Corey Andrew Powell ([00:02](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/rFjAUe8sJNg0sDMzQtfcfRGnpxu3cKIANa2ToaPsonRsGokiYCrQP8AUbZ_lCDcffa8qqpSm6uNZPwpkKm92k5mXWAM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Hello everyone. I am Corey Andrew Powell, and this is another episode of Motivational Mondays. I'm very honored today to be joined by Dana Tai Soon Burgess, a leading American choreographer, dancer, and cultural figure known worldwide as the diplomat of dance. So this year, his DC based dance company, the Dana Tai Soon Burgess Dance Company, will celebrate its 30th season. Dana, welcome to Motivational Mondays.

Dana Tai Soon Burgess ([00:26](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/rFjAUe8sJNg0sDMzQtfcfRGnpxu3cKIANa2ToaPsonRsGokiYCrQP8AUbZ_lCDcffa8qqpSm6uNZPwpkKm92k5mXWAM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Thank you. It's a pleasure to be here.

Corey Andrew Powell ([00:28](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/rFjAUe8sJNg0sDMzQtfcfRGnpxu3cKIANa2ToaPsonRsGokiYCrQP8AUbZ_lCDcffa8qqpSm6uNZPwpkKm92k5mXWAM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Well, thank you. The pleasure's all ours. And you have a new book out called, "Chino on the Dance of the Butterfly." And I have to just tell you before we get started that it's such an amazing book because it has so many layers. Like it's a history book almost of like different migrations and different interculturalism between America and other countries. Mm-hmm. <affirmative> your own family's migration. I mean, before we even got to you being born, I was like in love with your mom already. Right. She was like, you know, so amazing. And then your dad, and I'm like, wait, the dad was Irish and German, was it? Yeah. And spoke Chinese. I'm like, I mean, you, you really couldn't miss, you've got a lot of, uh, textures kind of, uh, put upon you that I'm fascinated by. But first to begin with, in your own words, at this time in your life and at the top of your career as you are right now, why was it important for you to write this book now?

Dana Tai Soon Burgess ([01:21](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/rFjAUe8sJNg0sDMzQtfcfRGnpxu3cKIANa2ToaPsonRsGokiYCrQP8AUbZ_lCDcffa8qqpSm6uNZPwpkKm92k5mXWAM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Well, it's amazing because the dance company, which I founded is now in its 30th anniversary year, as you mentioned. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. And what happened a couple years ago is that all of a sudden we went to this moment of a great quieting because of the covid lockdown. And I went from going to the studio every day working with the whole company every day to suddenly teaching them on Zoom and, you know, trying to teach, and the dogs are running through the living room and knocking over a plant and Right, right. And I just had this moment of, oh my gosh, I need to reflect. This is a moment in time in my life where I need to try and understand what had motivated different parts of my career, what were really seminal moments in my life, who were my mentors. And so I just started writing and I wrote a few chapters and I sent a prospectus to University of New Mexico Press, and they were great. They immediately, you know, wrote back and said, we would love to publish this memoir, so just write it by this date and, you know, we'll set you up with an editor and we're going to publish. So that's what happened, and it really allowed me to go back to moments in my life and be able to track over decades what the impact of those moments were and those people.

Corey Andrew Powell ([02:51](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/rFjAUe8sJNg0sDMzQtfcfRGnpxu3cKIANa2ToaPsonRsGokiYCrQP8AUbZ_lCDcffa8qqpSm6uNZPwpkKm92k5mXWAM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Yeah. And it's such a great legacy, as I mentioned. I mean, I know it well for you start your legacy off with your grandparents who, and I think it was great grandparents they end in, in Hawaii. Yeah. Right? Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, uh, end up in Hawaii. And then, you know, there's this sort of interesting way you end up in Carmel, but you were not, well, you were born in Carmel. Right. And then you went to Santa Fe, New Mexico mm-hmm. <affirmative>. And there's all these cultural influences happening that are for you tied into just not, like now you're exposed into Hawaiian culture and Japanese culture and, and now you're in the Spanish culture when you get to New Mexico. And I love this part where you're discussing like how you begin to speak differently because you were adapting like this sort of Spanglish <laugh> pronunciation Right. Of words. And, but talk about that kind of inter, I mean, I guess it's more like a multiculturalism that you were experiencing, but it's almost a culture shock too. I mean, what was that like for you to have to navigate through all those cultures?

Dana Tai Soon Burgess ([03:50](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/rFjAUe8sJNg0sDMzQtfcfRGnpxu3cKIANa2ToaPsonRsGokiYCrQP8AUbZ_lCDcffa8qqpSm6uNZPwpkKm92k5mXWAM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Well, I went to bilingual public schools and English and Spanish in the seventies and into the early eighties. So I was going from a very kind of Asian-American mixed household to speaking half the day in Spanish and English and sort of really speaking Spanglish, because what happens is you start not quite communicating perfectly in either one <laugh>.

Corey Andrew Powell ([04:20](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/rFjAUe8sJNg0sDMzQtfcfRGnpxu3cKIANa2ToaPsonRsGokiYCrQP8AUbZ_lCDcffa8qqpSm6uNZPwpkKm92k5mXWAM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>,

Dana Tai Soon Burgess ([04:22](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/rFjAUe8sJNg0sDMzQtfcfRGnpxu3cKIANa2ToaPsonRsGokiYCrQP8AUbZ_lCDcffa8qqpSm6uNZPwpkKm92k5mXWAM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

And then, uh, coming home to my family and then going to a martial arts dojo every night. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. So that was like another culture where people were then there speaking Japanese. So I learned really quickly that for me, the universal language that brought all these different communities together was actually movement, because everybody dances. Everybody knows when someone is, um, depressed, you can just see it in their body. You can see when someone is skipping because they're elated. Mm-hmm. And that is this just fundamental language of humanity which was created and that we all understand on a cellular level. And, you know, was created before there was written language, before there was spoken language. And that just was the unifying bridge to try and figure out how to move through all these different cultural perspectives. And there were many different, there was Native American, there was Hispanic, there was Japanese, there was Korean, there was Caucasian. You know, it just was this whole mix going on.

Corey Andrew Powell ([05:31](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/rFjAUe8sJNg0sDMzQtfcfRGnpxu3cKIANa2ToaPsonRsGokiYCrQP8AUbZ_lCDcffa8qqpSm6uNZPwpkKm92k5mXWAM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Well, I love too that you talk about the difference between Santa Fe when you were growing up versus like before Hollywood discovered it. <laugh>, you know, I love, like, you know, you were there before the Ralph Lauren collection, you know what I mean? <laugh>, the Santa Fe Ralph Lauren collection. So, um, but talk about that Santa Fe for you before. I was like, before Ralph Lauren got there, right?

Dana Tai Soon Burgess ([05:53](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/rFjAUe8sJNg0sDMzQtfcfRGnpxu3cKIANa2ToaPsonRsGokiYCrQP8AUbZ_lCDcffa8qqpSm6uNZPwpkKm92k5mXWAM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Sure. Well, Santa Fe was really a, a small western town, and it was unique because there was this intersection of an lots of different artists that would go there because it's just so naturally beautiful and the history is so intense there. So that was a very different place, this little sleepy western town with dirt roads and lowriders everywhere, you know mm-hmm. <affirmative> to all of a sudden Santa Fe style hit the runways. And when that happened, the whole city changed. The whole neighborhoods were quickly gentrified. There was a struggle to really keep an identity for a lot of families that had obviously been born and raised there, that who some, for some people, their roots go back thousands of years there. And for others, um, back to the 15 hundreds. So that was a huge, I think, difficult transitionary moment, and I just happened to be growing up and part of it.

Corey Andrew Powell ([06:52](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/rFjAUe8sJNg0sDMzQtfcfRGnpxu3cKIANa2ToaPsonRsGokiYCrQP8AUbZ_lCDcffa8qqpSm6uNZPwpkKm92k5mXWAM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Yeah. And we see that so often, uh, a lot these days with the whole gentrification. It reminds me of like Harlem for example, how, you know, Harlem had its thing back in the 1920s and thirties as a beautiful, beautiful thing. Completely. And yeah. And, and with the Harlem Renaissance comes things like a gospel brunch for $120. I'm like, <laugh>, okay. My grandma of chicken never cost $120, but they're promoting it as a thing. Right. This, um, sort of like destination to European tourists. Right. And it becomes this very different animal. So when you, I was reading that part about Santa Fe, that was like my version of the, uh, Ralph Lauren collection when <laugh> when I read that.

Dana Tai Soon Burgess ([07:31](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/rFjAUe8sJNg0sDMzQtfcfRGnpxu3cKIANa2ToaPsonRsGokiYCrQP8AUbZ_lCDcffa8qqpSm6uNZPwpkKm92k5mXWAM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Great parallel mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Corey Andrew Powell ([07:33](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/rFjAUe8sJNg0sDMzQtfcfRGnpxu3cKIANa2ToaPsonRsGokiYCrQP8AUbZ_lCDcffa8qqpSm6uNZPwpkKm92k5mXWAM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Yeah, I thought so. Thank you. Now also, again, you are obviously, um, a renowned dancer and I love the support you got from your family on that. And it's really interesting because for the time, and now I told you before we, we began recording, that you and I are very close in age, and with that comes a very different America. But I think culturally depends on where you are and who you are, who your parents are, and families, how supportive you are of your little boy that's a little vibrant and colorful and wants to dance. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. And you seem to have hit the jackpot with, uh, <laugh> an amazing mom and dad who really nurtured that, but your mom with the costumes and I mean the, the curtains and you know, making your <laugh>. Yeah. So, I mean, just talk about the support that you got when your mother and family decided that you, they were gonna let you be who you are.

Dana Tai Soon Burgess ([08:20](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/rFjAUe8sJNg0sDMzQtfcfRGnpxu3cKIANa2ToaPsonRsGokiYCrQP8AUbZ_lCDcffa8qqpSm6uNZPwpkKm92k5mXWAM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Sure. My parents were both visual artists and my father has since, um, passed away, but my mother still makes, you know, her in paintings and drawings every single day. So I grew up in a, a very active arts family, but what was different was that I, you know, didn't have that propensity to be able to draw or to paint. And I was always looking for something as a child, like, what could I do? And so I remember watching this Liberace special on tv, right. <laugh>.

Corey Andrew Powell ([08:54](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/rFjAUe8sJNg0sDMzQtfcfRGnpxu3cKIANa2ToaPsonRsGokiYCrQP8AUbZ_lCDcffa8qqpSm6uNZPwpkKm92k5mXWAM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

It all goes back to Liberace, huh?

Dana Tai Soon Burgess ([08:56](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/rFjAUe8sJNg0sDMzQtfcfRGnpxu3cKIANa2ToaPsonRsGokiYCrQP8AUbZ_lCDcffa8qqpSm6uNZPwpkKm92k5mXWAM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

And I thought, oh my gosh, this man, um, is an entertainer. He's got these amazing clothes. He's just, everybody loves them up there on that stage. And I thought, I wanna be a pianist, because that's what I thought. <laugh>,

Corey Andrew Powell ([09:10](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/rFjAUe8sJNg0sDMzQtfcfRGnpxu3cKIANa2ToaPsonRsGokiYCrQP8AUbZ_lCDcffa8qqpSm6uNZPwpkKm92k5mXWAM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

You get all the rings and everything, the candelabras.

Dana Tai Soon Burgess ([09:14](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/rFjAUe8sJNg0sDMzQtfcfRGnpxu3cKIANa2ToaPsonRsGokiYCrQP8AUbZ_lCDcffa8qqpSm6uNZPwpkKm92k5mXWAM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Right. <laugh>. And so I told my parents, you know, I, I would like to play the piano. We need to get a piano. Well, my parents were in no financial place to be able to buy a piano. And so like a week later my father said, oh, wear comfortable clothes and, um, we're gonna take you to your first class. And I thought, oh yes, here comes my big chance. And my father dropped me off at a martial arts dojo <laugh> instead of [inaudible]. And I thought, what is going on? But I actually loved it and I ended up having sort of a Mr. Miyagi mentor before there was a karate kid, you know, before it was a film and his name was Machionishida. So every single night I was taking martial arts classes. And that changed my life because I learned the discipline of the body mm-hmm. <affirmative>. And at a certain point my father said, oh, you know, why don't you go and try and take a dance class with your friend, um, Solame. And it's so funny, her name was really Solame that like, like the biblical dancers. I said, ok. So I took this class and I just fell in love with that too. And from that moment on I thought, oh, this is the perfect confluence of art and beauty and discipline of the body, and this is what I'm gonna do with my life

Corey Andrew Powell ([10:33](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/rFjAUe8sJNg0sDMzQtfcfRGnpxu3cKIANa2ToaPsonRsGokiYCrQP8AUbZ_lCDcffa8qqpSm6uNZPwpkKm92k5mXWAM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Yeah, and let's just be honest, you could also then like literally knock somebody out. If they called you a negative <laugh> <laugh>, you could pretty much defend yourself from a negative, uh, attack for being a dancer because that, you know, it came with the territory. I mean, in, in many cases, especially during that time. And um, you know, uh, as I was reading a lot about how you, you look at dance as this really connecting universal language for cross culture, you know, to bring cultures together. I was reminded of being a little boy, like maybe seeing, uh, the Nutcracker with [inaudible] for the first time on pb s and I didn't know what I was watching, but I was fixated on it. And it was the most beautiful thing I'd ever seen. I was like maybe eight or nine. And had I not seen it on PBS, we didn't have money for Broadway and theater. I didn't go to Lincoln Center. And so I really understand that there is this ability to use the dance cuz that piece has no dialogue at all. That's just completely a whole like two hours of ballet. Right. And I didn't move for two hours. Like my mom loved when it was on because Uhhuh <laugh>, she didn't have to babysit me. But I mean, I love that. So talk to me a little bit about how you utilize dance as a sort of collective language to connect people.

Dana Tai Soon Burgess ([11:48](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/rFjAUe8sJNg0sDMzQtfcfRGnpxu3cKIANa2ToaPsonRsGokiYCrQP8AUbZ_lCDcffa8qqpSm6uNZPwpkKm92k5mXWAM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Sure. I really create dances that bring out, I hope, a sense of empathy from the audience member. And in a way creating a dance is very similar to writing a book because you start with a movement phrase. You have an idea, you have a concept you want to explore, you take that movement phrase and you, you lengthen it and you edit it. And just like in a book that sort of becomes a chapter mm-hmm. <affirmative> and then you start building more and more and more and you have this, these crescendos and de crescendos of the choreography and there's just this whole exploration that happens. And sometimes I base choreography on a specific piece of artwork. Maybe it's a specific, um, social justice icon. Maybe it's a certain story from the canon of our American history that hasn't been told before. And then there are dances which I create, which are really purely abstract and I might just be really interested in a, in a musical score and hearing it performed live juxtaposed to the live performance of the dance. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. So there are lots of ways that I approach things. But I would say overall in general where my journey has led me is to this synergy of dance and the visual arts. And that's why so many of our performances happen in museums where they're based on great exhibits of visual arts. Mm-hmm.

Corey Andrew Powell ([13:22](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/rFjAUe8sJNg0sDMzQtfcfRGnpxu3cKIANa2ToaPsonRsGokiYCrQP8AUbZ_lCDcffa8qqpSm6uNZPwpkKm92k5mXWAM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

<affirmative>. Yeah. I mean, cuz now, uh, with the work that you're doing with the Smithsonian, for example, you're their first dancer, choreographer and residence there.

Dana Tai Soon Burgess ([13:31](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/rFjAUe8sJNg0sDMzQtfcfRGnpxu3cKIANa2ToaPsonRsGokiYCrQP8AUbZ_lCDcffa8qqpSm6uNZPwpkKm92k5mXWAM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Right. I'm their first choreographer in residence. And even though I don't personally dance anymore, I still choreograph and um, teach classes to the company. Right. We have 10 dancers. And it is a wonderful journey because every museum I work with, whether it's the Smithsonian or if it's private museum, I'm able to work with curators, historians to really dig deeply into the social context in which an art piece was created in which an artist's life occurred. And for me, it's always a learning process that then manifests itself into dance.

Corey Andrew Powell ([14:13](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/rFjAUe8sJNg0sDMzQtfcfRGnpxu3cKIANa2ToaPsonRsGokiYCrQP8AUbZ_lCDcffa8qqpSm6uNZPwpkKm92k5mXWAM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. And you are also bringing so much of your own personal story often to your work as well. And even your book, obviously your book sort of tells the story of how you have that intersectionality of being Asian American mm-hmm. <affirmative>, um, also a member of the LGBT community. Right. And how all those things impacted who you were, who you are and maybe where you're going. So I wonder, when you wrote the book, was it cathartic? Was it difficult? Was it painful? Were you like, oh, I can't tell that story. You know, did you have to edit yourself or what was the process like <laugh>?

Dana Tai Soon Burgess ([14:48](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/rFjAUe8sJNg0sDMzQtfcfRGnpxu3cKIANa2ToaPsonRsGokiYCrQP8AUbZ_lCDcffa8qqpSm6uNZPwpkKm92k5mXWAM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Well, it was difficult at times and I think it was difficult to remember being an outsider in a lot of moments of my life and then having to explore how I became an insider. How did I move from that outer circle into the center of the way I live my life? And growing up in a highly traditional old Catholic community in Santa Fe, that was very difficult in terms of coming out mm-hmm. <affirmative> in terms of being gay. And you know, in our generation it was a very different time than now. Right. Like, you know, now we start meetings and we ask what your pronouns are mm-hmm. <affirmative>, you know, but that was never the case. It was, it was like, don't ask don't tell anything, you know, <laugh>, it was more like,

Corey Andrew Powell ([15:46](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/rFjAUe8sJNg0sDMzQtfcfRGnpxu3cKIANa2ToaPsonRsGokiYCrQP8AUbZ_lCDcffa8qqpSm6uNZPwpkKm92k5mXWAM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Like, none of it. Don't even insinuate.

Dana Tai Soon Burgess ([15:48](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/rFjAUe8sJNg0sDMzQtfcfRGnpxu3cKIANa2ToaPsonRsGokiYCrQP8AUbZ_lCDcffa8qqpSm6uNZPwpkKm92k5mXWAM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Don't even try it. Yeah. Right. I just remember over the years trying to make this psychological shift of oh my gosh, I wanna hold my fiance's hand, you know, in public. And it just still being very hard, you know, very difficult to do that. And you know, I've overcome that of course. But it made me think about just kind of the traumatic experiences of growing up in a society that did not honor gay marriage, did not honor gay partnerships when I was a child or a teenager, even a young adult. Yeah. So that was big.

Corey Andrew Powell ([16:26](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/rFjAUe8sJNg0sDMzQtfcfRGnpxu3cKIANa2ToaPsonRsGokiYCrQP8AUbZ_lCDcffa8qqpSm6uNZPwpkKm92k5mXWAM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Yeah. In fact, in my notes I wrote like, I guess more specifically it was like, well, you know, does that re-traumatize someone to have to go back and like, you know, revisit stories and revisit the situations? And so I think when you talk about moving into who you are and owning that, you hear a lot about the authentic self and how you cannot thrive until you literally are able to own who you are and show up as that person without un without apology. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. So there's a story in your book about, uh, I think it was the fourth grade dance with the, you know, the fabulous bell bottom pants on. And um, and this is where I said, you know, you and me very similar cuz I've had many of fourth grade dance outfits like.

Dana Tai Soon Burgess ([17:05](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/rFjAUe8sJNg0sDMzQtfcfRGnpxu3cKIANa2ToaPsonRsGokiYCrQP8AUbZ_lCDcffa8qqpSm6uNZPwpkKm92k5mXWAM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

<laugh>

Corey Andrew Powell ([17:07](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/rFjAUe8sJNg0sDMzQtfcfRGnpxu3cKIANa2ToaPsonRsGokiYCrQP8AUbZ_lCDcffa8qqpSm6uNZPwpkKm92k5mXWAM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

<laugh>. Very same outfits and very same reaction from the faculty. I can assure you <laugh> and staff, the students. But you know, you had the village people shirt on, which specifically just the Indian Yes. Just call out. It was just Felipe Rose who ironically is someone who I, who would've thought I would've known him now today. And you might know him as well. Oh, <laugh>. Yeah. So it was funny when I read that, I was like, I gotta tell Felipe about this cuz like you're.

Dana Tai Soon Burgess ([17:32](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/rFjAUe8sJNg0sDMzQtfcfRGnpxu3cKIANa2ToaPsonRsGokiYCrQP8AUbZ_lCDcffa8qqpSm6uNZPwpkKm92k5mXWAM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Oh, that's great.

Corey Andrew Powell ([17:33](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/rFjAUe8sJNg0sDMzQtfcfRGnpxu3cKIANa2ToaPsonRsGokiYCrQP8AUbZ_lCDcffa8qqpSm6uNZPwpkKm92k5mXWAM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Yeah. I'm literally gonna tell Felipe Rose that he has to read this and point out where you mentioned him, him, I mean, cuz that's a really, that's a very specific particular person on that shirt for you. Right. I'm thinking about when you be you being drawn to it, the body, he was very visually, you saw the male form, he was like, you know, the Native American. And so I mm-hmm. <affirmative>, it makes perfect sense that that's what drew you to that particular village person, if you will, <laugh>.

Dana Tai Soon Burgess ([17:57](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/rFjAUe8sJNg0sDMzQtfcfRGnpxu3cKIANa2ToaPsonRsGokiYCrQP8AUbZ_lCDcffa8qqpSm6uNZPwpkKm92k5mXWAM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Oh, absolutely. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Corey Andrew Powell ([17:59](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/rFjAUe8sJNg0sDMzQtfcfRGnpxu3cKIANa2ToaPsonRsGokiYCrQP8AUbZ_lCDcffa8qqpSm6uNZPwpkKm92k5mXWAM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

But yeah. But I mean, you, you weren't able to be you without ridicule in that moment and some, some difficulty. So, you know, share a little bit about that experience and how that sort of like shapes you today when you think back on it. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Dana Tai Soon Burgess ([18:13](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/rFjAUe8sJNg0sDMzQtfcfRGnpxu3cKIANa2ToaPsonRsGokiYCrQP8AUbZ_lCDcffa8qqpSm6uNZPwpkKm92k5mXWAM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Well, I think there were a lot of experiences like that, that I had these moments of realizing like, oh my gosh, I'm perceived as the other sort of like, there's something freakish going on here, you know, and nobody's saying it out loud that he's gay or he's going to be gay or you know, whatever, you know, but they're all these potential labels that are gonna hit really soon. And I think that happens to a child is that around that time period, you know, there's such freedom in a child and then all of a sudden as social as they socialize around like fourth grade, fifth grade, it's like there's this shutting down of that beautiful freedom, you know, of that, that freedom to just fly through society. Right. And I definitely felt that. And then what happened is I ultimately grew up in this neighborhood called Casa Solana, or the house where the sun shines onto it essentially in Spanish.

Dana Tai Soon Burgess ([19:10](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/rFjAUe8sJNg0sDMzQtfcfRGnpxu3cKIANa2ToaPsonRsGokiYCrQP8AUbZ_lCDcffa8qqpSm6uNZPwpkKm92k5mXWAM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

And this neighborhood was actually built over the leveled Japanese internment camp. And so that right after World War II, it housed like over 5,000 people, like one 10th the population of Santa Fe during World War II when it was leveled after World War I, about 10 years later, they built this neighborhood called Casa Solana. And I, I ended up growing up in this neighborhood and I remember one day that one of my friends, uh, relatives said, oh, you know, hey Chino, which means, you know, like Asian or like Chinese looking person in, in um, Spanish, he said, you remind me of the guys that used to live here because during the war and we were running around his, you know, dirt yard and it had barbed wire kind of fencing around it Right. To keep animals out mm-hmm. <affirmative>. And I just remember like thinking what in the world is he talking about?

Dana Tai Soon Burgess ([20:09](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/rFjAUe8sJNg0sDMzQtfcfRGnpxu3cKIANa2ToaPsonRsGokiYCrQP8AUbZ_lCDcffa8qqpSm6uNZPwpkKm92k5mXWAM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

But the way he said it was so terrifying that I just like ran home and I asked my dad, what is he talking about? And my dad said, oh, you know, there used to be a Japanese internment camp here. So he tried to explain to me, you know, executive order 9066 and why Japanese Americans during World War II were suddenly taken into these prisons. So that kind of was the first time also that I felt like, oh my gosh, you know, for being Asian American I could go to prison. Like my rights could be taken away. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, you know?

Corey Andrew Powell ([20:44](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/rFjAUe8sJNg0sDMzQtfcfRGnpxu3cKIANa2ToaPsonRsGokiYCrQP8AUbZ_lCDcffa8qqpSm6uNZPwpkKm92k5mXWAM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Yeah, yeah. It's really scary too because so many uh, people don't know about the Japanese internment camps today, which is part of the reason why, you know, this whole idea to suppress history is so disconcerting to me because mm-hmm. <affirmative>, we already don't know what we should know. Many cases <laugh>. So now there's a, an effort to make sure they don't know even more what they don't know. And I'm like, wow. Because um, to me that is one of the most disturbing occurrences in American history, then compounded with the possessions of the Japanese were taken and their homes land. Land. I mean, it is really one of the ugliest things and uh, the fact that that's not really just really taught so that we don't make that mistake again, is really disturbing. So I can imagine how horrifying that was for you to, you know, to realize that was sort of your, someone was comparing you to that particular existence when these people were not welcomed really.

Dana Tai Soon Burgess ([21:39](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/rFjAUe8sJNg0sDMzQtfcfRGnpxu3cKIANa2ToaPsonRsGokiYCrQP8AUbZ_lCDcffa8qqpSm6uNZPwpkKm92k5mXWAM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Absolutely. And you know, what's interesting about that time period too is right before World War II, the California agricultural community was like 80, 90% Asian. Hmm. And Asian American. But today it's less than 1%.

Corey Andrew Powell ([22:00](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/rFjAUe8sJNg0sDMzQtfcfRGnpxu3cKIANa2ToaPsonRsGokiYCrQP8AUbZ_lCDcffa8qqpSm6uNZPwpkKm92k5mXWAM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Hmm. That's, I mean, that's incredible.

Dana Tai Soon Burgess ([22:02](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/rFjAUe8sJNg0sDMzQtfcfRGnpxu3cKIANa2ToaPsonRsGokiYCrQP8AUbZ_lCDcffa8qqpSm6uNZPwpkKm92k5mXWAM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Right? And so, you know, you really have to see the impact of really the systemic impact mm-hmm. <affirmative> of, um, policy and, um, really racism.

Corey Andrew Powell ([22:16](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/rFjAUe8sJNg0sDMzQtfcfRGnpxu3cKIANa2ToaPsonRsGokiYCrQP8AUbZ_lCDcffa8qqpSm6uNZPwpkKm92k5mXWAM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Yeah.

Dana Tai Soon Burgess ([22:16](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/rFjAUe8sJNg0sDMzQtfcfRGnpxu3cKIANa2ToaPsonRsGokiYCrQP8AUbZ_lCDcffa8qqpSm6uNZPwpkKm92k5mXWAM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

On even owning land.

Corey Andrew Powell ([22:18](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/rFjAUe8sJNg0sDMzQtfcfRGnpxu3cKIANa2ToaPsonRsGokiYCrQP8AUbZ_lCDcffa8qqpSm6uNZPwpkKm92k5mXWAM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Yeah. And it's, uh, unfortunately something we are still dealing with from many aspects. And I wanted to believe, cuz again, as we say, we are part kind of close to the same age. And I really believed when I was growing up that we were moving towards a more, it seemed like we were on this really great path to a more unified society, you know? Yes. My parents, my mom was born in a segregated country, so that's just one generation removed. But right there I was in a, like a predominantly white school and I had diverse friends and I, you know, had access to many programs and I thought we were going to a very different America than the one we were currently in, which is very, very unfortunate. But that brings me to your role as a cultural ambassador for the US State Department. How did that come about and and what does that role entail?

Dana Tai Soon Burgess ([23:07](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/rFjAUe8sJNg0sDMzQtfcfRGnpxu3cKIANa2ToaPsonRsGokiYCrQP8AUbZ_lCDcffa8qqpSm6uNZPwpkKm92k5mXWAM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

You know, it was a very serendipitous occurrence. I wish I could say I planned for it. I <laugh> had a strategic plan, but no, um, I was performing at the Kennedy Center, a solo that I had created, and an individual from the state department came backstage and said, we have a, a program in which we send artists out and we would like you to consider going out and representing the United States on some different performances and residencies. And so really I didn't know about that program until it happened. And ever since then, I've had a relationship with the US State Department and been able to go out with either by myself or with my company and toured and really engaged with communities, not just in performance, but it's, you know, in ways that are amplified by teaching, by meeting with the other artists, by collaborating, uh, really creating friendships. Because I think that diplomacy on a fundamental level is building a deep friendship that's going to last a long time.

Corey Andrew Powell ([24:14](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/rFjAUe8sJNg0sDMzQtfcfRGnpxu3cKIANa2ToaPsonRsGokiYCrQP8AUbZ_lCDcffa8qqpSm6uNZPwpkKm92k5mXWAM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Yes. And I think that, you know, people who are outside of the country.

Dana Tai Soon Burgess ([24:19](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/rFjAUe8sJNg0sDMzQtfcfRGnpxu3cKIANa2ToaPsonRsGokiYCrQP8AUbZ_lCDcffa8qqpSm6uNZPwpkKm92k5mXWAM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

mm-hmm. <affirmative>

Corey Andrew Powell ([24:20](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/rFjAUe8sJNg0sDMzQtfcfRGnpxu3cKIANa2ToaPsonRsGokiYCrQP8AUbZ_lCDcffa8qqpSm6uNZPwpkKm92k5mXWAM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

We, and I say we as Americans, I'll generalize. I mean, I don't think a lot of us do travel, but a lot of us don't even have a passport, right? Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. And, uh, the first time you leave the country and you really interact with other people, it is so eye-opening. You know, for me it was, and I was like, and I like left the country and I see people who have so much, maybe so little, maybe less than we have, and they're so happy or they're so content and they have a different outlook on life. And I think, you know, I think you have to travel and get outside of your bubble to understand and appreciate how others live, how they exist, and maybe makes you more appreciative for things you have. But do you find that there's a big reception when you're in these environments? When you go around to different countries and you're representing the us What's the reception like?

Dana Tai Soon Burgess ([25:06](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/rFjAUe8sJNg0sDMzQtfcfRGnpxu3cKIANa2ToaPsonRsGokiYCrQP8AUbZ_lCDcffa8qqpSm6uNZPwpkKm92k5mXWAM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

The reception is really, um, in general very, very fine. You know, communities are, I think always open to new information and to have discussions with other artists that'll listen that want to understand their work as well. Because a large part of being a cultural envoy of sorts is not to, to believe that one is going into a community and is like the savior that's going to bring a certain pocket of knowledge from the United States that's going to be, you know, this amazing <laugh> mm-hmm. <affirmative>, you know, community changing moment. Because actually it goes in both directions. Right. I feel like I've been changed so many times by the beauty of the artists that I've met and the work that they do. And also I've been very humbled by seeing the struggles that individuals go through in order to make their work. Mm-hmm. You know, because I always come back to the United States and, and the culture shock for me is often in reverse. It's when I get back into the states and I have this whoa moment, you know?

Corey Andrew Powell ([26:18](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/rFjAUe8sJNg0sDMzQtfcfRGnpxu3cKIANa2ToaPsonRsGokiYCrQP8AUbZ_lCDcffa8qqpSm6uNZPwpkKm92k5mXWAM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Yeah.

Dana Tai Soon Burgess ([26:20](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/rFjAUe8sJNg0sDMzQtfcfRGnpxu3cKIANa2ToaPsonRsGokiYCrQP8AUbZ_lCDcffa8qqpSm6uNZPwpkKm92k5mXWAM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Because the United States, depending on where you've just visited, can feel like very ent, opulent mm-hmm. <affirmative> and very overwhelming. Yeah. In a sense. You know? And yet there are countries that I have worked in where, and I write about it in the book where before dancing an individual's life is completely in danger. I mean, I, you know, I met a, a young dancer in Pakistan along the Afghani tribal lands that had been shot for publicly dancing. And that was huge for me because when I came y it has somehow, you know, in, in my younger self, in my twenties, had never crossed my mind that you could actually be killed for being a dancer. No. And yet seeing the courage that this dancer had and the passion to just continue in a life-threatening situation was for me life-changing.

Corey Andrew Powell ([27:17](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/rFjAUe8sJNg0sDMzQtfcfRGnpxu3cKIANa2ToaPsonRsGokiYCrQP8AUbZ_lCDcffa8qqpSm6uNZPwpkKm92k5mXWAM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Yeah. I mean, were they so not, uh, obviously not, uh, fatally wounded, but were they, they were still dancing after this injury after this situation, or they had been now impacted by it?

Dana Tai Soon Burgess ([27:29](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/rFjAUe8sJNg0sDMzQtfcfRGnpxu3cKIANa2ToaPsonRsGokiYCrQP8AUbZ_lCDcffa8qqpSm6uNZPwpkKm92k5mXWAM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

When I met this dancer, he literally was on an IV trip and, you know, had major bandages and couldn't walk well, was still recovering because the shooting had happened not that long ago prior to me meeting him. And so I never found out, even though I acquired whether he danced again Hmm. Or whether he was able to escape that particular situation.

Corey Andrew Powell ([27:55](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/rFjAUe8sJNg0sDMzQtfcfRGnpxu3cKIANa2ToaPsonRsGokiYCrQP8AUbZ_lCDcffa8qqpSm6uNZPwpkKm92k5mXWAM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Hmm, yeah. That's unfortunate. And again, it shows you that you don't understand about how other people in the world are living until you really kind of step outside of your own front door and make that effort to understand other cultures. And, and speaking of other cultures and understanding nuances and different things, I love when you drove the distinction between, uh, the word chino as a word of, of endearment, or potentially an insult. So another similarity I was mentioning to you about us is that I was raised around a lot of Hispanic people, but, uh, Puerto Ricans specifically mm-hmm. <affirmative>. And, um, I remember we had a friend who looked like he might have been of some Asian country, and they called him, Chino

Dana Tai Soon Burgess ([28:34](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/rFjAUe8sJNg0sDMzQtfcfRGnpxu3cKIANa2ToaPsonRsGokiYCrQP8AUbZ_lCDcffa8qqpSm6uNZPwpkKm92k5mXWAM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Uhhuh <affirmative>.

Corey Andrew Powell ([28:34](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/rFjAUe8sJNg0sDMzQtfcfRGnpxu3cKIANa2ToaPsonRsGokiYCrQP8AUbZ_lCDcffa8qqpSm6uNZPwpkKm92k5mXWAM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

But very endearingly and mm-hmm. <affirmative>. And they would call me Chino Moreno <laugh>.

Dana Tai Soon Burgess ([28:39](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/rFjAUe8sJNg0sDMzQtfcfRGnpxu3cKIANa2ToaPsonRsGokiYCrQP8AUbZ_lCDcffa8qqpSm6uNZPwpkKm92k5mXWAM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Uhhuh <laugh>.

Corey Andrew Powell ([28:40](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/rFjAUe8sJNg0sDMzQtfcfRGnpxu3cKIANa2ToaPsonRsGokiYCrQP8AUbZ_lCDcffa8qqpSm6uNZPwpkKm92k5mXWAM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Cause you know, I looked sort of like I could have been maybe part something in something at the, you know, and, uh, so, and I always looked at that as a term of endearment. So when I was reading your book, I was reading it and then I was like, wait, I've, I've never known it that way, but then you drew the distinction between the two and now you actually embrace it. So speak a little bit about that word for you.

Dana Tai Soon Burgess ([28:57](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/rFjAUe8sJNg0sDMzQtfcfRGnpxu3cKIANa2ToaPsonRsGokiYCrQP8AUbZ_lCDcffa8qqpSm6uNZPwpkKm92k5mXWAM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Sure. My great-grandparents came to America from Korea in 1903, and they were on the first ship of the first Koreans, the hundred individuals that came from Korea to Hawaii and settled in America. And so my family has always felt very proud about that. They ended up having indentured worker contracts on the plantations of Hawaii and having to pick, uh, sugar cane and pineapples for generations, right? Mm-hmm. So it was not an easy life Yeah. At all, and a difficult one, one to get out of. But there was always this real pride in being Korean, right. That somehow we knew where ancestry was. We like really felt strong about that. So when I got to Santa Fan, the kids were like, Hey, Chino, it would, I'd be like, oh no, I'm Korean. You know, <laugh>

Corey Andrew Powell ([29:53](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/rFjAUe8sJNg0sDMzQtfcfRGnpxu3cKIANa2ToaPsonRsGokiYCrQP8AUbZ_lCDcffa8qqpSm6uNZPwpkKm92k5mXWAM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Clarifying, not Chinese, but

Dana Tai Soon Burgess ([29:56](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/rFjAUe8sJNg0sDMzQtfcfRGnpxu3cKIANa2ToaPsonRsGokiYCrQP8AUbZ_lCDcffa8qqpSm6uNZPwpkKm92k5mXWAM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Like, you know, other third grader, right. Trying to get like a geography lesson of Asia. I was like, and they would be like, okay, okay. Chino <laugh>.

Corey Andrew Powell ([30:06](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/rFjAUe8sJNg0sDMzQtfcfRGnpxu3cKIANa2ToaPsonRsGokiYCrQP8AUbZ_lCDcffa8qqpSm6uNZPwpkKm92k5mXWAM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Yeah. Yeah.

Dana Tai Soon Burgess ([30:08](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/rFjAUe8sJNg0sDMzQtfcfRGnpxu3cKIANa2ToaPsonRsGokiYCrQP8AUbZ_lCDcffa8qqpSm6uNZPwpkKm92k5mXWAM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

So it used to, it just frustrated me and it, and it, and you know, kids could tell it frustrated me, but I maybe they didn't understand why or anything, you know, they didn't quite get the, get what my passion was about. Right. Trying to have people understand and differentiate, like, cuz you know, Asian America is so diverse, right? Sure, sure. But when I got older, I actually met, when I was on tour in Peru, I met a, um, per Peruvian dancer, and we had this odd synergy, you know, he started dating, um, and we kind of looked alike, which was wild too. And because he was part Asian or looked part, you know, had that look and, you know, I'm part Asian and his neck nickname was Chino also. Mm. And so there was this odd moment where I had this transference of loving the name Chino because I finally, in an odd way, had found a loving relationship to compare that name to Mm. You know, in adult life.

Corey Andrew Powell ([31:17](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/rFjAUe8sJNg0sDMzQtfcfRGnpxu3cKIANa2ToaPsonRsGokiYCrQP8AUbZ_lCDcffa8qqpSm6uNZPwpkKm92k5mXWAM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Oh, that's wonderful. Beautiful words to end on with Dance-Dana Tai Soon Burgess, leading American choreographer and author of Chino and The Dance of the Butterfly, which, um, is just, it's an awesome read. I think anybody, everybody will find something within those pages to identify with. So thanks for being here today. We appreciate it.

Dana Tai Soon Burgess ([31:36](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/rFjAUe8sJNg0sDMzQtfcfRGnpxu3cKIANa2ToaPsonRsGokiYCrQP8AUbZ_lCDcffa8qqpSm6uNZPwpkKm92k5mXWAM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Oh, thank you so much. It was a pleasure.

Corey Andrew Powell ([31:39](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/rFjAUe8sJNg0sDMzQtfcfRGnpxu3cKIANa2ToaPsonRsGokiYCrQP8AUbZ_lCDcffa8qqpSm6uNZPwpkKm92k5mXWAM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

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