K: So, first things first, I don’t know if y’all can tell, but we got out new mics up and functioning. Thank y’all so, so much. We value every single patron, and we love every single Musick Note. You guys are the best. But y’all put Chad to work today, boy. (laughs)

C: Well, I had to set them up.

K: Yeah.

C: And these are much more sensitive than our past ones, so it goes from… “I can’t hear anything” to “I can hear the neighbors breathing” with just a little twist of the dial.

K: (laughs)

C: So… it should be much clearer sound, but I’ll – I’ll find out in the editing process how much easier it is. It should be easier, not harder.

K: Yeah, and I think for all of our listeners that have sensory issues – especially with sensory issues with sound – I think they’ll be really appreciative of the improvement of our sound quality.

C: I think so. There should be no more banging noises or mics falling over or things like that.

K: Well, and too, we’re no longer recording from bed.

C: Yes.

K: (laughs) We’re trying to get a level of professionalism going on here.

C: Yeah… yeah….

K: (laughs) So, we set up a little studio for ourselves in a corner of our kitchen, and if you scroll down on our Instagram – the Musicks in Japan Instagram – like you have to really scroll back. Like, back a year, now? But if you scroll back, you’ll see us sitting in our kitchen with the old mics, and we’ve now set up new mics in that same area, so… we’ll see how it goes.

C: Yeah.

K: So, we’re hoping there’s a big improvement.

C: Yes.

K: How are you going to feel if it’s not? Because you put a lot of work into this.

C: I’m going to feel silenced.

K: (laughs)

C: Or loudened. I’m not sure which one yet.

K: (laughs) Or loudened. I like that. I want to be loudened.

C: Yeah?

K: Yeah.

C: You could be loudened.

K: I can be loudened.

C: Yeah, I can turn your volume loud.

K: I like that. So, with… everything going on in the world – the world being on fire – I’ve been focusing on… my PHD. And the topic of my PHD is cultural intelligence. So, lately, I’ve been thinking about how racism is culturally bound. It is a social construct tied to culture.

C: Interesting. So, tell me about that. So, are you saying that – that I can’t be racist in Japan?

K: (laughs) Right? If only. So, racism is basically… your social dominance orientation. So, social dominance orientation is the belief that one group in society is… the right or the best or better than a different group in society. And what racism tells us is that our stereotypes and biases about another group of people based on their ethnicity is correct. And that we’re better based on our ethnicity. But how that expresses and how that reads is culturally bound. That make sense?

C: Yeah. So, you’re talking here about holding racist ideas – or holding bigoted ideas about ethnicity – rather than about racism as a social construct. And you’re saying, if I understand you correct, that those two things interact.

K: Yes. And, for me, I find it really interesting because, in the United States, all of my Black friends were American. I didn’t have any international Black friends, and here in Japan I only have one Black friend that’s American, and all of my other Black friends come from different countries like – over in Europe or in South America or the Caribbean or Africa. And it’s really interesting because, for my friends that grew up in nations where Black people were the predominant ethnicity in the group, how they experience microaggressions are so much different than how I experience microaggressions. Like, if they’re followed around in a store, they just assume that person is following them to help them.

C: Mhm.

K: Whereas, because I’m American, if someone follows me around in a store, I assume that they’re being racist.

C: Right.

K: And I make them my helper because that’s one of the ways I cope with it – is like, “if you’re going to follow me, you’re going to hold my stuff.”

C: I’ve seen you do it. It’s quite funny.

K: Yeah. (laughs) Because I turn that racist person into my employee. And I run them ragged the whole time we’re in the store. “Oh, can we see this in a small? Can we see this in an extra small?” This is when we’re shopping with my son. “Oh, wait a minute. Can we see this in a medium? Mmm. I don’t like any of these. Here, take all the ones we don’t want. Here’s the ones we do want. Start sorting them.”

C: Well, I’ve seen you do it like, “oh, I’m so glad you were right here. How about you hold this while I look through the next rack?”

K: (laughs) Yes, I will give them a bag to hold.

C: Yeah.

K: Like, “thank you for letting me shop.” Or, lately in Japan what I’ve taken to is being like – standing in front of the rack and being like, “can you find me a medium? In this pile.” And letting them touch the clothes because of Covid, you know. I don’t want to touch things.

C: Well, yeah. Yeah.

K: And I haven’t gone shopping since Covid, so… yeah. But that’s how I was doing it before, and… usually, I develop a relationship with a salesperson in each of the stores that we go.

C: Mhm.

K: And then I go when they’re working, and then they act as my shield from any psycho – psychic, not psycho – any psychic microaggressions.

C: That’s nice to have a little shield from it.

K: Yeah. And… so, how do you deal with – so, you’re kind of like my African friends and my Caribbean friends and my South American friends where you’re used to being from the dominant ethnic group to now being… the non-dominant ethnic group.

C: Yeah, I do tend to stand out a bit here in Japan.

K: Yeah. (laughs)

C: More so in Nagoya than Tokyo. Tokyo has more white people in it, but… I just mostly deal with it as… like, shame on them because most of my life was online. And, online, I am not disadvantaged in that way.

K: Mm. Yeah. I thought – so, something interesting is I find that I’m more reactive to things than you are.

C: Yeah.

K: Like, when the – so, I hardly ever drink Starbucks, and to celebrate being ahead in my PHD, I asked Chad to go get my Starbucks. And he did, and the lady at the counter was like, “I’m just going to call you Santa.”

C: Well, she just started off saying, “Santa Claus.” I was like, “I have no idea what you’re talking about.” Because, without context, there are so many homophones in Japanese that I didn’t even know she was saying Santa.

K: Mm.

C: And then she said, “Santa.” And I just didn’t react. And she said, “you’re Santa because of your beard.”

K: (laughs)

C: “I’m going to name you Santa.” It was like, ugh, okay, fine. Whatever. There’s nobody in line because Starbucks is so empty because the mall is mostly empty because of Covid.

K: Yeah.

C: That, you know, people are getting to-go coffees, but they’re not sitting.

K: Mhm.

C: So, there’s nobody in line. There’s no need to write down a name. The next one is for me.

K: Yeah. Did she say “Santa.”

C: No. Because it wasn’t her who handed me the drink. Somebody else made the drink and just gave it to me.

K: Oh, okay.

C: They did not call me Santa or do anything like that.

K: They didn’t feel the need to

C: They did not.

K: Live their Santa fantasy with you.

C: They did not. No.

K: You should’ve told her, “there’s a lump of coal for you coming.” (laughs)

C: Yeah, I thought about it, but I didn’t – I wasn’t sure how to do it without it coming across as potentially sexual and flirting. So, she’s like 19, 20, and… like

K: So, you didn’t know how to rebuff her without seeming like you were coming on to her?

C: Well, like, in English – “I think you’ve been a naughty girl. So, you’re going to get a lump of coal.”

K: Well, the lump of coal thing was a joke. I don’t think she would know the whole lump of coal thing.

C: Oh, okay.

K: Yeah. I don’t think she’d know that, and… for me, I’ve always wondered why is a lump of coal a bad thing? Like, back in the old days and you were really poor – and you had 7 kids – wouldn’t you want everybody to get a lump of coal?

C: You would think so, yeah.

K: Right? To warm those cold, frigid nights. Because that’s like in the – like, peak of winter – winter’s coldness.

C: Well, plus like – okay

K: Well, winter’s coldness is at its peak in February here, I think.

C: Yeah, it is – that’s when it usually snows and such. So, I’ve got a stocking with some coal in the end of it, and my little buddy has a stocking with all kinds of candy and toys. Right?

K: Mhm.

C: This is a situation where, because I’m a bad kid, I just take my – my convenient

K: (laughs)

C: Like sap

K: Weapon.

C: My weapon. My stocking with a heavy weight in it… and get those toys and candy.

(laughter)

C: And then I’ve still got my coal to keep myself warm.

K: I feel like this conversation is appropriately dark for what we’re talking about. So, like, finding out – my mind was blown finding out about Black Peter in Belgium.

C: Yeah.

K: I – like, I could not believe it. And I found out about it like three months ago.

C: Mhm.

K: And I was like, “this is off the chain.” Like, are you kidding me? There is a country that does black face every year for a month? And then, like, all of the pictures with the… with Covid with people drinking a corona and being dressed in what would be traditionally Chinese clothing – like… I feel like racism – because of the internet – everybody’s showing their ass.

C: Yeah, I

K: And showing – letting their racism out because the way that they express humor is racist.

C: Yeah. And I do think it tends to amplify it, and then people ware like, “oh, they got attention for that. I want attention, too.”

K: Yeah.

C: “And I am racist, so I find this perfectly acceptable and funny. And they got a lot of attention, so I will repeat this.”

K: And, so, when looking at like how racism is completely cultural – being indigenous, people dressing up as though they’re indigenous has bothered me my entire life.

C: Right.

K: And, like, I’m a huge fan of Amber Ruffin, and she had this – on her show – she had this really fun song that, um, and one of the lines is “if your Halloween costume is an ethnicity, you’re a piece of shit.”

C: Uh-huh.

K: And I just love that refrain so much, and I shared it with a friend of mine, and she’s like, “What are you talking about?” Like (laughs) she’s from the Caribbean, and she’s like, “what are you talking about? I don’t get this.”

C: Right.

K: And I was like… “so, how do people dress up on Halloween?” And she’s like, “Halloween’s not a thing.”

C: Mhm.

K: And I’m like, “okay. So, this is… American and here in Japan” because there’s so many English schools that are trying to give their English schools like a cutting edge that they do Halloween parties.

C: Yeah. But it goes around on Twitter every year, so people have probably seen it, but in Japane – in Japan, one of the popular Halloween themes

K: Is slut. Everything is short, tiny, ass cheeks hanging out – crescent moons everywhere you look.

C: Okay, yes, but that’s because you’ve been associating with our son’s… compatriots.

K: (laughs)

C: And he goes

K: Yes, our early 20s son.

C: When he was going to

K: Now he’s mid-20s.

C: Yeah, literally called the Sexy Halloween Party.

K: Yeah. And, so, everybody was like sexy or a zombie.

C: Right. But people over 30, let’s say – a popular way to dress up is low-key costumes. And they’ll be like… they’ll have a sign explaining what their costume is, and it’ll be like, “person searching for a place to sit in the food court.” And they’ll have a tray with fake food on it.

K: So, like, the one year I had Rasta dress up as an internet surfer.

C: Yeah, exactly.

K: And made him a keyboard, and he had a surf – because Halloween was always

C: Yeah, exactly.

K: When he was doing Halloween, it was like – as an adult – I had him go as a lifeguard one year, then had him go as an internet surfer the next year, and then the year after that we did superman. And, now, that’s his go-to.

C: Yeah.

K: Because he has the blue superman shirt, and he owns a suit. And he has framed glasses, and so – like, everybody loves it, and nobody else is doing it.

C: Yeah.

K: So… he likes low-key, easy, I want to be comfortable, but he didn’t – you know, Covid, he’s not going out this year.

C: Yeah. Yeah.

K: And I’m really happy about that.

C: I don’t think there were any in-person big Halloween parties because Nagoya, usually – every other year – has had big, many hundreds of people, Halloween parties.

K: But what I find interesting is that, here in Japan, there’s something that really, really bothers me in that there is a low-rider Chicana culture.

C: Uh-huh.

K: And it’s cultural appropriation, and… they have a group of – in Nagoya – there’s a group of Japanese nationals who dress up as, basically, like, the pachucos and, um… I’m trying to think of how – because I grew up on – I used to be a gang member, and I belonged to a Mexican gang when I was younger.

C: Younger being… 11?

K: Yeah.

C: Yeah.

K: But then I was also like the person who got the weed for everybody, so I was a criminal.

C: Also, like, 11?

K: Yeah. So, I was like 10… 10 and 11. I was extorting someone for weed, and that’s a dark story that we’re not gonna tell today. And, so, I – all of my language is the language of the culture, and so… basically, wearing like zoot suits and khaki pants and eyeliner and… their hair in traditional like Chicana, Chicano, hairstyles. They don’t speak Spanish. They drive low riders, and… one of the outfits that they had was a prison outfit.

C: Mhm.

K: And they didn’t understand how offensive that is that you’re saying that a prison outfit is part of this culture because it’s not.

C: Right.

K: Like, I know a lot of people who – for – at least for me, when I was growing up – the pachuco culture’s really near and dear to my heart. Just as – like Cesar Chavez is really near and dear to my heart growing up in California because it was a movement of empowerment. Just like the Black Panthers are really near and dear to my heart because it’s a movement of empowerment. So, if somebody was here in Japan and pretending to be a Black Panther, that would be equally offensive to me.

C: Right.

K: And they don’t understand it because, in Japan, they do sell their culture. It’s one of their commodities. They want people im – exporting kimonos. They want people, um, you know they give every country a – their cherry trees – they give them away like pop rocks.

C: Yeah, they’re in the mall in Washington D.C. – when I went to Berkeley, Berkeley had a gift of some cherry trees from Japan.

K: San Jose’s Japan town was lined with cherry trees.

C: Yeah.

K: So, they were like everywhere in the United States. From Japan. So, I feel like Japan’s commodification of its culture – they don’t understand how offensive it is – how offensive cultural appropriation is. And trying to explain that to my Japanese friends, they’re like… “but, I don’t get upset when you wear a kimono.” I’m like, “you’ve never seen me wearing a kimono.”

C: See, and I think there’s an interesting perspective because I think, with the exception of I think 3 or 4 years where Japan was occupied after World War 2, Japan has been the empire-building nation in the region.

K: Yeah.

C: So, Japan has been the colonizer, not the colonized.

K: Yeah.

C: And, so, I think that’s where that sense comes from of like, “what? Of course, we want you to adopt our culture.” In the same way that, you know, the U.S. peace corps is all about spreading American culture and helping out.

K: Yeah.

C: But an explicit aim of peace corps is to show the rest of the world how noble the United States is and how much better off they can be by adopting U.S. technologies and ways of thinking.

K: Yeah.

C: And, so, I think Japan is like, “well, yes. Take our thing. And don’t think anything about a kimono.” Which… we see kimono here every once in a while. There are certain holidays it’s traditional to wear a kimono.

K: Yeah.

C: Coming of Age day – the year that you turn 20, early January, there’s a day. And Marine Day. There’s a couple of holidays that I tend to see a lot of people in kimono or yukata depending on the temperature.

K: Yeah. So, Marine Day’s in the summer, so people wearing a yukata because it’s thinner.

C: Yeah.

K: So, I’ve never worn them, and we had the conversation pretty early on when we moved here about whether or not we were going to be a tatami family. Where we assimilate.

C: Right.

K: And we decided not to assimilate.

C: Well, and Rasta has worn yukata out to holidays.

K: Yeah, Rasta has assimilated.

C: Right.

K: We have not. So, he’s truly bicultural. I do culture switching sometimes. I do it when it’s… more comfortable for the person I’m engaging with to shift my context, but

C: Yeah, that’s about your behavior, though. You don’t go change clothes. “Oh, I see you would be more comfortable with me if I were more Japanese. Let me – I’ll be right back.”

K: It more has to do with posture and

C: Yeah.

K: Facial expressions and such. So, adopting that is just doing cultural norms. And I don’t view that as cultural appropriation. I think… for me, it – cultural appropriation is sometimes – really really easy for me to identify and understand. But when I look at something, like, for example… braids.

C: Right.

K: Every culture has a braid tradition in it, just about.

C: Yeah.

K: And, so, the… when I look at being in indigenous, every tribe, just about, has their way – their style of braiding. Some braid underneath. Some braid over the top. Other tribes roll the hair rather than braid the hair. And those hairstyles, to me, are part of the indigenous culture. And, if you look at some of the cultures in Europe, they also have braiding traditions.

C: Yeah.

K: And particular types of braids. Box braids come from Africa. And box braids – so, looking at the type of braid and understanding what that type of braid is and what that type of braid represents…. I feel like everybody should look to their culture and do their culture’s braid.

C: Yeah.

K: What do you think about that?

C: I think I agree with that, but I would say that I’m not sure how much and how strongly it applies if you are… in another culture participating in that culture. And thinking about – like, wearing yukata here in Japan is not – I would really have a hard time calling it appropriation because you’re being invited to do it in the context of a bunch of other people who are doing it, so you are not exoticizing it. You are not exploiting it for your own… gain or to be different or to act as a representative when you – of something you’re not.

K: Mmm.

C: So, I think, like, if we were in the Bahamas, for example… when we were in the Bahamas in 99 or so, and you could get your hair braided, I think… all those white girls wearing their hair braided in the Bahamas – I would have trouble calling that cultural appropriation, but when they left the Bahamas and went back to the U.S., then I would say yeah. That’s starting to… walk into that cultural appropriation thing.

K: Okay. How so? Because… why is it not cultural appropriation in the Bahamas, but it is cultural appropriation in the United States? Because I don’t think they’re getting off – so, for me, when we were at the airport

C: Right.

K: I would be like, “okay. Y’all were on the same cruise as us” kind of thing.

C: Yeah. Yeah.

K: And I didn’t think anything of it. It wasn’t offensive to me. It didn’t feel like cultural appropriation to me. It felt like them wanting to hang on to their vacation.

C: Yeah, so I – that’s why I say it starts veering to it. I don’t think the minute they leave the Bahamas, oh, now you’re culturally appropriating. I think… that if you, you know, maintain those and dress in Bahamian dress and that kind of thing back in the U.S. Then that’s more like, “what are you doing? You’re off the vacation.”

K: So, do you think bohemian dress is Caribbean?

C: I… I think bohemian dress is bohemian?

K: Yeah. Because you lumped it in with Caribbean. So, you’re saying if people – so, I think you’re thinking of people who do dreadlocks.

C: I was saying

K: And consider it to be bohemian

C: I was saying Bahamian.

K: Oh, Bahamian meaning from the Bahamas.

C: Yeah. Meaning from the Bahamas. Not

K: Yeah. I’m hard of hearing, and the mics, as lovely as the sound may or may not be – it’s all speculation at this point – the mic stand sits right at my nose.

C: Yeah.

K: And, so, it makes it really difficult to read your lips.

C: Yes, I could see how that could be a thing. So, I’ve

K: And you’re having trouble breathing.

C: Yeah. So, I’ve got my mic below my mouth because I know you need to see my mouth, but your mic we need to work on the positioning a little bit for the next time, I think.

K: Yeah, we have to do something. I don’t know. I’m not sold on the new mics. I feel whiny.

C: Yeah.

K: But I’m not hungry. I did eat before this podcast.

C: Good.

K: (laughs)

C: That’s good.

K: You know I ate. You saw me eat.

C: I did.

K: I’m on a lunch meat kick. So, for those of you who don’t live in Japan, Japan does not have lunch meat. They just don’t do… American-style sandwiches except for at Subway. So, I feel like super smart and crafty because I’ve been craving sandwiches, so I had… Rasta go to Subway and get me a sandwich with double meat, and then I just pick all the meat off of it. Because I only use one slice of the meat per – two slices of the meat per, like, subway sandwich. So, then, when I’m done picking off all the meat, I have enough for like six sandwiches.

C: Yeah.

K: And I feel super clever because I feel like “I have beat you Japan.”

C: (laughs)

K: I have figured out how to get lunch meat. I can have a sandwich.

C: Okay because it exists at the industrial level. You can get lunch meat sandwiches at the convenience stores and at some restaurants, but to buy it at the grocery store, they’re like, “why would you want to by sliced meat that is only used by big places making thousands of sandwiches?”

K: Yeah, and it’s so – it bugs me because Japan does weird stuff with the lunch meat.

C: Right.

K: It’s not like you can just get – well, I guess you can get ham and cheese. And that’s another issue: I don’t eat ham.

C: Mhm.

K: So, I want specifically sliced turkey.

C: Yes.

K: Because that’s the only type of lunch meant I eat is sliced turkey. So, I feel oppressed. Japan is oppressing me. Help, help.

(laughter)

K: So, if you have ever read the Darren Shan thing – the help help comes form there. And it’s a spinoff from “my hands! My hands!” Because someone gets their hands chopped off, and they run around saying, “my hands! My hands!” It’s literally the dialogue in the book. “Help, help. My hands! My hands!”

C: And you are imitating the way that I read it when I read it out loud.

K: (laughs) Yes, I am. (laughs)

C: It doesn’t bother me; I’m just pointing that out.

K: Yeah. (laughs) Because that’s how it is for forever, now.

C: Yes.

K: Because in all of us, we’ll just like randomly – you don’t do it, but Rasta and I will look at each other and be like, “my hands! My hands! Help, help!” In ridiculous situations because we thought that was like some of the most – one of the most ridiculous things we had ever read.

C: Yeah.

K: Of, like, a character gets their hands chopped off, and they’re just like, “my hands! My hands!”

C: Yeah, that is not what you’d be saying. I’m speaking form experience, here.

K: No. (laughs) As someone who’s had his hands chopped off or as someone who’s chopped off hands?

C: I’m not saying anything more about it.

K: (laughs) Please see your legal representation.

C: Yeah. Well, I do have a related story.

K: Okay.

C: So, when I was younger, a friend of mine had just gotten a new truck. And she said, “let me give you a ride.” So, she hops in the driver seat. And I hop in the passenger seat, and then I shut the door. And I said to her, “how do you open the door?” And she said, “why, did you slam your thumb in it?”

K: (laughs)

C: And she looked over, and yes, I had slammed my thumb in it, and it was stuck.

K: Oh my gosh. I had my fingers slammed in a door. That hurts.

C: That hurts, yeah.

K: And the door immediately jams when your fingers are there.

C: Yeah, and I didn’t know where the handle was. It had a non-standard placement for the handle.

K: Yeah. I got my fingers slammed, and I feel really bad looking back on it but… we were at a… me, my mom, and my step-dad, and… one of my brothers was – we were at a used car lot, and I got my hands slammed in a van door. And the poor salesman.

C: (laughs)

K: He just knew he was not selling us that van after that. And we were really close to buying it, too.

C: Mm.

K: And then that happened. And all the hopes – you could just see all the hope drain out of his face. He felt horrible. It wasn’t his fault. My brother slammed my hand in the door.

C: And it was his fault.

K: Yeah. But… I was always tormenting him, beating the crap out of him, so you know – six of one, half dozen of the other. So, weird segway but completely related – and shameless plug: your book, Not My Ruckus, has racism in it.

C: Yes, it does.

K: That was my whole segway. Now talk about your book. (laughs)

C: Oh, okay.

K: No pressure. Talk about the racism in your book and why did you make the choice to put racism in your book?

C: So, first let me say the racism in my book – there are no slurs in my book. No racial slurs in my book.

K: Yeah.

C: So, I did not make that choice because that seemed like… not a way I wanted to go down.

K: Yeah.

C: Um... but I just felt like writing about Texas in 1980, and I was in Texas in like 1983.

K: Mhm.

C: If there’s no racism, you don’t have a genuine story.

K: Really You feel like it was that bad in the 80s?

C: I feel like it was that bad in the 80s, and so in the book it’s very low-key.

K: Mhm.

C: Like, the family is, like, racist against Mexicans unless they’re rich.

K: Mhm.

C: And racist against Jews, and just like… low-key, you know… the white supremacy that I saw my whole life growing up.

K: Mm.

C: Because growing up Mormon… white supremacy is part of the religion. And now, they have changed some of the words and say, “no no. It was never part of the religion.”

K: No, but it was. Because when

C: It was.

K: I was a teenager, and they were trying to recruit me, it was completely part of the religion.

C: Yeah.

K: I didn’t get most of it because I didn’t have the cultural context to understand it.

C: Right.

K: And… so, I wonder if it’s better to not have the cultural context to understand it.

C: I think that’s sometimes the case for me in my own personal feelings. Sometimes, I feel like… maybe this person’s being racist against me here in Japan.

K: Mhm.

C: But I just don’t have the nuance in Japanese to understand that they are.

K: So, like, for me in Japan… I like – so, there was this one time that Rasta and I went shopping at the Gap here in Japan.

C: Wow, that one time?

K: (laughs) One time in particular.

C: Okay.

K: And… the person didn’t think that we were shopping. And they came up to us like, “what are you doing?” And we’re like, “we’re shopping.” And then we put them to work, and… I just got a stool, and they were like – we took a bunch of shirts because Rasta gets a new wardrobe every couple of years. And, so, we had like 15, 20 shirts that he liked that day, and we were gonna get all of them. And she just didn’t believe – she thought we were getting so many shirts because we were going to steal them.

C: Mhm.

K: And she didn’t understand why we were trying them on, and that’s because Gap has inconsistent cuts of clothing

C: Yeah.

K: So, you don’t know the size. And trying on clothes is – for him – part of the fun of shopping. And we don’t know how they’re going to look on because not every color pops. And we only want the popping ones. And some of them you put on, and they look like pajamas or just wrong. And… she was like really dedicated to getting every shirt that we weren’t going to do, and every shirt that we were going to do. And she was like, “are you sure you want all these shirts? Are you sure you want all these shirts?” And I was like, “yes.” And then halfway through the process, she so wanted to stop what she was doing. She was miserable.

C: (laughs)

K: And she tried to leave. And I asked the other person who was just being chill to go fetch her because we had some more shirts that needed to be folded.

C: Okay, you weren’t done.

K: Yeah. Like, you want to fold every shirt girl, get over here and fold every shirt. And then I made her, after she folded every shirt, now check all of them to make sure they’re the right sizes. And she had made two mistakes. And she had to go find the two that were mistakes. And, of course, Rasta had to retry them on because I wasn’t sure if they were a mistake or not.

C: right?

K: So, I – I compensate with racism to be like – in Japan – to be like, “oh, so now you want to be helpful?”

C: Mhm.

K: And I did the same thing in the United States. But the sting of it… I’m still bothered. Like

C: Yeah.

K: It’s still like, ugh. Like… your clothes aren’t that expensive. Like, I – you can get expensive things at the Gap, but it’s not – they’re not that expensive.

C: Right.

K: And there’s always a sale. And… he’s dressed in head to toe from Gap. He’s been a Gap kid his whole life.

C: Yeah.

K: So, everything on his person is Gap. How do you not recognize your own clothing, girl?

C: Okay? Yeah, I hadn’t even thought of that.

K: Yeah, and the way we’re walking, and the way we’re behaving. So, to me, I always – I never told Rasta that that was racism until later on in life. He just always thought that that’s what people who are confident do. They just go in and get a salesperson.

C: Right.

K: That’s what I told him: “when you go in a store, whatever salesperson walks up to you first – that’s your salesperson. Get to know them” and all of that. So, I’ve taken that context away from him.

C: Mhm.

K: And even when he knows what they’re trying to do, it doesn’t affect him because that’s not his cultural understanding of what that behavior means.

C: Right.

K: So, for me, I wonder if… being aware and fighting it is better because I’m an activist or being oblivious and having peace of mind is better.

C: See, and I think it depends, too, on what the stakes are. I think going shopping… for clothing… is fairly low stakes.

K: Yeah. It is. For me, it is.

C: Yeah.

K: For some people, it’s not. But, for me, it is.

C: I think it’s different than like, going for medical care and then experiencing racism in the context of medical care.

K: Yeah.

C: Where they’re like, “we’re not sure you’re really sick because we can only tell what Japanese people look like when they’re sick.”

K: Yeah. I get that a lot.

C: Or in – on the context of police encounters or things – so, I think it’s contextual, like you were saying about the… cultural intelligence. How it’s… very contextual.

K: Yeah.

C: And depends on – ho wit’s culture-bound.

K: Yeah.

C: So, I know that… I experience the racism here in Japan as… mostly not directed at me, but I’m aware that they hold racist ideas about me.

K: Yeah, and cultural intelligence is the ability to… understand the culture of context in such a way that you can… enact behaviors that are viewed intelligent in the cultural context.

C: Yeah. But I’ve had Japanese people tell me about how awful Americans are, well except for the ones who come over here.

K: Yeah.

C: And it… you know, it’s tough because, yes, there is… a difference statistically between people who leave the U.S. and people who don’t. You get the same sorts

K: But they never met the people who don’t. Like

C: Right. Right.

K: If you’ve never been to the United States, you’re talking about what you witness via whatever media you’re consuming.

C: Right.

K: That has nothing to do with… anything real. And, so, for me, I feel like… being in Japan, you can really get caught up in the trap of only seeing the bad news in the United States and not seeing the good news in the United States.

C: Yeah.

K: Because, being from America, I learned at an early age… Americans aren’t any one thing.

C: No.

K: America’s a really complex country, and culture in America is very complex and nuanced and layers. Because the first layer of American culture, for me, is – first I’m American, then I’m Californian, then I’m Northern California, then I’m from the South Bay.

C: Mhm.

K: And it goes like that. And then, in the South Bay, I’m from Santa Clara county. And then from Santa Clara county, I’m form Santa Clara. And all of that matters (laughs) in saying what I am.

C: Yeah.

K: Before I even get to my ethnicity. And all of that wonderfulness. And then I always start with Black. First. And then, you know, I’m Black, indigenous, Cherokee, and Jewish, and then I don’t discuss the fact that I’m Dutch and French because the white part is insignificant.

C: It’s washed out.

K: Yeah. So, that’s the way people see it, like… you know, you don’t have enough cream in your chocolate.

C: Japan – Japan is very much… in my encounters of Japanese people, stereotyping. I think it’s like the equivalent of… of meting somebody and you say, “what do you do?” And they say, “I’m a chemistry teacher.” And then you go, “don’t kill me, Heisenberg.”

(laughter)

K: Yeah.

C: Is the way that Japanese people… broadly, not all of them, broadly react to

K: We have a friend in particular that’s like that.

C: Yeah.

K: (laughs) So, we’re talking about people that we know personally. Yes, we’re talking about you.

C: Yeah.

K: (laughs) We’re not going to say your name because everybody gets to tell their own story. But, yes, we’re talking about you. (laughs)

C: So, one of the reasons that I have such a long beard – besides its fabulosity

K: And the fact that you work remotely.

C: And the fact I work remotely

K: Is to identify to everyone that you are not a salaryman nor an English teacher.

C: Correct.

K: (laughs)

C: Yes.

K: Because, when you used to keep your beard short

C: Right.

K: People would assume that you taught English.

C: right.

K: And then when you said, “no, I don’t.” They’re like, “oh, you’re a salaryman.”

C: Yeah.

K: And now that you have a beard, they’re like… “you’re rich?” That’s what everybody assumes. Like, your beard means you’re rich.

C: Or that I work at the university. Some people assume that I’m a university worker.

K: Oh, really? Not a university worker – a tenured professor.

C: A tenured professor, yes.

K: So, anybody who’s doing

C: A couple of the deans at Nagoya University have beards similar to mine, so

K: Yes, so come on now. So, you grew a beard for gravitas.

C: I grew a beard for gravitas and for laziness.

(laughter)

C: (coughs) Excuse my coughing.

K: So, you have a beard for gravitas and what else?

C: Laziness.

K: Laziness? What do you mean?

C: It’s just easier. Just every few weeks, I just clip it so that it’s straight on the bottom.

K: Yeah, you do. And I immediately looked at the bottom. It’s been a while since you’ve done it.

C: Yeah.

K: I don’t really notice because I don’t look – because if my eyes start traveling south. Oh-ho-ho. (laughs)

C: They don’t stop at the border?

K: (laughs) They don’t stop at the end of your beard.

C: There’s no immigration control on your eyes?

K: No, none. So, see, that’s a good example – like, that joke, right? For us, is funny and light because we’re immigrants, and it’s part of – us making those types of jokes are part of us celebrating the fact that we’re off the visa hustle.

C: And I think, too, for me, celebrating the fact we haven’t gone back to the U.S. in a while.

K: Yeah.

C: Because one of the last times that we went back to the U.S. – okay, it couldn’t have been one of – it’s been a while.

K: It’s been a while. The last time you went was when you went to San Francisco?

C: Oh, yeah, no.

K: Oh, no when you went to Boston. When you went to Muse in the Marketplace.

C: I’ve been recently. I’m saying the three of us.

K: Yeah.

C: There was one time that we flew into LAX, and going through border control, they separated you and Rasta to ask if I was kidnapping you.

K: Yes, as we were coming back into the country, which was so weird.

C: Right.

K: Like, what – what are they thinking? Like, what’s going on with that?

C: And they had done the same thing to us when we came to Japan one of the first times.

K: Yes. They separated me and Rasta from you and asked if like, why are we here.

C: Do you not see the same last name on all of the passports?

K: Right?

C: With sequential passport numbers.

K: (laughs)

C: I mean, we’ve all renewed ours since then, so they’re no longer sequential, but at the time they were sequential passport numbers.

K: Well, I was so stressed out the time that they separated us in Japan. I was like using all my Japanese, and the guy looked at me, and he was like – because they were asking me, what is Rasta doing here? Because they asked me, “what are you doing here?” And I said what I was doing here. And they said, “what is he doing here?” And I was explaining like why is he here. And at the time, he’s like 12.

C: Yeah.

K: And the guy got so frustrated with me, he’s like, screaming at me, “to be with his mother. Just say he’s here to be with his mother.” “To be with his mother.” And he said, “thank you. Please go.”

C: Yeah, he has long term residence now, but for a long time, his visa status was special activities.

K: Yeah, which was so

C: And the special activity was “to be with my mother.”

K: Yes.

(laughter)

K: Which that is just so bizarre, right? Because he didn’t qualify for any of the other visas.

C: But it was one of the most permissive. It let him work as much as he wanted. Like, it was not

K: Yeah, he could do anything he wanted to do because he had special permission to be here.

C: I should say, let him work as much as he wanted up to 28 hours. But for some reason, he was never eager to violate that rule.

K: (laughs) Well, and it had – the way they counted 28 hours was so weird because it was a rolling 28.

C: Yeah.

K: So, in any given 7-day period, no matter how you count the seven days, you can’t work more than 28 hours.

C: That was a nightmare – that was a nightmare trying to figure that out.

K: Yeah it was really hard because he’s an adult. And…

C: Now, he’s on a long-term, unrestricted, so he can do whatever

K: Hopefully, soon

C: Permanent residency.

K: Yeah.

C: Yeah.

K: Hopefully soon. So, permanent residency, that’s a whole other sticky wicket.

C: I think we actually talked about that.

K: Yeah, we have a whole episode on it. Scroll back through the catalogue.

C: Yeah, find out – find out the reason that he doesn’t have permanent residency.

K: (laughs) Because I’m sure you’re just dying to know.

C: Yeah. It’s a paperwork issue. At us on Twitter, and we’ll give you internet points.

(laughter)

K: Oh my god that is so bad. So, I – I think – I don’t – I hope no one feels like I’ve misrepresented things because we did talk about racism. But I think because it’s so close to… U.S. elections and all of that, and we’re actually recording this Tuesday Japan-time. And y’all will be getting it Thursday, U.S. time – well, kind of Thursday Japan-U.S.

C: Thursday or a week form Thursday depending on whether or not you’re a Patreon.

K: Yeah, if you’re a patron, you can listen to it Thursday this week. And if you’re not a patron, you’ll be getting it next week. Because it’s the Patreon. So, that’s how the episodes work – they’re a week behind, and we just didn’t feel it was topical last week to talk about the election because of how it’s a week delayed. And

C: Yeah. By the time it came out, the results might be known.

K: Yeahhhh, but I’m not holding

C: But maybe not.

K: Yeah. So, I’m looking at Florida and thinking if Biden wins Florida in a declarative way, a total blow-out, then we know who the next president is because Trump has no past to, um, Florida.

C: Mhm.

K: And if Trump wins Florida, then we won’t know until December.

C: Yeah.

K: Is how I’m looking at it. So, yeah.

C: But we’re here either way, and we’ll

K: Yeah. (laughs)

C: We’ll still have Suga as our new prime minister.

K: Yeah. We will.

C: Who’s super racist but loves immigrants, so, you know.

K: (laughs) Right? So, yeah. Racism everywhere you go. So, we’re going to head on over to Patreon, and we’re going to continue talking about Chad’s book stuff. Lots of new exciting stuff has gone on with that process. And if y’all want to hear about that, check out the take two over on Patreon. And if not, we’ll talk to you next week, and thanks for listening. Bye.

C: Bye.