

## ASIAN VOICES

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INTERVIEWEE: Aravinda D'Silva &amp; Amy Weil

INTERVIEWER: Deepak Shinoy

(BEGINNING OF TAPE 8, SIDE A)

DEEPAK SHINOY: Okay, this is an interview for the Asian Voices Oral History Project, and-, er... I am Deepak Shinoy conducting the interview, and I'm sitting here-, with Amy Weil and Aravinda D'Silva in their house, in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. And the date today is July nineteen, nineteen ninety-nine, and-, er... we're sitting in their beautiful house and very comfortable room-, er.... The house they've just moved into, and-, er... it's the evening and we just thought we'd sit down and talk about-, er.... Talk about their whole experience of coming to America, ( ), so-, did-, er... you have anything you wanted to start out with, or--?

ARAVINDA D'SILVA: No.

DS: We can just start. Okay, so what's--, what's--? I should ask you that question first, you weren't born in Europe?

ADS: No, I was not. I was-, I was born in Sri Lanka.

DS: Sri Lanka. So, when did you come to the United States?

ADS: I came here in 1982.

DS: 1982? Okay. And- er... How old were you when you came?

ADS: I was-, about nineteen or twenty.

DS: Uh-huh.

ADS: When I went--.

DS: And, for what-, er.... ( ) er... particular reason you had come, or is it for--? How-, how did you come to-, come here?

ADS: I came here as an undergraduate, as a freshman college student.

DS: Where did you go?

ADS: To go to ( ) College in New York. It's a small ( ) college about two hours north of New York city. ( )

DS: Uh-huh. Yeah. And-, er.... [pause] er.... There were-, were there many Sri Lankans in ( ) at that time?

ADS: There were a couple, but--. That wasn't really a community of Sri Lankans--

DS: Uh-huh. And which-, which language did you speak in-,er.... back home?

ADS: Back home, I'm bilingual, and I speak both Sinhala and English.

DS: I see. So--, and-, er.... The-, er.... D'Silvas are Christians?

ADS: No, it's not a Christian name. Portuguese name--.

DS: Yeah.

ADS: So--. Portuguese names are the most common last names in Sri Lanka.

DS: I see.

ADS: Many people with Portuguese names are Christians, but others like my family, are Buddhists.

DS: I see. Most of the--. It's interesting, because most of the--. My family's from Goa-, er... originally. Actually, we're not from there for several generations, but most of the Conconese we know from Goa who have the Portuguese names are also Christian. So, it's not-, it's interesting, it's not really ( )--.

ADS: ( ) No, in fact, most people with Portuguese last names are not Christian.

DS: Right. It's ( ) more of the ones that I happened to meet.

ADS: Well, or-, or maybe the ( ) how the names ( ) go up. It was different. I don't quite know how-, why people starting started taking on Portuguese last names. There might have been-, er... certain privileges granted, with taking on Portuguese names as well as the religion, and many people might have said they were Christians, but never practiced Christianity.

DS: That's true. A lot of names in South-Asia, right, in terms of--, I mean in India—they took caste, you know, there are so many stories of different-, people changing the name because it-, of some social structural reason. That's-, you know-, er... So, that's-, that's an interesting story. So, you don't know why it was on your family's case, or--?

ADS: No. I have no idea. It is most people in the coastal areas, because the Portuguese didn't really penetrate into the interior of the country, but--. I don't know, it's such a common thing, because ( ) are the most common names in Sri Lanka. There must be a very good reason for so many people--.

DS: You have the same last name as the most South-Asian in America. [laughter]  
Diresh D'Souza!

ADS: Oh, D'Souza?

DS: Yeah.

ADS: I'm D'Silva.

DS: Oh, D'Silva! Oh. What am I saying! Sorry. Yes, he's D'Souza. Getting confused! [pause] Did I mention this is a very late hour for me ( )  
[laughter]. Okay, let's-, again talk about-, er.... So, how-, why did you decide on America, what--? What was the appeal of that, or--? How did you even come to know of that opportunity, or--?

ADS: I came to know of that-, American-, the whole American college application process by friend of mine who came in the previous year to Dartman. But-, but why America--? Ahm... [pause] Most Sri Lankans in the past-- in the seventies—they went to England for their higher education, but in the late seventies, England really started to make it difficult for students to come there. They raised fees-, different tuition scales for foreign students-, and British citizens--. So, a lot of people started looking at America for college. The reason I certainly came is, I felt-, ahm.... It's difficult venture, not eighteen nineteen, lived in this small island your whole life. When I left, it was going to be a temporary thing, so-, purely for education--.

DS: [laughs] A lot of people ( ).

ADS: Certainly it's a wonderful-, wonderful adventure, to go to the west, and--.

DS: Sure.

ADS: The rest is something that you're exposed to a lot, but-, I'd nothing ( ) a little bit, but at that time even for middle class families, like family I came from, travel to west was very expensive, and people rarely went on vacations to the west, mainly on work. So, I had never really traveled anywhere in the west before that.

DS: So, it was more of an unknown.

ADS: An unknown adventure ( ) read the-, American books-  
-, er.... And as soon as--. I knew that in order to come to the west, I would have to get  
money.

DS: Ah....

ADS: So, my parents encouraged me to apply, but there was no way they were  
going to pay for me to go to school. The-, the college tuition is so expensive compared to  
free education system in Sri Lanka. So I was in-, in university in Sri Lanka--.

DS: I see.

ADS: And--. The education system there was also--. I felt quite confined by it.  
It's a highly specialized-, continuity of the British system, so my last four years of high  
school, I only studied science subjects, and then I entered university, then I was only  
studying biology and chemistry-, in-, er... in university. I was also getting much more  
interested in humanities, and English, and literature, so a liberal arts education sounded  
like a great idea.

DS: So, that was---.

AMY WEIL: It was also hard for him to study at that time, right? You should  
mention that first.

ADS: Right. Right. But that is not the reason I came. The main reason I came  
was I felt confined and-, I ( ) adventure, to go to the America, but the chance of--  
. I had lots of friends-, my age-, who-, we all applied for American schools, and only a  
very small number of us got to come, because we all depended on getting scholarship-, to  
come. So I was very lucky in that I got almost full scholarship to come.

DS: Amy, why were you saying it was hard?

AW: Because of the war there, you know, the university was closed a lot. So their chance of getting through university in four years was almost zero. ( ) was closed for months at a time, because people were fighting and killing each other.

ADS: Yes, I know. It was not-, not because of the war, though. War came after I left--. The war had started after I left. But before that, the universities, they are all very involved in political life in the country, quite different from here. The students are very involved in politics, which is very good, but the-, the negative side of it was-, the campus was frequently on strike, and-, so because of that, we didn't meet a lot of classes, and--. But-, but-, but that was not the reason I came. That was--. At-, at that stage I didn't even realize how bad things will become later on. Because my brother who went to campus later on, had a difficult time finishing. But I was not concerned about finishing. I was just bored with-, Sri Lanka--.

DS: Yeah.

ADS: And-, here was a college, offering to—almost-- pay for my entire four years of education in the US, so--. It was a long shot--. I really wasn't expecting it to come. I sent out a couple of applications, then forgot about the whole thing. Got a bunch of rejections. And then finally there was a letter in the mail, it was ( )-, er... giving me all this money to come.

DS: How much is--. Very curious. Er.... Because I was born here, so-, I'd come to see how the west looks outside the west only through my cousins, but how did-, America differ from, or was it the same as-, what you thought it to be?

ADS: Ahm.... [pause] I think at that age, you can adapt pretty easily—when you're eighteen, nineteen—and-, I didn't have a lot of-, er... preconceived notions about

what life is going to be like. In ( ) it wasn't ( ) object ( ) America and Sri Lanka, because I was leaving my home for the first time, leaving my family. So it was not just coming to a different country, but it was the first time I was-, leaving-, on my own. So-, it's-, it's difficult that how we could have been different if I left my parent's home in Sri Lanka and started-, to live on my own in Sri Lanka, and started to-, do a job there. I never had that experience. I went straight from leaving my parents home to being independent in America. But overall, my experiences were--. I didn't have any ( ) public ( ) college ( ) lot of freedom--, people are friendly-, and there were people from ( ) lot of stories, foreign stories, in college. So we formed a small-, foreign-, South-Asian community--. In college also, initially.

DS: Foreign being in the sense that there wasn't much of one there before, or--?

ADS: No. There was one there before, but I-, in addition to, sort of, adjusting to-, ahm.... It isn't that was new, there was something little familiar that I could relate to ( ) people with an interesting ( ), and Indian movies, and--.

DS: There wasn't any internet to keep up on cricket scores at that time. [laughter]

ADS: Not that.

DS: So-, tell me how you two met. When was that?

ADS: ( )

AW: Hye! He hates-, he hates when the story is told. [laughter]

DS: Lucky him! We're getting it on tape now.

AW: Right. Well-, we met in nineteen ninety. He was graduate school, and I was working in New Haven, Connecticut. And we used to ride on the same transportation to go to where I worked and where he studied.

DS: Hunh?

AW: So, it's a long ( ) story, that I won't tell in quite such detail.

DS: Okay.

AW: Actually, we lived about a block apart from each other for all four years that he was in the graduate school, and the four years that I'd worked after college. ( ) a lot together and never knew each other ( ). Three months before I was moving away to the medical school, he started talking to me on the bus. [pause] Which he never ( ) story ( ) [laughter]. And asked me to lunch, and I said, very nice to meet you, I'm moving away. And he was--.

ADS: No, I asked you for coffee. To go for a coffee in the evening. She said why don't we meet and have lunch at work. Going out-, in the evening was too adventure-, sort of date.

AW: I wasn't trying to have dates, I was moving away. I was reading books, trying to forget about my personal life.

DS: So--.

ADS: So you know how( )--.

DS: Clearly he didn't move away without-, some-, without you meeting ( )

AW: Right.

DS: Did have a conversation. And--.

ADS: Yeah, we-, we-, we had several conversations, and then Amy moved away ( ).

AW: Before he--, [laughter] ( ) fall in love with ( ) before I moved away [laughter]

DS: Oh. It's such a nice story.

AW: ( ) a silly story, and at our wedding, various renditions were told. I got on a bus and sat on his lap [laughter] ( ). The truth was, I was reading a book, and the very first thing he ever said to me was, "what's that book you're reading?" So he started the conversation.

ADS: ( ) lot of our single friends in New Haven--.

AW: To ride a bus--.

ADS: That you can actually ride a bus [laughter]( ) and get married to them.

DS: Oh...!

AW: But actually, the fun and interesting thing about it, perhaps, what our impressions of each other were before we met, which was I remember seeing him standing at the bus stop and wondering where's that guy from. I can't quite picture where he's from, from looking at him.

DS: Uh-huh.

AW: So, ( ).

ADS: My impression was-, I told my room-mate that cute redhead, ( ) owner--. [laughter] So I was informed that she's not really a redhead.

AW: And not really cute.

ADS: And not really cute!

AW: Hye!

ADS: Hunh!

AW: ( ) we lived in the same place for a long time and only got to know each other right when I was--.

DS: Just before the ( )--.

AW: ( ) moved away. So--. Lots of phone calls and long drives at-, late at night--.

DS: So, this was-, this was not in ( Perkipsy? ).

AW: No, it was in New Haven. ( )

ADS: After college I--.

AW: ( ) graduate student and I was working after college.

DS: Okay. Let me--.

AW: That was nineteen-ninety.

DS: Nineteen-ninety, you said, yeah. So-, er..... what were you doing at the time?

AW: I was working-, er.... During research in the Child Study center at ( ). Studying ( ) syndrome, and ( ) disorder, and applying to medical school.

DS: Uh-huh. And, Aravinda, what were you doing there? You were in graduate school--?

ADS: I was in graduate school-, er.... I was-, it was-, the middle of my-, almost-, no, it was the middle of my Ph.D.

DS: What subject were you doing?

ADS: In-, in biology.

DS: So-, it turned out not be liberal arts ( ) after a while--.

( )

ADS: Ahm..... ( ) I-, I-, I-, I took-, took a-, when I was in college, I-, really took-, didn't take too many ( ) because I had a lot of the background already from ( ) Sri Lanka , a lot of English philosophy, couple of history courses-, which I think has really helped me ( ) in graduate school in science. To succeed in science here-, being able to write well, being able to communicate well--. It ( ) a detailed focus on ( ) specialized field.

DS: Okay. So-, ahm.... How long have you two been married?

AW: Seven years.

DS: And-, er.... Where are the places that you've lived in the last seven years?

AW: We lived in Rochester, New York, which is where I moved to, and then Aravinda followed when he finished his Ph.D. And then we moved back to-, near New Haven to a town called Woodbridge, and then we moved here.

DS: So, and you two have been in this area for how long?

ADS: Eight months.

DS: Uh-huh. Great. And-, er..... ahm..... you'd mentioned that in the-, college you had found this South-Asian community, what about the places you lived after college? So we have Rochester, new Haven-, ahm all these different places, and then finally here. Did you find that you were-, that the South-Asian community was there, or was of any interest, or--?

ADS: Ahm..... So--. In college I found--. I don't know if I'll be able to recall South-Asian community or more South-Asian group-, ( ) were interested-, with interest in South--. Foreign students from Asia--. But that--. My-, my college community was much bigger than that. I have lots of friends from--. First of all, foreign from other countries, as well as a lot of American friends. In fact my close friends--, er.....who-, sort of become--, my larger community are Americans who I met at college, and-, firstly when I came-, went to graduate school ( ) large-, group of foreign student. A lot of students from Indian sub-continent, once again. Ahm.... And-, ahm... there was one social group that I hung out with-, ( ) people from my lab-, were from-, many Americans. But-, er.... I guess both at Yale and-, at ( ) there were groups of people-, interest in South-Asia. People from South-Asia--. In Rochester, there are--. You know, once you get out of the student mode-, [pause] there wasn't really-, a similar group that I-, that I hung out with.

AW: But some of the best Indian food we ever had was in Rochester. ( )

ADS: An Indian restaurant--.

AW: ( ) South-Indian restaurant--.

DS: Actually, I've been to it.

ADS: ( )

AW: There's a-, there's a big community of people from--.

ADS: From--.

AW: South-Asia that-, who live there, but a lot of them ( )

DS: Is it that one that's across the street from Indian store?

AW: ( )

ADS: Yeah.

AW: from the north ( )--. Yup.

DS: What's the name of the place?

AW: I don't remember ( )--.

ADS: There are two. Across the street there are two Indian restaurants ( )  
and vegetarian South-Indian.

DS: Yes, I know ( )--.

AW: And the other one is the north one.

DS: We have a--.

AW: It's good. Better atmosphere than the one here.

DS: We have a very-, er.... Good family friend there. Ever since I was-, two,  
we've gone up to Rochester--, until ( ) North Carolina ( ) Rochester twice a  
year, at least. So, I've been to that. The same place, same restaurant you're talking  
about--.

AW: It's really good.

DS: It's very good. [laughter]

AW: So-, you think that that will be a place where there might not be people who  
are diverse, but in fact, there's a big community of South-Asian, and Asian in general ( )  
) business is there.

DS: Or there--.

AW: Not so much in our group of friends from there. That's true.

DS: All the people we knew up there a pattern I see with a lot of South-Asians is  
the basically where ( ). You see a lot, and like ( ) family friends (

) in Kodak. I mean, they've been there since the sixties, but I think that-, that's from ( ) so many people there. I never-, moving to this area-, I-, never expected there to be as many Indians as there are here-, Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankans, and Bangladeshis-, everything. And-, er.... I'm really very surprised.

ADS: Hmm.... Which-, which-, which probably tells something about our, I mean, view from New Jersey or-, view from, you know, Connecticut, New York, and--.

DS: Your impression of the south! [laughter]

ADS: Of the South! ( ) Ahm... which is-, which is not ( ) almost any large metropolitan area now has large Indian populations, I think, in this country.

DS: Yeah. I was-, tickled to death when I heard that there-, endless South-Asian in Texas. Well, I mean, in certain of the big cities in Texas. Doesn't at all fit-, the impression you have of Texas, does it?

ADS: ( ) Recently ( ) New York Times Magazine ( ) how half of all the motels in United States--. Over half of all the motels in United States belong to indians.

DS: That ( ) [laughter]

ADS: But ( )

AW: ( ) everybody is living in all ( )

ADS: Right. That means those people are spread, you know--.

AW: Everywhere.

ADS: Not just the metropolitan areas, but across the country.

DS: Yeah. Yeah, it's pretty-, er... it's really surprising. But it is also-, it is these kind of areas, because, you know, if you go out to smaller towns, it's a much--. I think they're in-, South-Asian-, in quite a few places spread out over the country, but they're also more in concentrations around certain kind of jobs, and industries--.

ADS: But they're also filling different-, different natures, and if the high-tech people--, in this same article, I was surprised to know that most of the horn stores in New York are run by Sri Lankans [laughter].

AW: ( )

DS: Did you say "horn" stores?

ADS: Pornography.

DS: Porn! That's what I thought you said. Not "horn"--, Porn-, pornography.

ADS: ( ) in New York ( ) news-stands run by Indians in New York, and--.

DS: Yeah.

ADS: ( )

AW: Yeah. Seems to have very little to do with Sri Lankan culture as I understand it! [laughter]. ( ) farther from what you'd expect would be their main industry.  
[pause]

DS: So, that Sri Lankan culture generally—I've never been to Sri Lanka—is much more conservative compared to the-, US in terms of sexual morals, and stuff like that, or-  
-?

ADS: I think there's a greater diversity of views discussed here. ( ) you get very conservative people also. So, what's out in the open-, er.... Is different in different

countries--. What's discussed in the open in Sri Lanka is much more limited. Which-, I think, often doesn't tell you a lot about-, what-, what people's ( ) people find acceptable-, because ( ) discuss may not really-, what-, ( ) acceptable to discuss may not really-, reflect-, society's ( )--.

DS: Yeah. I--.

ADS: About sexuality, and other issues.

DS: Or even what's ( ), you know, because I know so many people have the impression that-, you know, there is no homosexuality in India, or something-, which is absurd-, er.... It's just that it's not something you see reflected in the culture, whereas here, it's almost like a political project to make sure that that's reflected in the culture.

ADS: There's another thing also, in that here it's discussed, but you can also-, you also see a definite-, er.... ( ). There's a strong-, homophobic tendency in the society. In Sri Lanka, although it's not discussed, homosexuality is not really seen as--. Er.... There's also--. There is also acceptance, in certain ways--, in other form human-, human behavior. There is a strong homophobic tender.

DS: Yeah, this is a strange culture, in that it's very conservative and open.

[laughter] A very curious mix.

AW: You know, but there are no political rights for those people there, even though it maybe somehow accepted.

ADS; It-, it's not--.

AW: ( ) to have gay marriage.

ADS: Right. So, in the open those issues are not discussed, but on the other hand I was not ever raised in a climate-, or my friends-, we were not in a climate where we-, in

groups of us who felt that homosexuality was really bad. In fact, we've discussed just, just another form of sexual behavior. Especially among the men, there wasn't a-, a-, there were groups of men who-, er... violent towards homosexuals, or--.

DS: Fear.

ADS: Fear, or even ( ) certain segment of the society.

DS: The-, ahm.... What about these South-Asians in this area—you folks haven't been here that long—have you met up with-, er.....

ADS: Asian Voices!

DS: It's pretty much the main contact ( ) project, or--.

AW: We actually met a whole Sri Lankan community that we've never been in another place where we lived or were ever invited to a party where there were—I don't know—thirty or fifty Sri Lankan families.

DS: That's here in Chapel Hill?

AW: In the Research Triangle-, area. We went to an enormous party. I don't think we ever, except in Sri Lanka, met that many Sri Lankans in one party.

DS: Wow! What was--? How did you come to know about that?

AW They found him, I think. [laughter]

ADS: Yes. I ( )

DS: They found him!

AW: They found him.

ADS: In fact-, in fact--.

AW: Graduates did!

ADS: No, not graduate students. ( ) and Moti Kumar ( ) first of the ( ) interviews for Asian Voices--?

DS: hunh!

ADS: He saw my name as a new faculty member was coming, and he gave me a call, and told me about a New Year's eve party the Sri Lankans were having.

DS: Wow!

ADS: So we went for that, and-, then they had a Sinhala-Tamil New Year's party in April. We went for that also. My brother and father were visiting. So--.

DS: So, when you say Singhala, you mean Singhalese-, Tamilian--.

ADS: Right.

DS: The two groups together?

ADS: No. None of those two groups together. You know, unfortunately--. I haven't really met the Tamil community here.

DS: I see.

ADS: The-, the New Year's is the same day for both Singhalese and Tamils. Tamil new year--.

DS: Okay. That's just a phrase to refer to that day!

ADS: Right. ( ) April fourteenth.

DS: Not necessarily those people getting together unfortunately. Yeah!

ADS: Even in Sri Lanka those people don't celebrate the new year together. I mean-, in Sri Lanka, it's not because of any divisions, it's simply because there are different tradition of celebrating it.

DS: Oh, I see!

ADS: Ahm..... ( ) the new year also. So there's--. But over here, they're ( ) people could get together by ( ) between Sinhala and Tamil community.

DS: Here?

ADS: Uh-huh.

DS: I found that with Indians, there's--, er... when we were first in Edison, in New Jersey, there was very few Indians, and everyone was very friendly. [laughter] Then-, now that they have sort of reached a critical mass, where everybody can form their own group-, now we have a lot of groups. Maybe they've reached the critical mass here.

ADS: I think, in Sri Lanka's case, it's maybe to do with the civil war. Because so many of the people, especially among the Tamils who have come here, having in some way been affected by the civil war, and-, er... you find a similar situation here. Hen you get together at social gatherings, you can discuss in the ways you wouldn't discuss in Sri Lanka.

DS: Hunh! In between-, er....

ADS: Between Singhalas and Tamils. For example, if you're a-, if you're a Tamil person who's a strong supporter of the LTTE--.

DS: Yeah.

ADS: In a social gathering in Colombo, you're very unlikely to come and openly say that.

DS: Right. Obviously the military is out somewhere hunting the tigers, so---.

ADS: Yeah. ( ) breaking the law, because--.

DS: Wow! Really.

ADS: ( ) undemocratic laws that have been passed again. Political groups are trying to separate the country. So ( ) the climate is such that it's not conducive to free discussions like that. People ( ) often I guess--, while it's good that we can discuss those things, they can reach into the stage where-, they no longer ( ) they can no longer tolerate each other's opinions.

DS: So, have you two met a lot with this Sri Lankan group? Every now and then you see them?

ADS: No, twice.

AW: Only those two times when we didn't know were meant to ( ) with other members of the group, we haven't formed very natural friendships, or we've spent a lot of time with any other of the people. That's true to say that?

ADS: Uh-huh.

AW: So they included us in the community, and I guess maybe an interesting fact to that is, I think, that besides us there was only one other couple who was not-, both members Sri Lankan, and the other couple was, the woman from Japan and had kids who were Japanese. Couldn't speak very much English, so she was very isolated at that gathering.

DS: So, did you all feel isolated?

ADS: Ahm... No, I don't think we felt isolated.

AW: It was striking to me, because I was looking around thinking I am the only person here ( ) actually also that person, I couldn't talk to her at all, who was not originally from Sri Lanka.

DS: Oh.

ADS: I think in her case ( ) that she didn't speak in English.

AW: Yeah.

DS: Who? ( )

ADS: Amy. In fact, probably conversed more than I did everyone there! [laughter]

AW: ( ) that night. They were-, they were friendly. There's that-,  
interesting that most of the community had inter-marriage with each other.

DS: But are most them--? Got married and came here, or--?

ADS: Yes. So it's not a matter of--.

DS: There wasn't that much of a choice.

ADS: Most of the people are coming once they got married.

DS: Uh-huh.

AW: The second part-, there were a couple who got married here. Who had  
married Americans.

DS: Have you ever met Sri Lankans-, who married Sri Lankans here?

AW: Yeah. Your relatives are marrying each other.

ADS: Who?

AW: The couple who were in Rochester, and-, Georgia?

ADS: No, we don't--. You haven't met either of them! [laughter]

AW: They're your relatives. We've heard of this relative who's--.

DS: It's rumored that--.

AW: No! That's sort of the people who met here, though, right? We don't know  
them well.

DS: So-, ahm... do you feel like that's--? I mean, what do you feel your community is, now here? I mean, independent of Sri Lankan or whatever, if I were to ask you--?

ADS: Yeah. The Sri Lankan thing again, is not a community. It's a-, it's more-, a group to get together to celebrate certain holidays--.

DS: I see.

ADS: Ahm... and I-, did never really been a part of a community that's been defined by-, sort of, particular region or origin. ( ) friends are involved has come from-, mostly through work. Because we have met through work, and lot of them happen to be people from the sub-continent, Indian sub-continent. But-, [pause] why, couldn't you agree with that?

AW: Some of them are Jewish, which is ( ) but it's not particularly like they're either Sri Lankan or they're Jewish, in fact, they're more like to be-, somehow, sort of, from somewhere near Sri Lanka or somehow ( ) from one of our work places, the--. [pause] And I guess we've just done-, Jewish cultural things with friends, sometimes, but we often have, you know, given party or meal like that, we'll invite our friends who are Turkish, and-, all kinds of backgrounds that are not necessarily Jewish, even to that gathering. So, even a gathering that is supposed to be about one or the other of our cultures, there's a lot of mixing.

DS: What are the Jewish things also around calendar holidays?

AW: Yeah, it was-, ( ) Passover and our entire family. [laughter] One of the rites of Passover, you're not allowed to eat until sunset. We're better at keeping that than anyone else, family or friends, whoever comes to the house.

DS: So, what sort of, between-, between Judaism and Buddhism-, er.... What sort of things do you observe? Like, the Passover, what else in terms of--. Are there many of those kinds of rituals that ( ) to participate in, or--?

ADS: Mainly the-, the Jewish holidays. ( ) Passover, really.

DS: It's pretty much ( ) [laughter] I got the only one there, I don't need to go fishing.

ADS: There were some other things--.

AW: We had a Jewish wedding, and a Singhala wedding. That's probably worth knowing.

ADS: In Sri Lanka--. But in terms of-, regular-, on an annual basis, things ( ) Passover. Now the American holidays--.

AW: Oh, we ( ) of the candles.

ADS: Thanksgiving--. Er.... That's ( ) Passover and Thanksgiving.

AW: ( ) candles.

ADS: And no-, no Buddhist holidays, really. No. [pause] I think it's partly because to celebrate a lot of those holidays, you need to do--, part of a big community of people who are doing it, and-, then it will really happen.

AW: I think, also, for both of us, more of the things are cultural rather than deeply religious, because we eat a lot of Sri Lankan foods, or a lot of Jewish foods, or have friends who know about the culture of each of the places, but we don't go to a lot of their religious ceremonies. I mean, we haven't gone to-, the synagogue very much, maybe ( ) or something, for some reason.

DS: Tell us about the wedding. I want to hear about-, there were two weddings.

Two ceremonies ( )

ADS: Marrying--.

AW: ( )

ADS: Married twice to the same woman. [laughter]

AW: Within a week.

ADS: Within a week.

AW: We had a Jewish wedding here, which we fixed. Actually—and a good example of that—our friends and we, essentially made the wedding. So, I baked the cake with some friends--.

DS: Oh, wow!

AW: And we grew flowers with other friends--.

ADS: I negotiated the fee with the Rabbi. [laughter]

AW: ( ) our friends who we grew the flowers with, the woman is Jewish and her husband is from Honduras.

DS: Uh-huh.

AW: Another friend who we-, baked the cake with, one of them is a Phillipino man-, and another one--.

ADS: So, that was probably our community in Rochester--.

AW: Yeah ( )

ADS: ( ) Jewish ( ), that person actually married us with a Rabbi and probably a twenty minute segment of ( ) that was Jewish, but the bigger part of our wedding, I think was--.

AW: All this family ( )

ADS: ( ) family helped us out, and set everything up together and our friends would travel from ( )

AW: But it was important to me that we have a Jewish wedding ( )

ADS: ( ) family--.

AW: No. It was important to me too. Jewish weddings are nice. [pause] So, we very much made that wedding and then we went to Sri Lanka and his parents made a beautiful, huge, formal, much more elaborate, Singhala service with the whole Singhala ceremony. So, kind of, turns your ( ) America versus Sri Lanka, and that's because we didn't ( ) smaller things in the States. One in Sri Lanka was ( ) I was performing all these rituals that I didn't really fully understand, and including drinking milk for fertility, and all kinds of--.

ADS: Hiding of the sandal--.

AW: Giving of leaves to various family members.

DS: What's the-, what's the-, er... it's a priest ( ) ?

ADS: It-, it's-, it's not a Buddhist. There isn't really a Buddhist training and ( ) Buddhism ( ) Sri Lanka. It's more cultural ceremony of-, someone similar to a marriage-, er.... ( ). [pause] ( ) society who arranges marriages between people, he also conducts--. That's a lot of superstition associated with a wedding. Everything has to start at a certain time, and-, auspicious times--.

DS: Oh, yeah.

ADS: So-, so, the--.

DS: My continent, too. It's the same.

AW: It was fun.

ADS: It was fun, though. Amy didn't understand much. Everything was done in Singhala.

AW: We had our Jewish-Mexican friends at both weddings. They represented my family in his wedding. It's like supposed to be five Jewish families, so they were standing in ( ) like--. And he-, we know that because the man was in his lap.

DS: Yeah. So, the religion for both of you now, appears more of a personal thing, than any sort of-, er... you don't do much in terms of community, you're saying it's largely not available here?

ADS: It's not that it's not available. I mean, once it's not available to practice religious holidays more in a cultural sense. But for the spiritual fact, you don't really need a community. In fact, as a religion-, but I-, I think neither one of us is very religious. ( ) following a traditional religion Judaism or Buddhism--.

AW: We enjoy celebrating some of those holidays. We enjoyed going to this thing on a New Year. We did do a Passover with-, this-, of the three couples that got together for Passover, only one of them, both members were Jewish. And the other two, they were each half and half.

ADS: But-, we don't practice in a religion.

AW: Right. Well, although we try to learn more about that religion, I think, going through that ceremony. [pause] I guess I still have hopes that someday I'll practice religion more.

DS: Does that--? Is this at all a-, ahm.... We should mention for the record you two are very happily about to have your first child-, er.... Within two months. So, is this--?

ADS: Six weeks.

DS: Six weeks?

DS: Counting down?

AW: Maybe sooner.

DS: The-, er..... ahm.... Is that at all a discussion you two have had, or thought about, in terms of--.

ADS: Religion of the child?

DS: Child, yeah. Sort of, those kind of questions, about upbringing, or--?

ADS: We've talked about upbringing, but not-, in a religious sense. Ahm... ( ) manage to talk about it at some point, you know-, about upbringing, and using religion as a way of-, of teaching-, er... certain ideas, the philosophies-, er.... But I think-, I don't know about-, I think it won't become an issue because-, because I think, we still have carried-, ahm... [pause] fairly a-, developed philosophy--.

DS: Uh-huh.

ADS: Of what's right and wrong.

DS: Right.

ADS: And I think you can teach the kid without resorting to-, er... without using-, er.. religion.

AW: And you can tell the stories of those two religions in a way that doesn't make them have to be chosen between. There's a lot of history mixed into both religions.

ADS: I mean, I think the religious issues ( ) I think a bit more like-, when you're a kid in school, all the kids want to know what your religion is--.

DS: Uh-huh.

ADS: Maybe awkward for a young kid to say he has no-, he or she has no religion. But I don't think you really need the religion to teach the child whatsoever ( ).

AW: A lot of it is also cultural, and they can give an answer that's cultural ( ) their origins--. I mean I don't think my answer was particularly more than that, when I was asked that question.

ADS: You said you were Jewish.

AW: Right, but you could say-, you know, my father is Buddhist, and mother is Jewish, and that's an answer in-, I'm both.

DS: Are there some principles—just curious—between you two that you seen in-, common of those two? In terms of teaching? I'm just curious. That's one of the things I think about, so, is that a--?

AW: I would make jokes about how the Singhalese and the Jews are very similar in a lot of cultural ways. I think their values for their families are very similar--.

DS: Uh-huh.

ADS: But-, but those are very different things, I mean Singhalese is not the same as Buddhist.

AW: ( ) No, but it's your culture is both.

ADS: Singhalese is a-, Singhalese is an ethnic identity--.

DS: Uh-huh.

ADS: And there are Singhalese who are Christians, and there Singhalese who are Buddhists.

DS: Uh-huh. Sure.

AW: But I mean, more in terms of your family's values for you, or your relatives' families' values-, there's a lot focus on kids and education, and-, lot of things that are very similar. That's not a deep religious--.

DS: Yeah. No, but that's also an interesting connection that-, ahm... certain values might be held in common and-, ahm... when you point that out, is that with any feeling that there's a-, difference somehow between these values and what's reflected in the mainstream culture in America, or is this nothing that's different-, these kind of values, that ( ). Is it the same as what one would have said, say, with being American, or is it-, is there any difference those two things or not?

ADS: Huh. So-, ( ) I think most of the values we have, come from us being individuals, and not necessarily from-, from a-, religion-, er....

DS: Or culture.

ADS: Well, culture is more difficult to sort out. Because religion says explicitly-, I mean all these-, sort of-, these are a set of principles or values that ( ) your life. ( ) have you listened to those, have you followed ( ).

DS: Sure.

ADS: The difference of culture is more subtle. Ahm... I think kind of difficult to tease out. So, I think ( ) my culture with someone who ( ) in Sri Lanka and then another-, how many years now?

AW: Nineteen.

ADS: Nineteen. ( ) [laughter]. No, it's nineteen years--. Another nine--.

AW: You're thirty-seven.

ADS: Nineteen years in-, in-, the USA, I mean all those ( ) what I think is right and wrong.

DS: But that's-, that-, but-, I just thought it was in Amy, in the way you said it. Ahm... maybe it's just the way we were talking, to set up or whatever I asked previously, I don't know, but was there-, when you had pointed out as culture—leaving religion aside—just as cultures, I mean, do you feel there's anything distinctive about these values you're picking out in these two cultures, or--?

AW: I don't think that they're particularly mainstream American values. I may have to say when-, whenever ( ) wants to criticize something that I'm holding as a belief of value, or act, he usually calls me an American.

DS: That's interesting.

AW: I mean-, I think, by culturally identifying myself with America, ( ) say I'm a Jewish person from New York city, which is very different than a lot of people in America-, in both of those ways. So the-, the idea that we have lots in common with mainstream America, I'm not sure it's something either of wants to-, own up to.

DS: ( )

AW: Usually when he's saying that I'm American, it's not for a good reason.

DS: So--.

AW: ( )

DS: ( )

ADS: So, I thin-, I think no one really feels that a part a of mainstream America—

DS: Interesting.

ADS: Everything ( ) different from mainstream America, so what is--, ( )  
) I think in some ways, we are a part of mainstream America. ( ) looking at us, I  
mean people ( ) Amy ( ) would be less-, at me, think that I'm American, but  
there are people who do that ( ) a very long time in this country. Ahm--.

AW: But, for example--.

ADS: I think it's difficult-, I see nothing called mainstream American values.

DS: That's a legitimate answer-, ( ) question. What-, what were  
you going to say?

AW: No, I was just thinking, in our-, in ( ) trying to go and get the things  
for this impending baby--.

DS: Uh-huh.

AW: Going to this horrifying consumerist baby ( ) store, where only in  
America would you have, you know, a choice of fifty different cribs, and-, the  
assumption that you need to buy all these items in order to have a baby.

DS: And think about all these different choices.

AW: Exactly. And I didn't feel very comfy in that store either. And I think it's ( )  
) alienating that, assuming and being sucked into this whole consumerist-, way of  
thinking. So, I don't know, maybe that's the way of feeling ( ) whatever you  
perceive to be the mainstream thing.

ADS: Maybe your--. You say that you feel alienated from it, but ( ) we go to  
Raleigh to the Baby ( ) and that's the only place to buy baby's clothes. You

wouldn't patronize the little baby store in the Mom & Pop show in Chapel Hill, so in a sense--.

AW: No, we couldn't find one.

ADS: But in a sense, we are supporting the mainstream values and mainstream--.

AW: That's what we have in your ( ) thinking that way. Look at this over here. The cat is looking at you, and she's in jail. [laughter] [pause]

DS: So-, er... just to change the subject a little bit, you would-, er... your parents are visiting right now, and I was just wondering-, ahm... how much do you keep up with the family back in Sri Lanka?

ADS: Very much. So-, I very much lead a dual life. Even though I've been here for a very long time, I go back to Sri Lanka regularly.

DS: What's regularly-, roughly?

ADS: More recent, I've been going back every year

DS: Wow!

ADS: For about-, er... two months each time. Ahm... before that probably every other year, as a student. My father's going back for two to three months at a time. So, I've kept in touch-, with friends in Sri Lanka and my parents. Ahm... but in-, in addition to that, you know we were talking before about what are the things you do to celebrate, or keep in touch with your culture. Holidays you celebrate, or certain occasions--. The way I have done it, more is to have my-, my research interest, my academic interest in Sri Lanka. So I-, I work on research projects in Sri Lanka, ahm... ( ) obviously the Sri Lankan newspaper, follow the politics, the scores. So, in that sense I've kept myself pretty involved with-, with-, er... things that are happening there.

DS: And how do you-, how do you get those? Do you get these papers delivered, or?

ADS: No. Through the Internet.

DS: Through the internet!

ADS: And going and working there.

DS: Uh-huh. When did that start happening? How many years into the career were you able to arrange that?

ADS: I mean-, ( ) arrange that, first time about three years ago when I started getting a degree in public health. I did my masters in public health research project in Sri Lanka. I set up some connections there, ( ) I've gone back two years in a row after that, I worked at-, at research institutions in Sri Lanka. And that, you know, through my work I also am regularly in touch with people there, people from there write to me. So hopefully, with my lab here, I'll be able to bring over from Sri Lanka, students, post-docs to come and work on public health problems here. I mean, to ( ) Sri Lanka public health ( ) trained in-, in--.

(END OF TAPE 8, SIDE A)

(START OF TAPE 8, SIDE B)

ADS: So-, so-, there are ways in which you can-, continue your-, roots or ( ) keep in touch with-, your past. But not necessarily practicing a religion or going for certain-, ahm... ceremonies-, ahm... or celebrating holidays, but in my-, my case I think the way to do o it is by-, involving my work with-, things-, things relevant to Sri Lanka.

DS: So-, ahm... is your family--? Your parents still live in Sri Lanka and visit here, what about brother, sisters, cousins?

ADS: I have two brothers. They're both in North America. One is in Canada and the other one is in Ohio--.

DS: Ah.

AW: You should say the Canadian one just moved to your-, well--.

ADS: He just moved here about-, er... six months ago.

DS: So you were the first one out of there? Isn't that right?

ADS: Uh-huh.

AW: And the other one also came here for college and ( ) a long time.

DS: Since-, eighties also?

AW: Yeah.

DS: And then the recent one. How about-, other ( ) links back home.

ADS: No siblings. Lots of relatives, but--.

DS: Uh-huh. Do you miss anything about life there, over here-, I mean, you mentioned the festivals, what about just the-, I guess most of the people you know are-, are more closer by-, from-, from Sri Lanka, or no--?

ADS: Well even the ( )--.

DS: In Sri-, in Sri Lanka.

ADS: Yeah. My brothers are here, but I-, I miss Sri Lanka a lot. A big-, big-, source of sadness to me--.

DS: Really?

ADS: That I don't-, I don't live in Sri Lanka. Ahm..... And I guess it's been some source of tension between Amy and I also. Where are we going to make our home, where are we going to live? Ahm.... So, it's been wonderful that I've been able to go back, especially for these past few years, and-, ( ) a long time. Not just go there for a visit, and you know, and have a good time and visit relatives ( ), but to get immersed in-, in life there, to work there, to get to know working people there. So, that's been wonderful, but I still-, I still miss Sri Lanka a lot.

DS: Do you mean-, you--. Can you articulate why you miss it? Or, I mean, is there any things that come to mind when you think about missing it?

ADS: Yeah. Several things. First, you know, it might sound strange, but I really miss the landscape of Sri Lanka. You know, people often think it's-, it's relatives, friends, but more than that it's the landscape. Er... Before I left Sri Lanka, I used to travel widely. I get a sort of a certain spiritual solace from-, from the landscape, and I-, I miss that a lot. Ahm....what else do I miss? You know, it's a country with a lot of

problems and-, er... before I came here I was very involved with friends in the environmental movement there--.

DS: Uh-huh.

ADS: Things that, sort of, made you want to-, to ( ) the causes that we believed in, and wanted to-, we wanted to change things. I miss not being able to be a part of that, even with all the education and-, and, er...-opportunities that I've had, I feel frustrated that-, that-, er... that I-, I believed in all these causes so much. Now I'm probably in a-, even better position to do something about those things. Ahm... And yet I'm so much--. You can stop that, remove the ( ). ( ) Another source of frustration is to-, to work in academia to do science, but to be so far removed from some of the causes, problems that-, that-, er... I feel strongly about.

DS: So, that's-, er... Landscape, really, is the unique part-, anywhere you live, isn't it? Any country, any-, part of the country.

ADS: I think people have different responses, though. Because, I mean, the question you asked what do you miss, I have many people in Sri Lanka, many friends in Sri Lanka who have come and who, sort of-, look at me-, they're quite baffled when I say landscape.

DS: Uh-huh.

ADS: I think different people respond differently. The landscape-, to me, that-, sort of, target myself, heart and soul. It is very-, very-, er... physical.

DS: Yeah?

ADS: The relationship I feel with-, with-, er... the ground, the trees, hill--.

DS: Direct relation and ( ) [pause] So, that's-, ahm... the obviously the-, those are kinds of things that are a little harder to replace. [laughter] I guess you could, maybe, ( ) fled from Sri Lanka here, that really wouldn't work. It's a little easier with-, er... culture, or something, isn't it?

AW: Beautiful place, too. There's denying that.

ADS: Yeah.

AW: Really is very beautiful.

ADS: Yeah, but it-, it's-, it's not just beauty ( ) miss the ( ) non-beautiful is the ( ) you know, the dry deserts-, er... ( ) dry zone of the country, the parts ( ). And I think it's also more than the landscape, maybe there's-, there could be a biological basis for it-, belong to a--. [pause]

DS: So people who leave-, that people are connected in some way-, that way--. You know, that-, there's a-, er... A visceral connection to a place is not mediated through culture necessarily. That there's some sort of more primal-, connection, or-, I don't know what you'd call it, but that--. You don't need to come up with a reason why you feel that way for the places, explain—to use your language—you just feel that way.

ADS/AW: Uh-huh.

ADS: It's almost sort of a sense of mental peace you get, you know, ( ) going on in your life as a certain ( ), peace you have ( ).

DS: So-, ahm.... [pause] How do you two found-, ahm... in terms of living in the US-, ahm.... In terms of reaction to you two as a mixed couple, or yourself also, as obviously, coming from foreign origin, the--. The places you've lived in, which is many

different places, and-, and that-, ever been an issue, or in any sort of negative way, or is that-, not really made a difference?

AW: Aye, aye, aye!!

ADS: Easy one.

AW: Not that it seems to me that it's made any difference among our friends. I think they're all fond of us as individuals. There were certainly conflict around our getting married to each other, in my family.

DS: There-, there was conflict in your family?

AW: They think it was not a popular idea-, for me to marry-, a foreign person with darker skin than me.

DS: Wow!

AW: Especially in our Jewish persons. I don't know which of those things ( ) [laughter] debate about that among--.

DS: That's a debate about which is worse?

AW: ( ) debate among us about what the real problem was.

DS: Oh, I see.

AW: Of course, my mother's stated version of the problem was the worry that he would kind of carry me away to his beautiful foreign land. Far from her, being her only child-, ahm... I was-, ahm.... He has ( ). I think she was wanting me to marry somebody who was from the same cultural background. That was the big-, issue. ( ) the big issue up until the moment when we had the wedding. Which although we were very excited and happy that our friends helped us with the wedding. That's probably one

reason why we and our friends made our wedding, and it wasn't my family made this wedding.

DS: Right. What about-, er.... on your side

ADS: I think there was a-, ahm... a lot. There was no-, no resistance on my side, er..... I'd been here on my own for a long time. And before Amy, I-, I had a-, a-, French girlfriend for a long time, so--.

AW: That wasn't his girlfriend. [laughter] ( )

ADS: Different ( ). There really wasn't-, there wasn't-, I mean it's pretty difficult for a--, because I was pretty much independent here.

DS: Yeah.

ADS: Ahm... and-, and my-, my parents didn't have strong ( ) my having to marry a-, in fact they had never met Amy when I married.

AW: And yet they made us this enormous, beautiful wedding.

ADS: I just told them that we were getting married and we went to Sri Lanka and they had made a big wedding there.

DS: Family loyalty! Did the thing right. So that was a-, er.....

AW: I should say ( ) present defense of my family, that they're very fond of Aravinda now, and they have gotten over a lot of those issues, I think.

DS: Well, that's good to hear. Great.

AW: So, I think that's the rest of our story.

DS: What-, what about beyond the family? In places you've lived-, mostly lived in places where that would make a difference?

ADS: I don't think it's any difference. I haven't felt-, difference when we've already lived in-, cosmopolitan college towns--.

DS: Uh-huh.

AW: And where people knew us each in our ( ) professional ( ) other. What might be ( ) is from my same home town, or whatever ( )

DS: And your-, er... both of your professions-, er... shall we say, not entirely-, er..... devoid of foreigners. [laughter]

ADS: But usually in-, in a university, they're facing is different, so, I mean, we can't ( ) say to them as people living in ( ) people ( ) happen to have problems, because we've led a very sheltered life. I mean, what if we were-, both-, er.... You know, working in a factory and living in a ( ) town-, er.... what would ( )

AW: So, we've lived in a somewhat working class neighborhood in Rochester. That was a mixed ethnic neighborhood, mostly African American, which was not what either of us is, in terms of background. That's probably the closest experience to being in not exactly our cultures, either than living- situations--.

DS: But, I mean, you just made the distinction between the working class-, er.... Is--? Do you think it's that-, what's helped you all has been the- the white-collar, or is it been specifically that it's these kind of professional jobs in college towns-, that's made the difference?

ADS: Hard to say, but I-, I still stick to that-, in college towns-, in college-, towns--

AW: The actual town in Connecticut wasn't really a college town. It was a small ( ) town.

ADS: But-, ( ) town ( ).

AW: Place people lived to work ( )

ADS: People were coming into New Haven from--. Ahm....

DS: Oh! Don't want the pleasure of living in New Haven!

ADS: New Haven. But they fled to the nice area outside--.

AW: But there isn't-, there isn't much ethnic diversity in Woodridge, really.

ADS: No, but I think ( )

AW: Yeah. There are a lot wealthier people--.

ADS: ( ) very few of us ( )

DS: Because I can think wealthy neighborhoods and areas in US which are not very happy with--. That's why I was asking--.

AW: I think that-, at least I had a lot apprehension about what it would be like to move to the South in that way, to be honest. I mean, Chapel Hill maybe again, it's the same thing. Liberal-, you know, diverse college town.

DS: Well, I'll tell you a story that-, er... some of the people I go to school with-, er.... Ahm... had this reaction after I'd lived here for a few years, you know-, like, say that you know, living in the south isn't all that bad, and I have some friends who are from other places in the south and they said, well, you know, I'm glad you're happy here but you're not really living in the south. [laughter].

AW: In the south ( )

DS: There's this weird-, er... pocket of weirdness around Chapel Hill, that's a little bit different than some of the surrounding areas.

ADS: We just got a house, we went through the mortgage process, and I was worried about that, you know. The first time we were, sort of, getting out-, a little out of the shelter, you know, ( ) applying for loans, going along with realtors, looking at houses, we didn't really feel that-, er.. if anyone was uncomfortable with us, in terms of giving loans, or--.

AW: Yeah, at the moment we don't know the people in this neighborhood like we knew our other neighbors who were all very active in the university.

ADS: We've been here two weeks.

AW: ( ) elderly retired people that-, I don't know. I guess I still have some of those apprehensions. And the one place that ( ) I felt strange, was when traveled once on a trip to New Orleans and we drove out in Louisiana. Where we thought we were going to be looking at birds, but it turned out to be a lot of oil rigs and we were out in a very small town. And I thought some of those people were not so warm and friendly to us. That's the only experience I can really think of like that, where I felt uncomfortable.

DS: ( ) experience ( ) living in Chapel Hill.

AW: Exactly. But we-, you know, we were going to the ( ) nature experience. So what we were thinking, you know, how people are going to react to us, as a couple.

DS: And there it was ( ), huh?

ADS: But you know, the other side of the question is what-, ( ) outside America how do people react to the two of them? People have been much more-, open with their-, with their-, discomfort with the two of them being together. ( )

DS: Where?

ADS: Well, once we were on a flight-, where-, a woman from the Middle-East-, er... sitting next to us-, so three of us were sitting and-, then she started talking to Amy-, and then she realized that I was Amy's husband. She couldn't believe it. She said people like me clean houses in her country. ( )

DS: Why did she say that? What is-, what was meant by that remark?

ADS: I don't know, the Sri Lankans and Indians, as you-, as you might know, ( ) work as laborers in the Middle-East.

DS: Yeah. Yeah.

ADS: Right.

DS: But, okay. She only made that observation after she-, ahm. Realized you're husband--.

AW: The ( ) was that this is a person who's of a class that should be servants, and yet you're married to him. How could you do that?

ADS: ( ) Well, then in Sri Lanka, I've had a-, couple times people tell me-, ahm... ask me why did you marry a foreigner. Ahm.. Why did you-, er... why did you decide to-, not marry someone from here? Often-, you know-, total strangers. I was once reserving a room in a hotel--.

DS: This is in--?

ADS: Sri Lanka.

DS: Sri Lanka. And so they'll just ask you outright why?

ADS: ( )

AW: Or if we go to a small town people will stare in a very open way that they wouldn't stare at him--.

ADS: That's a little different--.

DS: That-, that--. I think, that if you went by yourself?

AW: Yeah.

ADS: ( )

AW: Yeah

DS: ( )

AW: Yeah. ( ) We went to a ruin site. These--. All these Muslim girls from a small village-, all kind of, swarmed me, to look at me. Very strange sensation to have--.

ADS: ( ) to anyone. Definitely, people from Eastern Sri Lanka, they'll be in a--, [pause] cornered by the war for a long time, not really able to get out.

AW: Yeah. Strange. Things you experience is a person to be ( ).

DS: Yeah. A bit of a reversal, this country, isn't it?

AW: It's actually a very healthy thing. To look different, I think, in a new-, in another place. ( )

DS: If it doesn't kill you. [laughter]

AW: Oh, they're usually very warm and curious, like they want to touch you, or take pictures of you, I mean, it's very sweet and then-, they all ( ) it has been always been like that.

DS: That's nice. Glad to hear that.

AW: Except occasionally I'm baffled in Sri Lanka, where the men pass me notes with their phone numbers on them. And they don't realize I'm with him. [laughter]

ADS: ( )

DS: Yeah, but that's even--. But that's also there because I think, you know, even making eye contact with men is-, means something different--.

AW: Right. And there are stereo types of that ( ).

DS: Yeah.

ADS: And ( ) different ( ).

DS: Yeah. That is-, if that-, that cultural economy, that is the ( ) strange, because, you know, if you ask-, er... Asian women here, they'll point out how often they're ( ).

AW: Exactly.

DS: It's a-, the cultural economy is-, reversed, I guess.

AW: That's interesting.

DS: Well-, ahm... we're getting quite late. Maybe we can wrap this one up for now. And-, ahm..... if there's anything else you all folks like talking about today?

ADS: You've been quiet. ( )

AW: I-, I spoke.

ADS: I think, then, maybe--. We can follow up with another if you have any more questions for us.

DS: Yeah. We can have another session.

ADS: We can have another session.

DS: We have plenty of tape. [laughter]

ADS: Let's see what these transcripts look like. Maybe there's a lot of work.

AW: Yeah. This is longer than you think it is.

DS: Well, then, I wanna thank both of you.

ADS: Thank you, Deepak.

DS: Enjoyed it, very much. And-, ahm.... I guess I'll wrap it up.

(END OF INTERVIEW)