completely smacked of the notion of the docile, servile Asian woman.

MAYA LIN:

joking or not.

MAYA LIN:

But I got back to Yale graduate school. Actually, ironically the only person I sort of really felt kind of very much less of was the sculptor of the three statues.

BILL MOYERS:

the edge.

MAYA LIN:

comprise our lives.

MAYA LIN:

Nobody thinks of that as a physicality.

I fit in.

The joke in our family is if we had gone into law

BILL MOYERS:

The other thing they read into is that it's a V for victory.

I could understand people not getting what it would be.

Absolutely. That's the only way I can reason it. It's no coincidence.

My dad always used to tease me, like, they've really got you well trained.

They are not what you would call [environmentalists].

I don't know how they both did it.

But as I look back, imagine you get sent out with I think $50 sewn in to her coat with a suitcase, never to see your family ever again.

My understanding was he sort of had to.

My brother was a poet.

Another adage in art is: you're a child and then you become an adult.

As I start reading, I'm thinking it's not about when Yale officially went co-ed.

New York City.

MAYA LIN:

Can we make it that personal and still be in a very large public space?
My ears were burning. I think equivalent stereotypes in other ethnic groups would have been nailed down. Maybe they’re more sensitive or they’re louder about fighting it.

BILL MOYERS: Yes, if that ad had had an African American woman in it and said she as born to serve you there would have been an uproar.

MAYA LIN: Oh, there would have been an uproar. I think the next generations are going to be inclined to speak out. It’s still kind of engrained in me to be very, very polite. I mean, that’s how I was raised. It’s just not in my nature. I think as the next generations go on, they might be more vocal. So there’s that inherently we don’t speak out in protest the way we might have to to change it.

Or two there’s also that lumping us all together as Asian American. And you’ve got such diverse cultural groups within that. So I’ve always felt it was almost a western conceit, that they were just gonna lump together all the rest that didn’t fit in anywhere else. But it also means how do you bound together, how do you form community when you’ve got societies that culturally are not that similar and yet they are lumped together by western eyes.

It does help with certain things because it puts a voice together. But it also can be problematic in galvanizing that identity and that voice. I am surprised that the stereotypes can be so much a part of images we see.

BILL MOYERS: What about your two daughters, will all this be behind them? Will they ever be free, liberated, because of what has happened? To not have to think this way anymore? Tell me about it them.

MAYA LIN: They’re really cute. And what I find fascinating is that we will get asked when we bring them out, my husband and I. On several occasions, we’ve been asked, "Are they half?" Which is kind of a very kind of odd-- are they half. Like are they half-- No, they’re full children.

BILL MOYERS: Your husband’s background is?

MAYA LIN: He’s American Jewish. My daughters look very Caucasian. He’s Caucasian. You can tell in the eldest girl's eyes—but it’s not recognizable except by someone else. Usually it’s a young girl who asks that question, like a 20 year old woman.

And I know that she’s looking at them going, "What are you gonna be?" You can relate because they’ll go through what she sort of went through a little bit. If both my husband and I had been Chinese they would get asked that exact same question in the cab, "Where are you from?"

Because no matter how long you’ve been here you’re not going to be quite allowed to be American, which is very intriguing about all the Asian races.

BILL MOYERS: So you’re still living between boundaries.

MAYA LIN: Yeah, between worlds. It’s a funny place to be. But it’s also who you are. You might try to understand it. And I think at this point I embrace it; it’s great. You can share a culture and take from both, but it’s a balancing act.

BILL MOYERS: While I look at the cover of your book “Boundaries,” that’s your hand around that beautiful giode, which is one of my favorite stones of the earth. I think, she’s got the whole world in her hand.

MAYA LIN: Nah. I don't know where that cover came from. But as far as just between the design of it I just love. Wherever I go, I collect rocks, and I just think they’re so beautiful. Everyone assumes they’re so simple. You look at them and think it’s a dumb simple water worn rock.

If you ever tried to analyze its shape, it’s one of the most complex forms. Think about it, it’s every compound curve. There’s nothing symmetrical about it. It’s about looking at something again and then appreciating it. I mean, nature, is so complex.

BILL MOYERS: Maya Lin, thank you very much.

MAYA LIN: You’re welcome.