

## **0:00 Introduction**

H: Is it ok if I use my English name here? Jason.

L: Of course, no problem at all.

H: Jason Huang. And the last name is the same: Huang. We're in Charlottesville. I came here in... let's see, '02, '03, around Christmas.

L: You moved here in Christmas 2013?

H: 2003.

L: 2003. Ok, so it's been a while?

H: Yes. I've more or less been here for fifteen or sixteen years.

## **0:35 Life in China**

L: Good. So you came from the mainland? Where did you grow up?

H: Yes. I grew up in Henan Province.

L: I've never been to Henan.

H: Oh really?

L: How long did you stay there? Did you grow up there?

H: Yes. I was already more or less forty when I left China.

L: Oh, ok. So did you start working in the restaurant industry — the food industry — when you were already in China, or no?

H: No. Some of my family members had worked in restaurants, opened some restaurants locally in China... but when I was in China I did other things: worked in the tourism industry, worked as a teacher... Things like that.

## **1:23 Moving to US**

L: So, in China... So, when did you decide you wanted to work in the restaurant industry? Was it after you came to the United States?

H: Yes. Even after I came to the US, I had no immediate plans to work in restaurants, but I worked in my cousin's restaurant for a while. It must've been, oh... half a year in DC, in Alexandria. After half a year, business wasn't so good, so we went looking for another job and left his restaurant. It just so happened when we started looking for work that we had a friend who worked at the Walmart in Charlottesville. <You know Walmart?>

L: Yeah.

H: So we got a job there and then the three of us — my wife and I and our daughter — moved to Charlottesville. My wife and I both worked at the Walmart. I worked — not even a whole

year, more like seven to eight months, because to be honest with you, it was pretty low-level work. The wages were too low, if I'm being honest. They couldn't cover all our expenses. So after I quit that job, I went to Los Angeles and learned how to drive the big buses. After I got back from that, I found a job at a Chinese-run tourism company in Washington DC. I worked there for five, six years as a bus driver.

## **2:55 Transitioning to the restaurant industry**

H: I formally decided to open a restaurant in 2011. Yes, 2011. It just so happened I had a friend, Zhang Pengliang — Peter Chang — left another restaurant — you might know it, “Taste of China?”

L: Oh!

H: After he left there he didn't have anywhere to go, but we knew him. So after he and his investor split, he was living in our home for a time. And he said, “You must open a restaurant in Charlottesville!”

L: Ah, because the location's so good?

H: Yes. Because this is a good place to do business. Charlottesville is a small town, but don't let the small population fool you. It's a place where the community is very open, very vibrant. It's in the south, sure, but when I look at it... I think it's classically American. And if you're doing business here, there's not as much competition. Look at big cities where there's lots of Chinese people: New York, Los Angeles. Even Washington DC. There's so much competition. If, on the other hand, you want to open a... authentic-adjacent, quality, shall we say, restaurant here, there's definitely going to be good business. So we decided to help him [Chang]. At the time, he didn't really know how to go about opening his own restaurant. So there were a few of us, a few investors, two others: five in total. So we put this restaurant together. In 2011.

L: So at that time, in Charlottesville, was there only one other Chinese restaurant? Or were there others?

H: Oh, no. Restaurants? There were many restaurants. In Charlottesville, I checked at the time. There were about twenty to thirty, including take-out places. But more authentic Chinese cuisine, no. I mean the kind of Chinese food Chinese people like to eat, or would eat. There was only Peter Chang's old restaurant, Taste of China. At the time, it had very good business.

L: Very good?

H: Very good.

## **5:10 The Chinese community in Charlottesville**

L: At the time, was there a big Chinese population in Charlottesville?

H: Not then, no. I think it had something to do with the University of Virginia not really pulling in a lot of foreigners at the time, especially not Chinese students. Because it was quite conservative.

L: Then?

H: No, even earlier. By the time we arrived they'd just started coming. But there were very, very few of them. Maybe because it's a public university so it didn't want for funds? For whatever reason, it was also quite conservative. And, on top of that, politically speaking — although I personally don't get involved in this — politically speaking, this school draws a lot of Tibetans and Tibetan scholars. You know about this, right?

L: Yes.

H: So I think a lot of students from China, and professors, might've avoided it for that reason. So there weren't many Chinese people.

L: But there's more, today?

H: Oh, yes. Yes, very much so, these past few years. And it's very apparent. Just these past three or four years.

L: Just the student population, or people who come to settle down?

H: Yes, more people have come to settle down as well. Including professors who come to teach at the University, and Chinese families. But speaking on the whole, there's still not that many. Still, more than before.

### **6:35 Customer demographics**

L: So do you mostly have Chinese customers, or locals?

H: I would say about 80% of our diners are local Americans. About 20% or Chinese.

L: Even now?

H: Yes, even now. From when we opened until now. Because this restaurant is, for the most part... To a Chinese diner who wants an authentic Chinese experience, it's not quite it. Because traditional, authentic Chinese cooking uses a lot of oil, and it's numbing, it's spicy. Foreigners don't eat this. But if you only catered to Chinese customers, there's a limit, because the population here is so small. If you just did that, you couldn't cover your expenses. In a place where the Chinese community is small, also, there's frugality, there's... These families we were talking about don't really go out to eat in Charlottesville. I know a friend who's lived in America for twenty years and he's never gone out to eat. I said, if that's the case, then who's money are we making?

L: So he just cooks for himself!

H: Yes!

L: We call that a "house cat."

H: So here, we do Americans' business.

### **8:00 Doing business in Charlottesville**

L: Let's see here... So you mentioned earlier that you liked doing business in Charlottesville. Now you've been to DC, you've been to Los Angeles — but you think Charlottesville is better than both those places?

H: Yes. One reason is that Charlottesville is only two hours away from Washington DC. That's the first reason. In terms of convenience, it's not too bad. The other reason is that this city... is not like Lynchburg. Maybe in terms of size, it's about the same, but Lynchburg is kind of spread out. Charlottesville, all 50 or 60,000 people are more or less in the same place. But the most important reason is that this is a college town. So our shareholders all agreed that culturally speaking, in general, it's a bit higher. People know how to eat, know what to eat, and aren't afraid to try new things. They're willing to give you a chance. So I think that's very important. If you do poorly, they just won't come back. They'll still say it's delicious, of course, but they won't come back.

L: So your produce — your vegetables, your meat — do you get it locally, or... Where do you get it?

H: We get it from a supplier. For the meat products, most of it we get from an American company in Richmond. All the restaurants... I'd bet most Charlottesville restaurants, a lot of the restaurants in this area, get their meat from Tom's Meat. But for the vegetables we use in Chinese cooking, we have to get it from a Chinese company. Because American suppliers don't carry it. So we get it from DC, Richmond...

L: Is this a big burden? Or have you just accepted it? Because I know a lot of other restaurants, they can get their supplies from local farms, local suppliers.

H: Yes, this is a problem. Because lots of things we need, things that Chinese people eat, they aren't grown locally. There is an American supplier, Standard, but what we want is very specialized. So that's something that's a challenge for this small city — it's a bit out of the way. We need some very special items. So that's a bit inconvenient.

L: So do you have to go get it yourselves? Or do you order it specially?

H: We order it specially. So there's two Chinese groceries here, we ask them to order them for us, but that raises the price. Occasionally we will go ourselves, to DC, and get things ourselves. At least once a week.

L: Ok. So let's go back a little bit...

### **11:00 Comparing labor/work experiences**

L: You said you went to LA to learn how to drive tour buses, and then you came back here and worked for the tour company, and then you opened the restaurant. So between these two lines of work, is there one you... That you found more fulfilling, or easier to do?

H: Between these two jobs... I did both of them for quite a long time, and neither of them I liked very much. But because in China, in terms of economic pressures, cultural pressures, we didn't have many options. There were economic reasons and then, because of lack of education, we could really only rely on physical labor. Driving, too, is a very physical job. But, on the whole, when I was working for the tour company, I felt that... Well, I was always on the move, always meeting new people. We were mostly going up and down the East Coast. We'd go to Canada... Each trip was about 15 days. Driving to Montreal, to Toronto, to Boston. In the other direction, we'd go to Atlanta. Overall, that job was... pretty easygoing, I'd say. You were always somewhere different. So I feel like I came to understand the US. As for opening a restaurant, it's just so exhausting. You're chained to it. We usually open at 10:30 AM, and here we close at 9:30 PM. That's 11 hours. That's every day. Even though we might get a two hour

break from 3 to 5, if you're the manager, the responsibilities don't stop. Even after you close, there's responsibilities. Restaurants don't always have big things, but the little things never stop. Every single day! Workers walk out and you're short on staff; customers <complain>. There's things with the equipment. Yesterday one of our stoves broke. Every day there's something! So if you're going to work with restaurants, just working in one is the best. But opening a restaurant, if you don't have certain experience, certain physical health... I don't recommend it to my friends. But if you're a chef, with skills, who can cook well, it's a pretty good deal. They make pretty good money. Our chef, he makes \$4,000 a month. That's what he takes home! That's about the same as the governor of Virginia! Overall, opening a restaurant — if you do it well, if you have good dishes and good produce — and if you put some care into managing it, the money comes pretty quickly. Of course, if you do badly, the money goes pretty quickly too.

L: So quickly! My family's been through that too.

H: Absolutely.

L: So you were saying when you were in Washington DC, you worked in a restaurant?

H: When I first came to the US, for about half a year, yes.

L: When you first arrived, ok. But you had no experience running a restaurant. So did you learn from others or did you figure it out yourself?

H: I worked with others to open this place. With the kitchen half of it, I wasn't too worried, because two of my partners were chefs. Even in China, they were well-known chefs with lots of experience. And they had years of experience in America, too. So I wasn't worried about the food. But for the front, we learned slowly. We put together all our experience and found someone to help us take care of front management. Things like taking care of the staff and so on. The employee you met, she's from Indonesia, but our first manager was an American young man — Robert. They're all very smart, very dedicated. We've always been very happy with them — everyone works very hard.

### **16:35 Unique difficulties of opening Chinese restaurant**

L: When you first started, did you meet with any difficulties as a Chinese immigrant, or with opening a Chinese restaurant, that you don't think American restaurateurs had to worry about?

H: Absolutely. As a Chinese person doing business in America, it's important to understand the American market — very accurately. I know because, even though I'd never opened a restaurant before this one, I tried others afterwards and they didn't go well — I didn't judge the environment properly. I tried to open a place in DC with a friend and within a year, it folded. I must've lost \$100,000... \$80,000 dollars. The market, the environment, the flow of commerce, you have to nail that down. That's why McDonalds does so well: they have a team that just studies this. The other thing is, as Chinese people, as immigrants who don't speak English, we have to gain some level of cultural understanding. As for what culture is — for us it can be quite specific, as businessmen. I'll give you an example. We have to read the contract and the lease carefully. If you can't even pay attention to the lease, or you can't understand it, you might as well not start. It's not that I think they're trying to trick us in the lease. It's just that you didn't read it properly. I had a friend in Richmond whose restaurant wasn't doing so well, and without telling the landlord, he closed it. And afterwards he wanted to sell it. But the landlord told him, "You can ask the landlord in writing for accommodations or to lower the lease, but

you can't just close up shop." If you close and within ten days, the landlord has no notice, he has the right to come and take everything in your shop. If you do that, you've lost all rights to the property. And, for the next couple years, until the end of the lease, he still has to pay rent. So my friend has a lot of problems now. You have to think about... When you do something, you have to pay attention to the language, do it properly. If you can't do it, you hire someone to help you do it — a lawyer, someone who understands.

L: So you got someone to help you?

H: Yes, yes, yes. We had someone. One of the investors, he'd been in the US for a while and his English was better. So for all these outside contacts, this gentleman took care of it.

### **19:45 Living in Charlottesville**

L: So... Let's see. We've talked for a while about business. So you said you've been in Charlottesville for many years now. You said you had a daughter? She grew up here?

H: Yes! She just, uh, she graduated from the high school and right after that she went to UVA. After she graduated from UVA, she found a local real estate company and started working for them.

L: So aside from business, what's the living environment been like for you?

H: Very good. The small city environment here is very good. One thing is, the living costs aren't high, but the culture, the atmosphere, isn't low at all! It's small, so everyone is very warm, very inviting. You can see it on everyone's faces. The community is good. It's not like if you're in New York or DC — if you greet someone, they look at you funny! But not here.

L: Yes, the South is different like that.

H: Absolutely.

L: So living in the US, was it just you who went to LA or did the whole family go?

H: No, when I went to LA it was just me. I was only there for a month and after I had the operating license, I came back.

L: So your family has been in Charlottesville the whole time.

H: Yes, my wife was working at the Walmart. She worked at Walmart for... five or six years.

### **21:25 Future plans**

L: Do you anticipate staying here in the future?

H: To tell you the truth, we don't... I don't think you can run a restaurant for too long. It's too tiring. You tell people you're tired and they say, "Well why don't you hire someone to run things for you?" But hiring someone and managing it yourself is a world apart. We're such a small operation, once you hire someone — then your margin disappears. All the profit we're making is scratched out with hard work. In America, a restaurant's profits are so low. All the rent, the tax, the produce — you carve out that profit where you can. In Charlottesville, in America in general. If there's an opportunity, I'd like to find a better job. For me, myself, I quite liked working in the tourism industry. I've always wanted to get that here in Charlottesville. I wouldn't

have to run to DC for tourists every day, for instance. I could go once a week. I've thought about it — but I've never acted on it. I just think, if I did it, most of my customers would be Chinese people. And they spend money differently, you know what I mean? I don't think I want to make their money. But if you want to make Americans' money, it's different. I don't have the language skills... We've got two years left on this lease. We'll renew it for another five years, and then we'll have to talk to the landlord, have a look at the situation. Because the rent just keeps getting higher. And the market is changing. There's too much take-out. The number of people coming to dine-in is not the same. It's not like the past few years. And the other thing is, there's too many restaurants! Just in this shopping center, this Barracks Road center, even. When we first opened, there were just a few restaurants. Now, just in this mall alone, there are five to six new restaurants. Just think about it. Everyone eats, but there's probably only about 10,000 customers a day to go around. We're pretty satisfied with where we're at — we've more or less kept the flow constant. But it's still going down. Every year, \$5,000 less? And meanwhile, costs go up, the rent goes up. So the profit margin shrinks.

### **25:15 Labor**

L: So, related to this then — and if you don't want to go into details that's perfectly fine — when you look for employees, do you look locally?

H: When I look for front staff — waiters and such — I look local. But for the kitchen, the cooks, I look outside. Locally there's not a lot of Chinese cooks. I've got to look for specialists, specialist chefs. For the most part we find them through friends — from New York, from LA.

L: Do you train them yourselves?

H: Oh, of course. Every restaurant is a little different. We find people with experience, but all menus are different, all the ingredients are a little different. We can train them, bring them along a bit. Usually, within a week or two weeks, they can go it alone. What's more — and you might already know this — real Chinese food isn't like American cooking. In American cooking, for instance, the <sauce> is fixed. You just add it on. In Chinese cooking, we call the method “he sa”. Every dish, every time you make it, you make the sauce for it individually. It varies — with the amount, the timing. Adding things earlier, later: it changes the flavor. So when we're looking for chefs... We can find some locally, and certainly the front staff is all local. But for the kitchen, we generally find people from China.

L: So how do you attract these chefs here to Charlottesville?

H: We have networks, to be sure. But to be honest, it's not easy to bring them to this little city. When they hear about this little place...

L: Well, compared to New York or Los Angeles!

H: It's true. Because they think this is the boonies. It's “going down to the countryside.” Many people, they like the big city. But if they're serious, if they want to make money or get their life in order — and if they're smart, as opposed to just looking for hustle and bustle — they're willing to come. They can save money, and there's nowhere to spend money! And we take care of housing here. In New York, for instance, no one's getting housing for you. In New York, a chef has only \$500 to spend on housing — can't even find a single room. Here, our pay, compared to that of a similar chef in Los Angeles, is \$500 to \$600 dollars more a month. You look at DC, a good chef only makes \$3,000. Here, they take home \$4,000 a month. So: the pluses are you make more money, you spend less money. The downsides are: it's a bit slow — when they're on break, they don't have anywhere to go!

L: It's not that bad!

H: Even if they want to spend money, they don't have anywhere to do it!

L: That can be a good thing!

### **30:10 Designing a menu**

L: So let's talk about the menu. How did you figure it out, when you first started?

H: Ah yes, when we first started. This menu also was a result of the experiences of those two chefs. Because they had lived in the US for many years, they more or less knew what Americans' tastes were. Between them, we figured out what the more popular dishes were. We also did some trial and error. But when it comes down to it, it's pretty unique. A lot of other restaurants don't have our dishes.

L: Yes, I've noticed that.

H: Yes... So, in the US, if you want to do well — and we're speaking generally here — you have to go with Americans' tastes. For instance, if you did real authentic Henan food, Americans wouldn't put up with it. Our friends and I, we've always insisted, this isn't authentic Chinese cuisine. This is... enhanced Chinese cuisine! So many Chinese customers tell us, for instance, "This... This isn't Shuizhuyu!" And I'll say, "Well, yes, you're right, because if we made real Shuizhuyu, you'd eat it, but our American customers wouldn't. I can't just make it for you!" So, to go back to your question: this menu is the result of those two chefs learning from other restaurants where they worked, what succeeded there.

### **32:02 Becoming manager of Peter Chang**

L: Those two original chefs though, they don't... work here anymore?

H: They're still with us! They're the big investors — original investors! Those of us still here are their "underlings," so to speak!

L: I see, so you're the only one who comes in every day and keeps an eye on things.

H: Yes, for the past two years, I've been the manager. When we first opened — for the first four, five years, it was another investor. He also came to the US to open restaurants. But, recently, he's getting up there in years, and he's got his own place, so he left to go take care of his own restaurant. Up until recently as well, to be honest with you, on the weekends the tourism company was very busy and did very well. The money was pretty good. Now, though, the flow of tourism is bigger, it's more independent — they travel by themselves, not with companies. So the business isn't as good, and I left the tourism industry. These past few years, I've just been here.

L: Do you like to cook, yourself?

H: Of course! Of course I do. But I don't cook much at home. Generally, if you run a restaurant, and this includes the chef, when you go home, you don't want to cook anymore.

### **34:00 Chinese community in Charlottesville**

L: Ok, let's see... What else can we talk about. Ok: Would you say the Chinese population in Charlottesville has a lot of contact? Like would you say there's a feeling of a community here, or not so much?

H: I would say there is, yes. Because there's a Chinese church here. When we first arrived, there was already a Chinese church, which seemed to be... I should say it was pretty big. I don't really know... It's good when there's a lot of us, but it's also good when there's fewer of us. When there's lots of us, these conflicts pop up. For instance, the church split into two congregations. Then, this year in October, they came back together. Now — here let me check the WeChat group — just in the group, there must be a few hundred people.

L: So what's the story there? Why did the church split, can you tell me?

H: Ah, that I can't tell you.

L: Ok, ok... But they got back together again! So it's alright now.

H: Yes! Our first priest, he left to go to Chicago, so right now there's not really a priest here in Charlottesville. Usually I would say... there's not too much coming together, probably to do with certain aspects of Chinese culture. But on Fridays, Saturdays, they still have church events. Here, [pointing at phone screen] just in this group there's over 170 people. And that's individuals, so that's not counting their family members. If you count their family members — and most of these are families; there's not many students in the church — that adds up to about 600, 700 people. If I had to guess, I'd say there's about 1,000 to 2,000 Chinese people in Charlottesville now.

L: One to two thousand?

H: Yes, and that's not including the students. I'm sure there's many more of those.

### **36:05 Chinese international students in Charlottesville**

L: Do you think there's a lot of contact between Chinese international students and the local Chinese community?

H: Not a lot, no. But, I will say, the Chinese community here has always wanted to establish some ties to the international students. But really — I think there's some big cultural differences there. Some people are doing this work, though, I just don't know what the results are. I'm not sure if I approve of all this, really. But some people, they really want to, through this and that, reach out to these students, expand their social horizons. And there's nothing wrong with that. But trying to influence people's mindsets, their attitudes — that I don't know about.

L: You must have a lot of customers who are international students!

H: Yes — that 20% of my customers who are Chinese, 15% are international students.

L: So these local Chinese families don't come, just the—

H: Yes, Chinese families... They're very private, pretty frugal. They don't eat out. Of course, sometimes they'll have an event or something... But for the most part, they eat out less.

L: What's the evaluation, from these Chinese students?

H: Pretty good! They're very smart. But I think their cultural background is a little different. They need some more time to really absorb the different environment in the United States. They're new bodies. By the time they're where you're at — doing their graduate degrees, their doctorates — they've settled. But they're very smart. I like them very much. For us, as adults, who are working... I mean, back then, in the 80's, it was very hard to get into college. The atmosphere was very intense and stressful. Now, I hear it's a little easier. Now almost everyone can go to university! Back then, it really was... And to go overseas, it costs a fortune. They're here to learn, first and foremost. But I still think they're a good bunch. Very smart, very polite...

L: Yes, I've recently started TA-ing and many of my students are from China and they're all very capable.

H: They've still got some of their own differences, it's true. For some things, when they see something they don't understand or can't get used to, they leap to say something about it. But I think you need to consider something strange, and then formulate your response. Still, they're young. When we were young I'm sure we couldn't resist ourselves either. But it's good to remind them. The earlier you can grow up, the better.

#### **40:52 Return trips to China and impressions of China today**

L: Do you still go back to China?

H: I do! Every two or three years, we go back.

L: So, looking at China today... and the US today... is there one that you'd prefer to live in?

H: Hm... Each has its positives. If I had my way, I'd be able to go back and forth more often. But, of course, with work, and family here, I spend more time here. But whenever I get a chance, it's good to go see China — because the place is changing so quickly. I will say, Chinese people understand America far more than Americans understand China. China really is developing economically at an incredible rate. Some older Chinese people in America always like to point out where China is still lagging behind the US, but I think in terms of middle classes, there's not much difference between the US and China. In some ways, I think the US is behind China even. Take healthcare — the US can't keep up with China, even. Healthcare in the US is just a disaster. The poor, people who need help from the rest of society — you have to look after them. This is a matter of social responsibility. But you can't disincentivize work! For instance, a lot of our employees, part time employees, ask for fewer hours. I say, "Why don't you want more hours?" They say, "If I work more hours and make more money, I have to spend money on healthcare. Right now, at my current income, I spend almost nothing on healthcare. But if I even make a few more hundred dollars a month, suddenly I have to spend thousands!" I thought to myself, "Is that how things work here?" So then they say to me, "I'll take more hours if I don't have to report it; just give me cash." And I can't do that. Of course, if you get really rich — like Mr. Trump, the president, there — with a few billion dollars, these social problems mean nothing to you. Right now, I think if a household makes only \$100,000, that can be a bit rough. But between \$70 to \$250,000 — that should be a comfortable life.

Let's take Charlottesville. You might not even believe this. If you're a two income household making \$70,000, last year — maybe it's less this year — if you buy Obamacare, the lowest coverage per month is \$3,000. But I only make \$70,000! And I'm spending \$40,000 on healthcare! That just leaves me with \$10,000 to \$20,000 left. I might as well make less and then spend less on healthcare. It just makes no sense to me. And what's more, in the US... Because

it's "the United States," every state is different. Even if you're just in Virginia, each city is different. You enjoy different privileges. Charlottesville — I did some checking — here, the healthcare costs if you make \$100,000 are some of the highest in the country.

L: And this is something on your mind, as an employer? Because it's not just about yourself...

H: Of course! Of course it's on my mind. Lots of employees leave after a certain point. I think many aspects of American society aren't like other countries — Well, I can't say it's unlike China. But a lot of people don't seem to care about this. There's some apathy here. There's no big impulse to change society or politics. They don't always go to their representatives, they don't look for ways to make society more rewarding of hard work. You don't want people to make an effort, you don't let them make a living — I think that's a big problem.

L: But you seem to be paying attention to all this!

H: Well, not particularly. It just blows my mind. You work so hard all year and for what! Maybe in a country like the United States, it's hard because maybe there aren't as many poor people. In a developed nation, it's hard to rustle up the energy or the motivation. The economy, the politics... Sometimes... They say, it's pretty easy to go from being poor to being middle class. But to go from middle class to being rich? That's not so easy. Maybe society is just structured this way.

#### **47:53 A11/A12**

L: Last subject. As someone who's lived here for many years, how did you... Last year, with the protests in August downtown, were you here?

H: Yes.

L: Did you feel like it affected you?

H: Well, that weekend... Just speaking for the business, we took a hit. But for myself — I thought this was something left behind in the past. Why are you trying to dig it up again? And something that failed? If it's in the past, leave it in the past. Some people want to take the statue down. Do you really think taking a statue down is the same thing as erasing history? Or putting up a corrective plaque — how is that erasing history? I don't think those people had a very developed or democratic mindset. It was just violence. But I think in the end — this city is very liberal, but Albemarle has always been quite conservative. Maybe it's because American history is so short, on the whole, but there's a lack of historical thinking. Or else it's not very mature historical thinking. How can you try to go back into the past and — even if it's something that was right — try to go back and revive it? But most of all, I'm against the violence.

L: What I'm curious about is, as an immigrant, have you felt unsafe here ever?

H: Never. That's one of the reasons we like it here: the city is small, but it's open. All us immigrants, we can live together as a community. There's a large African American population, a large Latino population... Not so many Chinese people. Quite a lot of Indian immigrants! A few Korean immigrants. But just here in our restaurant, I think about 5% of the customers are from India! They enjoy our food, too.

L: I think that's it for now! Thank you.