After I graduated from college,

I thought it would be cool to work for United States government.

So that's why I chose to and when I had interview, they hired me right away at the spot.

So I was very encouraged to work for the federal government.

My mentor actually recruited me

because he knew that I had diverse work experience from other federal agencies.

So he actually direct hired me to that particular program.

So I was actually recruited

and he's the one who's actually supporting my language skills to do other meaningful things at the agency.

I prepared myself to be a good candidate for the job that I applied to by searching,

researching about the job beforehand.

I have to do my due diligence to know the job before I even get to the job.

So my primary job does not require Korean language skills.

So what I did was I volunteered whenever the agency needs help,

such as when the Korean delegates come to agency for the partnership

or cooperation or some kind of meeting,

I would volunteer to translate their meeting minutes

or any kind of discussion related to partnership.

I would help them translate or communicate better to build a better relationship between,

you know, team to team or country to country.

Currently, I'm assigned to improve supply chain risk management for the intelligence community.

I lead the programming, the budget,

the federal budget programming for the supply chain risk management

to make sure that we get enough resources to do what we need to do as far as funding and demand power.

Yes, there are other Korean speakers at NGA (National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency).

I don't talk to them on a daily basis,

but I do try to interact them on a regular basis, such as we have international affairs.

There are Korean speakers who are on Korean issues such as North Korean issues all the time,

that's their primary job.

So, I try to reconnect with them, network with them,

so know what they're doing,

now that I know that there are activities involving Koreans.

Korean culture is very different from, you know, American way of getting things done.

So I do think that heritage language speakers bring a lot of benefit to the agency

because they're the one who knows not just language,

but the cultural aspects of how things are being done

and they can actually definitely promote the relationship between the different countries.

So working for National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency,

I have certainly improved my own Korean skills

not by doing the day-to-day job

but to contribute to the agency mission of interacting with other components at the agency,

improving relationships with their international partners.

It has helped me looking outside of box where I was comfortable at the transaction level of doing day-to-day job,

but looking at much higher level to see bigger picture at the national level or even globally.

I think I can help with the Korean language community by helping Koreans

or even others who can speak Korean or who are interested in Korean language itself

so they can improve or they can at least see the benefit what they can bring to the table.

I volunteered to go to career fairs,

recruiting through the younger generation that I get connected through different professional meetings and conferences.

So, I do try hard to encourage current students who are younger generation with the language

because I have benefitted for my own career.

My advice for heritage language speakers is that they need to see their language skills as

their pros, not cons.

I don't think they're ever negative.

That actually was life-changing in my career, in my profession.

I didn't think my Korean skills will ever help with anything until I found out that it could.

So don't be afraid to jump in, I think, and don't get comfortable with where you are

but always try to improve and seek ways to contribute

because your impact by speaking the language can be really greater than you think.