K: So, lately I’ve been thinking about how Japan has changed in the past – I think of it as the past 16 years because I came over by myself for six months, as the Musick Notes know. And… then we emigrated together as a family fifteen years ago.

C: You came over fifteen years ago. We emigrated together as a family thirteen years ago – well, we’re here in Japan, so we immigrated, but.

K: Thirteen?

C: Yes. It’s 2020

K: What are you talking about?

C: It’s 2020, and we all came over

K: Yeah. We’ve been here 14 years.

C: And we all came over in 2007.

K: Okay.

C: 20 minus 7 is 13.

K: So, then we went for permanent residency when we had been here for 12 years?

C: 11 years.

K: 11 years. Okay. Alright. So, I don’t know our timeline, so you guys should really trust Chad on timelines. So, please, duly note for the record that I am saying Chad knows something mor- better than I do.

C: Wow.

K: Right? Coming right out the gate with that. That’s like – I know, Musick Notes, your heads are just spinning right now like, “what? Chad knows something better than Kisstopher that isn’t math?” But then I guess that is kind of math.

C: That is kind of math, yeah.

K: (laughs)

C: Subtracting one year from another. That’s kind of math.

K: (laughs) For me, I just feel like I’ve been in Japan forever because this is my home. I had a really dear friend of mine – I was talking to them the other day, and they were like, “I just want to go back to Gifu.” They live in Nagoya, but they want to go back to Gifu because they just want to go home. And Gifu is home to them.

C: Why don’t they go back to Gifu? Gifu is like thirty minutes away from here, so that’s why I’m

K: Work.

C: Oh, okay.

K: They work in Nagoya, so.

C: Yeah.

K: Everybody just kind of – a lot of expats just live where they can find work.

C: Mhm.

K: And don’t really get to pick their city until they get enough experience. And, usually, it’s like five years’ experience at anything you do. It’s between one- and five-years’ experience, and then you can basically pick your city based on whatever it is you do. I think.

C: And that’s kind of strange to me because employers here, generally, will pay your transportation up to a certain amount. So

K: Yeah, but not everybody has a commute in them.

C: Yeah. I guess that’s it.

K: Because I don’t have a commute in me. Like, I seriously – we got – where my office is located is literally ten minutes away from the house, and some days that’s a struggle.

C: See, and I find that ironic because I work from home a hundred percent of the time now.

K: Yeah. Whoop.

C: My last job was like 90% of the time, now it’s 100% of the time. And not just because of social distancing or anything. I’ve just worked from home the last ten years or so.

K Yeah.

C: And I could totally handle the commute. Because, when I was working in the Bay Area, I did long commutes every day.

K: Okay. No. Pump the breaks. Your commute is literally three steps long.

C: That’s what I’m saying.

K: Is that you can handle the three steps? You’re courageous enough because sometimes, sometimes, your commute is like a good twenty steps.

C: Yeah, if I go in the other room. No, what I’m saying

K: If you work from your nap room.

C: Right.

K: Because I’m outing you as having a nap room.

C: Yes.

K: Oh my gosh. I’m going to call you something. I can’t help it.

C: Don’t do it.

K: I’m going to do it.

C: Don’t do it.

K: I can’t help it. You’re a napper. Ohhh. Them’s fighting words. Chad’s just like

C: They are. Yeah.

K: He’s like – you guys think we’re messing around (laughs) but it’s a low-key simmer thing. Chad hates being called a napper because don’t define him by his sleep habit. Don’t do it.

C: You’re making me yawn just calling me a napper.

K: (laughs)

C: Here it is first thing in the morning.

K: He doesn’t nap every day, but he does have a nap room. So, how can you not be a napper if you have a nap room? Like, the color of the nap room. The features. Everything in the nap room is about making your naps comfortable for you when you need a nap.

C: Yes.

K: How are you not a napper?

C: That’s like asking how somebody isn’t a professional racecar driver if they have a car they like to drive.

K: What?

C: Like, don’t assign me the profession of napper. Yes, I enjoy a nap.

K: (laughs) But you are a casual napper.

C: Yes. So, I do have a very, very short commute now because I don’t have to leave – leave the sanctuary of the apartment.

K: Yes.

C: I wasn’t saying I have a long commute now. I’m saying the irony is that you are the one with a commute at all, and I am the one who could handle a commute. Because I did

K: Yeah because you were fine when we were – even when we lived in Santa Clara and you were going to Berkeley

C: I commuted to Berkeley

K: Yeah.

C: I lived in

K: You were fine with it.

C: I lived in San Francisco and commuted to Marin every day.

K: Yeah, but the whole time you’ve known me, you’ve known I can’t handle a commute.

C: Yes.

K: Like, if I have to get on a freeway to go somewhere, I’m pissed.

C: Right.

K: Unless – but then, I would love to drive just for fun.

C: Yes.

K: I liked to get on – there’s a freeway in Northern California called 280 that I used to just love to drive.

C: Yes. When we first met

K: (laughs)

C: I let Kisstopher borrow my car.

K: Yes, you did.

C: Which I had a Miata.

K: Yes, which I loved.

C: She told me, “yea, I was on 280, and she just had to go a hundred miles an hour.”

K: Yup.

C: I said, “she who?” “She your car.”

K: Yes. It spoke to me. It said, “Kisstopher, put it in sixth. Pedal to the metal.”

C: Yes. Because I had the special edition Miata with six gears.

K: Yes. And it was crying out to me. That sixth gear was crying out to me. The car was begging me. It’s like, “please, Kisstopher, you’re the only one. Chad’s only done it once on a racetrack where it was legal.”

C: I put it in sixth gear all of the time. You’re saying the hundred miles an hour?

K: Yes. Open that baby up. It could do 120.

C: It could do 130.

K: Okay. It could do 130, so I feel like what? I did a hundred miles an hour. It’s not like I even opened her all the way up.

C: (laughs)

K: Stop being so judgmental. There was nobody on the road.

C: (laughs)

K: Come on, now. Musick Notes get my back. The car wanted it. (laughs) That sounded so creepy. Oh my gosh.

(laughter)

K: Oh my gosh, that sounded – okay, I hear it.

C: Do you?

K: Yeah.

C: I’m glad.

K: Yeah, I hear it now. I wanted it. I wanted it.

C: Yes.

K: Yeah. But I feel like the sixth gear is consent.

C: Yeah, it’s really not

K: It’s not?

C: No because it was only special for the U.S. because in Japan, the stock Miatas had six gears.

K: Oh, really?

C: Yeah. At the time. I don’t know what they do now. I don’t know if

K: Yeah, and in Japan the – it’s like Kilometers per hour, so I don’t know how fast to drive anything. I’m so – the imperial system, the metric system is just a mystery to me. I know how far ten meters is now thanks to GPS.

C: Well, and I think you know what temperatures are.

K: Yeah. And I do know grams and kilos. (laughs)

C: Yup.

K: But, really, I only know grams, ounces, and kilos. So, it’s so weird to me.

C: So, how many grams in an ounce?

K: I don’t know. Eight? An eight ball? An eight ball is an ounce? No. An eight ball is

C: (laughs)

K: Three point five grams?

C: Yeah.

K: Yeah, an eight ball is three point five grams, and

C: You are so corrupting our listeners.

K: What?

C: No, I mean, they’d have to look it up if they didn’t know what it was. But, yes, it’s an eighth of an ounce. An ounce is about 28 grams.

K: Okay. Because I’ve never – so I know that weed is sold by the ounce.

C: Okay.

K: So, I know what an ounce of weed is, but I only know an ounce of weed as a lid.

C: Mm.

K: And I know a dime bag of weed is just one fat bud. It’s not weight. It’s just one fat bud.

C: It’s supposed to be whatever costs ten dollars, isn’t it?

K: Yeah.

C: That’s why they call it a dime bag – is because it’s a hundred dimes. Which shouldn’t it just be one dime?

K: Because it’s ten buds. It’s a dime bag.

C: Yeahhh.

K: It’s a dime. So, with the weed, it’s dime bags and then an eighth – an eighth of an ounce.

C: Okay, so, have you seen any change in Japan as far as the attitude toward drugs?

K: (laughs) Because I can go on and on about drugs

C: You could.

K: So, thank you for bringing me back to it. So, something interesting about Japan – and I think we’ve talked about this before – but having drugs in your system is considered possession, and they can compel you to have your blood drawn or urinate at any point in time.

C: Yes.

K: And they do stop and frisk. I have clients that get stopped and frisked just because – they do not need a reason to stop you and frisk you, and I’ve had clients that have had experiences while driving – getting pulled over and having their car searched. And… just for no reason.

C: Well, I think, having read about both but never having had either one happen to me – I think when you say, “stop and frisk” that means something very different here in Japan than it does in New York – where the phrase was popularized, New York City.

K: How is it something different? The police stop you, they make you empty out all your pockets, they pat you down, and they empty out your bag searching for illegal items, ask for your identification, take a record of your identification, and then, if you’re under the influence of alcohol or any excuse whatsoever, they arrest you. How is that different?

C: The scale and the mass effectiveness of it. So

K: I think that’s just down to the number of police on the streets.

C: You think so?

K: Yeah. So, for me, I – I have been stopped by the police on my bicycle, and I have had to prove that I owned my bicycle.

C: Yeah, and so was our son.

K: Yes. So, for me, it’s because I’m a foreigner.

C: Yes.

K: and the police officer felt like I was riding my bike too fast and too dangerously. And that’s when I stopped wearing a helmet – because I was wearing a helmet, and in Japan it’s really rare that anyone wears a helmet while biking.

C: Yeah.

K: And… I was biking – it was in Okazaki – and I was… I would tell you all the time that I was getting hit by car windows

C: Yes.

K: And getting hit by cars while I was biking, so I was really afraid of – there was no, on the road that I had to bike down, there was absolutely no sidewalk.

C: Right.

K: And so I had to ride in the road. And, at the bottom of the hill, because I’m just rolling down the hill – I got stopped by the police for speeding on my bike, which I didn’t know was a thing.

C: It’s a thing even in the U.S., yeah.

K: And they were like, “yeah, you’re reckless endangerment.” And I’m like, “what about the person who hit me with their car?” And they were like, “where are you going? Why are you in Japan? Why do you have a burner phone?” I didn’t have a burner phone. I had a pay-as-you-go phone. Like, “why do have a pay-as-you-go phone?” Which triggered me, and I started crying – I missed my husband so much, just telling them my life story.

C: Why do you have a pay-as-you-go phone? That’s such a strange thing because there’s a law that you can’t get a non-pay-as-you-go phone unless you have a certain

K: Back then, yeah.

C: And there still is.

K: Oh, really?

C: Yeah.

K: So, to get a phone fourteen years ago in Japan, as a foreigner, I had to take them my passport, my foreign card – my foreign residence card – and I had to also have – when I first got the phone – I had to bring in a Japanese person to verify my existence as – to vouch for me, I needed a guarantor is what it’s called – to get a phone. And I was lucky enough that I had – I was friendly with one of my Japanese teachers, and she went with me to the mall to buy the initial phone. I was really super proud of myself that I did all of it – that’s Chad opening a soda, it’s not Kisstopher.

C: (laughs)

K: This background noise – that one’s on Chad. So, I had to show them all my identification, they took a copy of my passport, and I could only get a pay-as-you-go phone.

C: Right.

K: I couldn’t get any other type of phone. And I had to buy cards to charge it.

C: Yes.

K: But when the police stopped me, it was suspicious – why do I only have a pay-as-you-go phone? And then I had to explain to the police office that they wouldn’t give me a phone. And then the police said, “that’s against the law. If you’re going to be here for a long time” it was this whole weird conversation because I’m crying to the police officer about how much I miss my husband, how hard it is being in Japan as a foreigner, and he’s empathizing with me and talking to me, and we had this really great, positive exchange.

C: Uh-huh.

K: And then I was on his beat, and he would just be like, “hey. Ohayougozaimasu.” We would say good morning, and sometimes if I was early on my way to school, I would just have a casual conversation with this police officer who now knew me and would brag about knowing the foreigner.

C: Yeah.

K: Because I was like the foreigner on that route.

C: Ironically because you were in Okazaki because they had a huge school at the time.

K: Yeah, but I didn’t live in the dorm.

C: Mmm.

K: I chose to live in my own apartment.

C: I forgot everybody lived in the dorms.

K: Yeah, so I took a different route.

C: Yeah.

K: So, yeah. So, that has not changed in Japan. The stop and frisk of foreigners.

C: No.

K: Have you been stopped and frisked?

C: I have… not been stopped and frisked, no. Not ever. I have been, like… I should say not out on the street. So, when I’d been working – the company that I worked in before had an office in Nagoya. They would come by and ask, “what are you doing here? Can we see your residence cards? This is a business?” “Yes, that’s why it’s got a sign on the door” and everything.

K: Mhm.

C: “Okay, show us your work visa. We’re going to be keeping track of you.” And they come by the apartment her once a year to inquire like, “what’s your profession? What’s your visa?” All of that.

K: Yeah. And they come to my office, but not for nefarious reasons. They come to my office to – recently, they came to my office to warn me that two trucks had recently gotten a permit to drive through the neighborhood, so please don’t call in noise complaints.

C: Mhm.

K: And they drive – so, as a therapist, there is nothing worse than a noisy truck. So, I have clients that have auditory sensitivity, and I have to now book them around when the truck comes. And one client, the only time that they can come is during that hour when the trucks come. So, between six and seven. And I have to warn them – and sometimes they come as early as 5:30. And, so, I have two clients on two days that have auditory sensitivity that the trucks come by during their session, and I feel so bad because I can’t do anything about it.

C: That’s totally obnoxious because I have that - I have that too.

K: They’re super loud.

C: They are super loud.

K: So, I learned what the trucks are saying in Japanese, and

C: Yeah.

K: And one of them’s a political truck, and one of them is a yam truck. (laughs)

C: Yes. “Yaaaaaaaaakiiiiiiiiiimo. Yaki imo Yaki imo!”

K: Yeah, it’s so just like – but it’s a decked out – so, like – and I give them mad props. So, the yam truck started – so the people who own the yam truck, they’ve come up. Because they started on a bicycle pulling a yam cart behind them, just shouting it out in the street. And now they have a truck with a loudspeaker, so I guess their yams are selling, and I get why they’re in the neighborhood. And props to them, but damn.

C: So, they’re selling like hot potatoes?

K: Yup, they’re selling like hot potatoes, and they are hot potatoes. So, the noisy trucks – that’s something that hasn’t changed, that’s always been a staple.

C: I feel like

K: The trucks with loudspeakers. I feel like the entire – way more so than in the United States.

C: Yeah.

K: I guess the closest thing we have in the United States is the ice cream man?

C: Yeah. I feel like there’s a lot less Nazis in the last few years, though

K: Yeah.

C: Maybe like the last five or six years, the Nazis have stopped bulling through our neighborhood because it used to be every single Sunday morning.

K: Yeah, they did.

C: The Nazis would spend a couple of hours in our neighborhood shouting, and

K: Talking about the foreign plague.

C: Yeah. And then they put in place some hate speech laws, I think five years ago, and that pretty much stopped that.

K: Yeah. And the Nazis used to drive around my office as well. And, for the clients that didn’t understand Japanese sometimes I wouldn’t tell them, and sometimes I would. But, therapeutically – I had to make a decision as a therapist like, “is this going to be triggering for the client? Are they going to feel under threat? So, the stop and frisk hasn’t changed at all in Japan from my experience the entire time we’ve been here, but since moving – I have to knock on wood because I don’t want to be stopped and frisked – since moving from Okazaki to Nagoya, I’ve never been searched in Nagoya. I’ve never been stopped. I’ve never been questioned in Nagoya. Rasta has, but I never have.

C: Yeah.

K: So, I feel like – a lot of my clients do, and interestingly enough, it’s my white clients more so than my black clients.

C: Mhm.

K: So, that’s something that’s so shocking to me is that, for the Japanese police, my white clients are more visibly offensive, I guess, and mentally offensive. There’s a stronger bias against white men in Japan than there is against black women.

C: Interesting. Do you think it’s down to neighborhoods and such? Because I think that, when I’m in Tokyo – I haven’t gone to Tokyo in a while because I no longer have to for work – I would get asked by the police like, “hey what are you doing?” I’m like, “I’m here from Nagoya for work” and they hear my accent, and they’d be like, “okay, you really are here from Nagoya.” Because I apparently have a thick Nagoya accent.

K: And, so, for me, I think it’s down to (clears throat) excuse me. So, when I went to the Black Women in Japan Conference, something all the American black women said – and even, I was surprised that even women who are not from North America also said that they don’t want to be an angry Black woman. That they’re really aware of that stereotype that Black women are loud and angry and obnoxious. And, so, when we’re out – and it creates a lot of pressure and all of my Black girlfriends tell me that we all feel this. And I’m saying Black, not African American, because I’m not just talking about black women from the United States

C: Right.

K: I’m talking about – I have literally

C: Yeah, go ahead and say that somebody from Jamaica is African American.

K: Ohh.

C: You could be wrong in so many ways.

K: Yes. Yes. They are Afro-Caribbean or just – so, for me, my girlfriend – I have a really good friend from Jamaica, and she’s like, “I’m just Jamaican.”

C: Yeah.

K: Like, they don’t – you don’t need to say anything else. And I have a girlfriend who’s Haitian, and she says, “I’m just Haitian.”

C: Yeah.

K: “I’m just Dominican.” And then my Dominican girlfriends go back between whether or not they’re African at all. And they’re like, “yes, we get that we have ancestors from Africa, but we are Dominican. And we speak Spanish.” And I guess – and then some of them are like, “No. I’m Afro-Latina.” So, I find it interesting the different ways that people identify. So, everybody accepts Black – all my girls are cool with me calling them Black.

C: Right.

K: we were all talking about how the pressure of knowing that when we’re out in the world, everybody’s staring at us. And gawking at us.

C: That’s interesting because, when I was a member of the ACCJ – which I haven’t been for a while because, again, no longer relevant to me – I hung out with a bunch of white guys who, like, had consistently gotten in trouble with the police.

K: Who act like jackasses with all of their white entitlement.

C: That’s what I was – and that’s what I was just thinking. Every time they would describe being hassled by the police, they were like, “I was just getting my buzz on.”

K: Yeah.

C: “And the police were like hassling me. I was just out with my bunch of friends, drunk and being loud and carrying on.”

K: Yup.

C: “And I got hassled by the police.”

K: And, so, all of my sisters – all my girls – we all say that we are on our best behavior, and the pressure of being that model minority to represent what the Japanese see as a monolith – because we’re so aware, and I’ve talked about this before on the podcast, because we’re so aware that we might be the only Blackness that these Japanese people come in contact with. And it creates a huge amount of psychic and emotional stress, but it has the byproduct of we don’t really get harassed because we like – we dress appropriately, we make sure our hair is combed out and clean, we make sure we’re lotioned so we’re not ashy, and make sure that our hair is moisturized and that we smell good, and that we look good. And there’s a certain standard that we go out. And I have to admit that I’m like dragging down the curve because my girls are gorgeous.

C: (laughs)

K: They beat that face, and they do that hair. And I’m like, “yeah. I’m doing jeans and a button-down shirt, and that’s all you’re going to get for me.” And I never wear makeup. Always put my hair in a bun. But they’re like, “but you’re clean and you don’t stink.” And I’m like, “thank you.” (laughs)

C: Yeah, thank you. Thank you for agreeing that I’ve passed that hurdle.

K: (laughs) I was talking with my girls about it because we were hanging out. And I was like, “yo, I think I’m bringing down the curve because you all look gorgeous.” And they’re like, “no girl, you’re clean and you don’t stink.” And I was like, “aww. Thank you.” (laughs) Because I really did feel like I was bringing down the curve, man. Everyone’s hair was done. Everybody had on at least a liquid lip, and I’m like (laughs) I can’t even put on – be bothered – I put on lip chap, and I’m good to good. Like, right now, Winter and Spring – my skin is so irritated. So, one thing that hasn’t changed in Japan is that in Nagoya, I feel like a preferred minority because I feel like, in Nagoya specifically, there is a strong bias against white men.

C: Yes.

K: And I have a lot of clients who are white men who are dealing with culture shock. We’ve talked about this before that a lot of white guys come over here, and it’s their first time being a minority. And then it’s their first time being targeted by the police for driving while white, and walking while white, and just like – sometimes, just being sober and white. And just going about their day, the police will stop them and ask them, “why are you here?” And they want to know that specifically. “Why are you here in Japan?”

C: Yeah.

K: Like, “what are you doing right here in this space and time?”

C: I guess I have gotten asked that a lot by police.

K: Yeah, “why are you here?”

C: And I just don’t think of it because my answer always shocks them, and so they always leave me alone after. I think…

K: No because you’re a law-abiding citizen, and they have no reason to arrest you.

C: No, that too. But I think that – I think I would get treated differently if I was here temporarily and didn’t speak Japanese.

K: Mhm.

C: Or if I was an English teacher. It’s like…

K: No, most of my clients who are getting stopped are not English teachers.

C: But they’re here temporarily, or?

K: No, they’re here for several years. Like, the client that’s been here the longest that got stopped and frisked – they had been here for… I want to say 23 years.

C: That’s a while.

K: Yeah. But they often got stopped and frisked. (laughs)

C: Oh, okay.

K: And I’ll just leave it at that. (laughs) No need to go into that. So, I don’t feel like the stop and frisk has changed at all in Japan.

C: I don’t think it has either. I feel like I don’t have it hard as a white guy here in Japan. I don’t want anybody listening to think that when I agree that white guys get discriminated against here, that I’m like woe is me.

K: It’s your beard.

C: Yes. But I think that white guys in particular are in this thing where they can basically go out and get an English teaching job pretty easily.

K: Yup.

C: But English teaching doesn’t pay very well – but if they want to work at a Japanese company and make more than minimum wage, it’s really tough.

K: Yeah.

C: Because companies are like, “why shouldn’t we just hire somebody Japanese because they’re going to be cheaper, and they’re going to understand?”

K: Well, unless they’re fully bilingual.

C: Yeah.

K: And then it’s pretty easy once you’re fully bilingual.

C: Yeah.

K: So, the Japanese language proficiency test level one – that’s a standard of reading that they want everyone to have. Actually, the level two is the standard – you all can google that if you like.

C: So, I feel like, in terms of attitudes toward foreigners, or non-Japanese people, there’s kind of a bounce. I feel like things were… changing from the time we got here until about 2011.

K: Yeah.

C: Until about March 11th in 2011.

K: Yeah.

C: and then the big earthquake hit.

K: Yeah.

C: And then… a lot of non-Japanese people left Japan.

K: Yeah.

C: And that kind of reset it to where people are like, “okay, now we’re comfortable with the level of foreignness here in Nagoya.”

K: Yes.

C: And since then the recovery happened and all of that. More and more people have been moving here, and I hear people saying, “well, we don’t mean you because you guys have been here a long time, and you went to school here” and the whole thing of it. Of why they don’t mean us specifically, “but there is too many foreigners around here.”

K: And so, that’s impacted the way that – I feel really fortunate that we have permanent residency because right after – like, literally the year after we got it, they changed the permanent residency laws and made them way stricter now. And, aft the same time, they changed the pension laws. So, now to get permanent residency – so, the pension, we were able, I’m not proud of this and don’t come from us on this – unless you live in Japan, you won’t understand it. Okay. So, I feel guilty and defensive. Let me just put that out there.

C: That was clear to me, but I’m not sure yet what you feel guilty and defensive about.

K: I hadn’t paid my pension every year.

C: Right.

K: Because there were some years that I couldn’t afford it – like, legitimately there were years where I was working, and I didn’t have the money – it was like pensions or fresh fruit. Like, and then we were able to back-pay. And we could – at the time that we did our permanent residency, you could backpay your entire stay.

C: Right.

K: Which, thankfully, we didn’t have to backpay ten years’ worth of pension. We just had to do a couple of years. And then, right after we did that, they changed to you could only backpay up to three years.

C: Yeah. And, so, for people who aren’t in Japan and don’t know: if you’re working for a company full-time, then you get one type of pension, employee insurance pension, which is the kind that I had before we got permanent residency, so mine was paid. But everybody is – every adult is required to pay in unless they get an exemption.

K: Yeah.

C: And it’s 17,000 yen a month.

K: Yeah.

C: Which, for the three of us, when none of us was on the employee insurance, was like five hundred dollars a month.

K: Yeah.

C: and the thing about it is, because of my age and Kisstopher’s age, it is literally impossible for us to ever collect on that pension.

K: Yeah. Well, no, I can get my pension, and I would get a thousand dollars a year.

C: Right. I shouldn’t say it was impossible. It’s like, if you paid in for twenty-five years, then you could get a thousand dollars a year.

K: No, if you pay for twenty-five, you can get more than that.

C: Okay.

K: So, for – because they send notices every now and then – I don’t know how much I’ve paid in to date, but now I think I’m up to like, I could get a thousand dollars a month.

C: No, you can’t get a thousand dollars a month.

K: No, wait. Three hundred dollars a month.

C: Okay, that might be.

K: Yeah, three hundred dollars a month. Sorry, converting Japanese to American because three hundred dollars a month is 30,000 a month.

C: Right.

K: Yeah, so my math was off. Sorry about that.

C: The maximum anybody can get from that pension is about 700 dollars a month. Which is how I knew you couldn’t get a thousand dollars a month.

K: Yeah, I don’t think that in the next ten years or in the next fifteen years that I’m going to get there.

C: Yeah.

K: So, that’s not my goal. (laughs)

C: No. No.

K: And, so... they’ve recently changed the laws that not only do you have to have paid your pension the entire time you’re here, you had to have paid your pension on time, so even if your pension was – let’s say your March pension was paid on April 1st, you will be denied permanent residency.

C: Until you’ve paid it on time for two years.

K: Yeah – not two years, 24 consecutive months.

C: Yes.

K: And that’s really important. It’s not two years. It’s 24 consecutive months.

C: Yes.

K: So that’s – the permanent residency, how to get it and how to qualify for it, every year is getting stricter and stricter. And that’s because they’re trying to prevent men who marry Japanese women from getting permanent residency.

C: Mmm. I hadn’t thought about that.

K: Which I think is so weird – that particular bias. Because Japan needs children, so shouldn’t they just be happy anyone’s procreating and

C: I think that’s where the racism comes in.

K: Yeah.

C: Because I had like one professor when I was in school sit me down and tell me, “oh, I can tell what race everybody is.”

K: Yeah.

C: And he was pointing out people, “that person is Chinese because look at how rude they’re being. That person is Korean because look at how ugly their clothes are.” “You don’t know any of these people.” “No, but I can just tell.”

K: Yeah that’s super racist and horrible. And there’s just like, a lot of – a lot of racism against other Asians in Japan more so than foreigners in general. So, I think they’re most racist against other Asians and then foreigners. That hasn’t changed in Japan, but the visa laws have changed in that now there’s domestic help laws, and

C: They did a massive immigration reform in 2012.

K: Yeah.

C: and then they’ve been doing some recently because they’re like, “oh, shit. We’re running out of people. Everybody’s too old. We need nurses, we need healthcare workers, we need construction workers.” Like, nobody wants to take the jobs that aren’t good.

K: Yeah. Because Japan is becoming more educated.

C: Yeah. And, so, it’s interesting moving out of academic editing because, when I was in academic editing, I would see what they’re trying to do behind the scenes.

K: Yeah.

C: Which there were a lot of – I did hundred of papers, literally, that were like, “Japan is an aging society that needs reliable young labor; therefore, we’re inventing a robot to do this work.”

K: (laughs) That is so Japanese. That is so Japanese. Like, “let’s not look to people. Tsk tsk.” Because the Japanese love their robotics – they have like, they built that fashion robot.

C: Yeah.

K: Which I’m like, who needs a robot to walk down the catwalk during fashion week?

C: It’s interesting when you say “the Japanese” because I know exactly what you mean. You don’t mean all Japanese people. You mean Japanese people, collectively, and so I find that the way that Japan has changed, for me, in the time we’ve been here is that I – I’ve heard a lot more people saying, “I don’t agree with the collective opinion on this, but I’m not going to voice my opposition to it because I don’t want to create trouble.”

K: Yes.

C: So, I feel like we’re in a situation where the majority of Japanese people don’t have certain attitudes, but politically… they don’t express themselves, so the political stuff is like… very anti-foreigner. Even if the population

K: Well, Abe loves the U.S.

C: Yes.

K: Prime Minister Abe loves the U.S.

C: Yes, but he’s very… very far right politically.

K: Yeah, he is.

C: I think people don’t know that Abe is not quite as crass as Trump, but

K: Oh. I’ve seen Abe speak.

C: I know you

K: Prime Minister Abe – yeah, Prime Minister Abe is as crass as Trump.

C: When I say crass, I mean in the original sense of he’s not a billionaire.

K: Oh, okay.

C: He’s not always flaunting his wealth.

K: Mmm.

C: Like, his status, his power? Yes.

K: Yeah.

C: And there’s a lot of

K: But the cut of his suit.

C: And there’s a lot of cronyism that’s

K: And he wears bespoke suits.

C: Okay. You’re giving me a look like that’s a dirty thing as if I don’t have two bespoke suits in the closet.

K: (laughs) But I feel like anybody wearing a bespoke suit, how can you say they’re not flaunting their wealth?

C: Okay.

K: Like, come on.

C: Maybe they got it a lot of years ago.

K: Oh, come on. Abe looks like he just stepped out of Dandy House. He’s manicured, coiffed in a bespoke suit. How is that – he’s not always talking about his money.

C: And that’s what I mean by crass.

K: Okay. So, he’s not always talking about his money, but he is low-key flaunting his money.

C: Quick digression. Crass is named after Crassus, who was a person. He was one of the first triumvirate of Rome.

K: What are you talking about? There was a Roman emperor named Crassius.

C: He was not the Emperor. He was one of the senators, and his name was

K: Okay, so there was a Roman senator named Crassius.

C: Crassus.

K: Crassus.

C: And he was always using his wealth and talking about his wealth, using it to influence things. And, so, crass is named after Crassus.

K: Oh. Cool. Yeah, so you do actually mean the traditional

C: Yes.

K: You’re going way back.

C: I’m going way back.

K: Kicking it old school.

C: Yes.

K: For me, I feel like sometimes it’s hard for – oh, something else that’s changing in Japan that I love: I see more Black folks.

C: Yeah. Yeah, that’s a good point.

K: I love it. I love it. Sisters and brothers. Come over.

C: We’ve been in this apartment for more than twelve years, now, and it used to be that we saw no

K: No foreigners.

C: No foreigners, and then no black foreigners. I remember when Rasta was maybe sixteen or seventeen, he came home and he was like, “I met a black guy!”

K: Yeah. Super excited.

C: “He met me! He gave me his card. He was like ‘hey brother.’”

K: Yeah. And now there is enough Black people that when Rasta goes out and sees one, we look at each other, but we’re like, “we’re good.”

C: Yeah.

K: Like, no need. We’re good. And, so, I find that that’s gotten better. And, just for all my beautiful queens and sisters, hey. The Japanese men, they’re into it. They are into

C: (laughs)

K: They love the curves and the swerves. Do not let the propaganda that’s out there make you think different because they like luxury rides. So, if you’ve got thickems, they love all that thickems.

C: (laughs)

K: All my thick girls, because my crew, we’re all thick, and we all got thickems. And we all got men. But I’m the only one that doesn’t have a Japanese man. But, yeah. They love it. They’re like – it’s a bonanza. They just want to play, play, play.

C: (laughs)

K: So, this is what my girls tell me, okay. So, and they love rich, rich textures in skin, and they love curly hair. So, don’t let the propaganda about Japan – it’s like, Japan is not perfect, and there is racism in Japan, but I just – and, hey. I’m biased and total self-interest here, I want more of my brothers and sisters to come to Japan and make that money and build that wealth.

C: Yeah but come to Japan and make that money don’t often go together. So, I think if people are going to come, they need to be really realistic about whether they can make that money when they come to Japan.

K: Okay, so the first three years, you’re going to be broke, but then after that you can trade up.

C: I think you can get

K: Because there are Japanese teaching jobs that pay quite well – English teaching jobs, rather, that pay quite well.

C: I think you can get a comfortable life.

K: Yeah.

C: But Japan has been voted numerous times the worst place to work in Asia for expats, so if you’re just coming temporarily, it’s not the highest salary. Salaries start off low, and they take a long time to build.

K: Mm. I have – so, I have… a lot of friends that are researchers and not English teachers.

C: Yeah.

K: And, so, for researchers – if you have your masters, you can make decent money in Japan.

C: Yeah, that’s what I’m saying. You can make decent money. Be middle class.

K: Yeah. And, so, I feel like if you have a masters and you’re struggling to find work, come to Japan.

C: Yeah.

K: And there’s research jobs, and the one thing that’s challenging in Japan is that every three years, you have to change jobs if you’re on the researcher thing, but there’s so many universities that if you don’t mind changing every three years, then it’s not that big a deal.

C: Yeah.

K: And as long as you don’t work for an extortive company, like I’m just going to name them – I think Interac treats their employees abysmally, so yes. I named them. I said an opinion.

C: Yes.

K: And I’m taking that risk.

C: You guys can search on the internet for why. Because opinions, still protected.

K: Yes. (laughs) You can’t sue me. I’m stating an opinion. I’m covering my biscuits in case Interac wants to sue me for defamation or slander. What? It was just an opinion.

C: Yes.

K: I just said my opinion. That’s all it was. (laughs) So, I don’t – this is again one of those weird things – I’m having a really weird sense of déjà vu like I think we’ve already done this conversation, but I’m not fore. I feel like this is bits and pieces of other episodes that we’ve done over the past years.

C: It probably is because

K: Because we’re coming up on our one-year anniversary.

C: So, we’re synthesizing.

K: (laughs) So, if like – if this episode was boring, sorry. I gave Chad like a dirty look when I say sorry, as if he’s the one that found it boring.

C: Yeah, unless I’ve miscounted, this should be episode 53.

K: Yeah. I think so.

C: And episode 52 is not our one-year anniversary because released with several.

K: Yeah, and so May is our one-year anniversary doing the podcast.

C: Yeah.

K: So, I want to take a few minutes to talk about our listeners for a bit and give them some love.

C: Okay.

K: So… I’m completely just honored and humbled in all sincerity. Like… I’m… all of our Irish listeners, I just really want to give you a shout-out specifically. We’re in like over 30 or 40 countries now that we have listeners, and our top three countries are, in order, the United States, Ireland, and Japan. And, so, I really want to give a special thanks to all of our Irish listeners, all of our American listeners, and all of our Japanese listeners, and all of our listeners around the world. And we see you, South Africa. We see you, Albania. So, I don’t know. I feel like, should we open them up and – I don’t know – because I don’t usually look at the internet. Because I want to

C: I don’t think so.

K: I want to thank everybody – I feel bad not mentioning every country. I feel like that’s rude.

C: I feel like people can google for a list of countries.

K: Why?

C: Because they can see what countries we’re in.

K: How can they google for a list of countries?

C: Maybe we should write a blog post about it, but Wikipedia

K: No, you’re not getting me to write a blog post.

C: Wikipedia literally has a list of countries, so what do you mean how can they google for a list of countries?

K: A lot of countries – we don’t have a Wikipedia page. Chad, why don’t we have a Wikipedia page?

C: Because we don’t meet the credibility criteria for noteworthiness.

K: What are you talking about?

C: You can’t make a Wikipedia page about yourself, and you have to be famous to have a Wikipedia page about you.

K: But couldn’t somebody just write a Wikipedia page about us?

C: No, it’d get deleted because you have to be famous to have a Wikipedia page. It’s called noteworthiness. You have to be noteworthy.

K: And so, what you have to have a blue check on some social media platform?

C: No, that’s not enough. It’s a whole complicated thing, and it’s very political about who gets one or not. There’s been a thing in the last six months or so of women scientist being given Wikipedia pages – like, good women scientists who have won awards and all kinds of things.

K: Yeah.

C: And then being deleted en masse as not noteworthy even though the male scientists in their same field have the pages.

K: What?

C: It’s a whole thing, but what I’m saying is we don’t qualify at this time for a page.

K: Okay. So, we don’t qualify for Wikipedia?

C: Correct.

K: Well, I’m glad I don’t donate to them.

C: Right?

K: (laughs)

C: How much we got to donate to buy a page on Wikipedia?

K: That was so just – that was so rude. I’m going to say every country. I don’t care. So

C: Okay.

K: Thank you to all of our listeners in the United States, Ireland, Japan, Russia, Pakistan, Untied Kingdom, Thailand, South Africa, Germany, Australia, Netherlands, Canada, Sweden - let me scroll, this feels so awesome to me to scroll – Albania, Vietnam, Switzerland, China, Malaysia, Egypt, Spain, New Zealand, Finland, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, Brazil, Philippines, Turkey, Belgium, and Austria.

C: Nice.

K: Yeah. So, I feel like every country deserves a shoutout.

C: They do.

K: All of the people who are listening in those countries deserve to be recognized and appreciated as the Musick Notes as they are.

C: And if you hear a country that’s not on there, and you know somebody from there, get them to listen. Or better yet

K: Join the party. Get into it.

C: Get a VPN…

K: (laughs)

C: VPN as if you’re from that country and give us a listen.

K: (laughs) We are so – oh my god. You are so bad. That is so bad. Why are you saying that?

C: Because I have to use a VPN for work for security reasons.

K: Yeah, you do.

C: So, I

K: But you don’t listen to our podcast from different countries.

C: No, but I show up as being in the U.S. when on my VPN. So, it’s always interesting to me how different things are when I’m at work and go to a website or when I’m not at work because, if I’m not at work, it looks like I’m in Japan – when I’m at work, it looks like I’m in the U.S. even though I work for an Australian company. So, yeah.

K: Hello, you see I’m doing something.

C: I do see you’re doing something.

K: Keep talking.

C: I’m not sure what you want me to say here. I see that you’re counting up the number of countries.

K: Yeah, I’m counting how many countries.

C: Okay.

K: We’re in 30 countries.

C: Nice.

K: Yeah, and I feel like each listen in all thirty countries absolutely deserves a mention and a shoutout.

C: Each listen? Like

K: No, I mean each country that has listeners because no, we have way

C: We’re going to be here for a while.

K: Yeah, no. So, we’re really, really happy with how the podcast is going, and we’re really, really happy that people are listening and into it. And all of that. And we’re happy that you all love being called the Musick Notes and that – we really like that. So, we were supposed to have a new project that we were starting that was supposed to launch in March, but, as you know (laughs) it didn’t launch.

C: Can we say it was because of the Corona Virus?

K: No. We cannot say that.

C: Okay.

K: Because it’s not true. So, basically – you know, with my PhD and

C: My work.

K: And client work and everything. Because you changing jobs kind of threw everything into chaos for us.

C: It did. It’s been good, but it’s been chaotic good.

K: Yeah. And, so, now you’re at the six-month mark?

C: Around there, yeah.

K: Yeah, so things are starting to settle back down, and we’re starting to catch our breath and regroup and figure out when’s the best time to record episodes for us and all of that. Change our routine.

C: Yeah.

K: Because I don’t have on-demand Chad anymore. (laughs)

C: Yes. Sometimes, I’m legitimately busy.

K: Yeah, so yeah. But we do have a new project coming, and we hope that it’s coming soon. Maybe May?

C: I hope so.

K: Yeah. So, we’re optimistic. Maybe May. We hope. So, let’s keep the conversation going. If you want to you know, keep listening, blegh. I lost my tongue.

C: Yeah. Come back later.

K: No, not come back later. Head on over to Patreon and check out our take two.

C: Yes.

K: There you go. (laughs) Bye.

C: Bye-bye.