on the certificate. I think maybe I did it, maybe a focus group or with some undergrads, you know, what is it that this would look like? And so I met a couple of but again, think I think sustained with undergrads Look.

00:40:50:19 - 00:40:59:19

Lori Lopez

Yeah. And then you said that you started it once you started taking on more administrative roles with journalism, you had to step away from Asian American studies more or.

00:41:00:05 - 00:41:37:20

Hemant Shah

Yeah, yeah, I did. I mean, I, I went on a sabbatical in 1999 maybe, and then I came back in 2000 and became director of grad studies and that was that was a five year, I think it two for five years maybe. And there was just there was it there was an issue that we were having a difficult issue with with our with the Department Life Sciences Communication and we have a joint program with them.

00:41:37:20 - 00:42:01:02

Hemant Shah

And they were trying to pull away and they were making all kinds of accusations against our graduate program. So I was going to pull into that like, maybe you know about this. You're nodding your head. It was a huge, huge it's still going on. I think it was just a it was a time to think for five years, you know, And my research basically came to a halt.

00:42:01:02 - 00:42:24:12

Hemant Shah

Well, I guess my choice. But but I had to I mean, it was just a it was a huge, huge thing in my in my life. And so I was doing hardly anything with Asian American studies at that point. I was trying to go to job talks and but it just my my head was not an it was in a different place.



00:42:24:12 - 00:42:52:16

Hemant Shah

So anyway, so I did that. And then I take that I think I stepped right into head department chair after that. So I don't think there was a break. So five years of that, six years of six years of chair and so 11 years of administration. And then and then I had a sabbatical, but I left. So yeah, that was then.

00:42:52:17 - 00:42:56:23

Hemant Shah

So the 2000 went by like that entire decade.

00:42:58:17 - 00:43:01:10

Lori Lopez

That makes sense. And then what year did you retire?

00:43:02:19 - 00:43:17:02

Hemant Shah

Yeah, then I retired. I so I did five years of degrees, six years of chair sabbatical, and then I retired September of last year. Yeah.

00:43:18:03 - 00:43:26:05

Lori Lopez

All right. I think that was all my questions about Asian American studies. But if there's any other stories you want to tell or any other memories you.

00:43:26:05 - 00:44:12:15

Hemant Shah

Have, Not really. I mean, I think that the staff people that work on the staff, you know, that they actually deserve so much credit because there was always a small staff, but they did so much work. You know, they did so much work to make sure that events came off without a hitch. All the stuff that you had to do for the newsletter or for the film festival, the keeping track of the statistic I get so many of the things that people you have to do to keep a program running.

00:44:12:15 - 00:44:39:10

Hemant Shah

And there's only there's always just either one or two people. At least while I was there was either one person or two people doing all that work. And so I just I, I think it's really important to be acknowledged. Those people who are often anonymous, you know, to to the to the community at large, we know, you know, the people on the advisory committee know them, obviously, and appreciate it.

00:44:39:10 - 00:45:07:17

Hemant Shah

But I think it's just it's just really important to sort of make sure everybody knows that, especially in the early days, they were doing a thankless, thankless, tedious work to make sure that we had you know, there were visibility, stayed high with the with the community and with with with the administration. And we had that. We had fun.

00:45:07:17 - 00:45:17:19

Hemant Shah

You know, we did the film festival, which was always fun, but it was a lot of work, too. That was a lot of work. So hats off to all those folks for sure.

00:45:17:19 - 00:45:19:10

Lori Lopez

Yeah, I echo that as well.

00:45:19:20 - 00:45:37:09

Hemant Shah

Yeah, right. Of course. Yes. You know, you know, Yes. You know, and any anyone who's been in that in that head of Asian Americans that is definitely knows and appreciates that they're indispensable. They're literally indispensable.

00:45:37:09 - 00:45:38:20

Lori Lopez

Absolutely. Yeah.

00:45:39:02 - 00:45:40:02

Hemant Shah

Yeah, yeah.

00:45:41:24 - 00:46:03:09

Lori Lopez

All right. Well, it's been so great connecting with you.