



NEWS 'n NOTES

CHINESE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

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December 2008

December Program

Holiday Pot Luck

Wednesday December 3, 2008

(The public is invited.)

@ 6:30 p.m .



In keeping with tradition, the December program will include a holiday pot luck, a white elephant sale and caroling.

Castelar Elementary School

840 Yale Street

Los Angeles Chinatown.

Enter from College Street between Yale and Hill

The Society will provide hot beverages and a few dishes but we look forward to the dishes that you all will bring! As a matter of organization, we have designated specific groups of people to bring certain items. If your last name begins with the letters below, you bring the corresponding dish or \$5.00:

A-F: Side dishes

G-M: Desserts

N-T: Cold Beverages (non-alcoholic)

U-Z: Entrees

The new Gum Saan Journal will be available at the party. Renewal of your membership for 2009 at the holiday party will be most welcome and appreciated.

Items for the elephant sale can be brought to the CHSSC office Monday to Friday, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. including lunch hour. Or you may bring them to the party December 3.

Around CHSSC

ENGLISH ONLY Revisited

By Linda Chong

Part political rally, part personal reminiscences and part evening at the theatre, the event English Only Revisited, hosted by the CHSSC on the night of November 21, drew a diverse crowd of about 50 people to the New Los Angeles Theatre Center (LATC).

The theatre, located in the heart of downtown L.A.'s historic Old Bank district (Renamed the Historic Core), will be the venue for upcoming performances of the play ENGLISH ONLY: A Fight for Words in America, written by Annette Lee. In advance of the opening of the play, which will run from Dec. 5 to 7, the Chinese Historical Society of Southern California assembled a panel of leaders to discuss the issues behind it.

Featured speakers were: State Assemblyman Michael Eng, who was also a former Monterey Park mayor; Jose Calderon, Ph.D., an activist and a professor of sociology and Chicano Studies at Pitzer College; and Ruth Willner, a long time community activist. The panel was moderated by John Horton, Ph.D., a UCLA professor emeritus of sociology and author of *The Politics of Diversity: Immigration, Resistance and Change in Monterey Park, California*.

("English," continued on page 4)



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Bob and May Wong



Philanthropists Bob and May Wong
Photo taken in 2006 at their home.

Once again Bob and May Wong bestowed on CHSSC another generous donation that will jump start a proposed Family History Project (FHP). In a way, the FHP is an extension of the recently completed Chinatown Remembered Project documenting life in Los Angeles Chinatown in the 1930s and 1940s. The FHP aims to continue documenting Chinese American stories.

There are many logistics to be worked out before implementing this new project. Stay tuned. In the mean time we wish to acknowledge the generosity of Bob and May Wong without which the FHP would not be possible.

Wing Mar, a retired doctor, a long time supporter and a former Board member of CHSSC, and the force behind the CHSSC's Portraits of Pride Project (PoP), shares his memories about the Wongs:

"Without their inspirational gift two years ago we may not have started the PoP Book 2 which should be finished by early 2009. My wife Joyce and I have been friends with May's family since World War II when we were in college. I remember driving down from UC Berkeley when there was a game with the Bruins and we stayed at the gracious Lee (May's parents) family home on Figueroa Street."

"At those times (WW II and Post WWII) the Chinese American students up and down California in the various colleges like University of the Pacific, Stanford, UC Berkeley, USC, UCLA were networking with each other and we were close to each other. There were not that many of us and we held dances and conferences in various towns for social reasons. May was from the popular Lee family in Los Angeles and there were many brothers and sisters in their nuclear family so there was a lot of dating and staying at their very friendly household. We were welcome to their home it seems like anytime and for whatever occasion. Since then we have shared many happy Pot Luck meals together over the years."

("Wong," continued on page 3)

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MISSION STATEMENT

The Chinese Historical Society of Southern California was organized in November, 1975. The purposes of the Society are: 1) to bring together people with a mutual interest in the important history and historical role of Chinese and Chinese Americans in Southern California; 2) to pursue, preserve and communicate knowledge of this history; and; 3) to promote the heritage of the Chinese and Chinese American community in support of a better appreciation of the rich, multi-cultural society of the United States.

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(*"Wong," from page 2*)

"The most memorable event was exploding several feet of firecrackers in front of the Wong's home in Orange County celebrating Chinese New Year and prosperity. Bob was very nervous for he was worried about the fire department. I think awakening the spirits worked for the Wong's good fortunes and their extraordinary generosity in benefiting CHSSC. We hope others will follow their example and continue supporting the activities of CHSSC and the great staff in recording our rich history."

Preserve America Neighborhood Coalition

The CHSSC is part of the Preserve America Neighborhood Coalition in Los Angeles. Sharon Lowe, the force behind the Coalition, reports that we have had a very successful year, but we are not done yet. We commenced this partnership almost a full year ago on November 26, 2007 with our first discussions.

We've managed to accomplish three Asian Pacific Islanders Preserve America Neighborhood designations, Chinatown, Little Tokyo and Thai Town. There were two recognition ceremonies, in Chinatown and Thai Town. With the support of many community leaders and organizations, four grant applications have been submitted in November 2008. However, we still have to complete and file the Preserve America Neighborhood designation applications for Historic Filipinotown and Koreatown. That task is on schedule for completion in November 25, 2008. See the August 2008 edition of this newsletter for information on the Preserve America Initiative.

Historic Railyard Beam Uncovered

According to the Daily Breeze of Torrance, California, on September 6, 2008, archaeologists working in Los Angeles said that they uncovered massive redwood beams from a Southern Railroad Co.

roundhouse built at the city's first rail depot in 1875. The original River Station's foundation was dug up by the scientific team. It is the starting point in 1875 where Southern Pacific engines brought by ship to Los Angeles steamed up for the trip toward Arizona.

The scientists found the original roundhouse where locomotives were stored and served by a turntable built out of redwood beams. The station served as Los Angeles's major rail terminal until Union Station was opened in 1939.

In 1931, the original Los Angeles Chinatown was condemned to make way for construction of the Union Station. A new Chinatown was planned at another location and opened on 25 June 1938, in a gala ceremony attended by the then Governor of California Frank F. Merriam.

Scholarships

Application for the CHSSC/David and Pearl Louie Foundation scholarship for 2009 can be downloaded from:
www.chssc.org/Scholarship/2009application.pdf.

Students presently enrolled in undergraduate or graduate studies in an accredited university in Southern California can apply. Preference is given to those who will continue their education through 2009-2010. Minimum overall cumulative GPA of 3.0 is required. Academic emphasis must be related to Chinese American studies in the humanities or social sciences.

Applications must be received by 3 April 2009. Finalists to be available for interview on 25 April 2009, at CHSSC's office. More details on the criteria and other related matters can be found at the above mentioned URL.



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Also invited was former Monterey Park Mayor Lily Lee Chen, who was unable to make the event due to sudden, unforeseen circumstances.

The night's multicultural panel of activists and scholars was pivotal to fighting off the divisive forces that pushed for English to be declared the official language of Monterey Park during the contentious 1980s, when large-scale Asian investment in commercial and residential real estate literally began to transform the city's look and feel. Together, they worked as CHAMP, an acronym for the Coalition for Harmony in All Monterey Park in direct opposition to a conservative, slow-growth group of longtime residents that called itself RAMP, the Residents Association of Monterey Park.

On behalf of the New LATC, welcoming remarks were made by Jose Luis Valenzuela, professor of directing at UCLA and artistic director of the New LATC and the Latino Theater Company. He congratulated Annette Lee for writing a play with a hip, contemporary feel that deals with a serious, historic subject that is still relevant today. He also invited attendees and the Chinese American community in particular to consider the New LATC—officially home to his Latino Theater Company—to consider it your home. (The refurbished 80,000-square-foot center is home to four performance spaces and our meeting of ENGLISH ONLY Revisited was conducted in Theatre #3.)

CHSSC vice president for programs Eugene Moy welcomed people to the event and gave a brief introduction of our organization. He was followed by former board member Gilbert Hom, who spoke about his firsthand experience as a Monterey Park resident and community activist during the era when the events portrayed in the play took place.

The program included a spirited 15-minute staged reading of a comic scene in which the play's lead character, Scarlett Wong, describes a heated Monterey Park city council meeting to her friends from Alhambra High School. The brief performance included displays of acrobatic prowess, a la Chinese martial arts, as well as wry satire. The cast and director of ENGLISH ONLY are students at UCLA,

where Annette Lee recently completed her graduate studies and is currently teaching dramatic writing.

The dramatic interlude was immediately followed by remarks by the distinguished speakers, who commented on how this period more than 20 years ago affected them personally and professionally. They reflected on this period of rapidly shifting demographics for the western San Gabriel Valley city and how it reverberated through the local high schools (for example, Jose Calderon spoke briefly about tensions in the early 1990s involving Latino and Asian students at Alhambra's Mark Keppel High School), in city halls, in political campaigns and even in the mass media, which came from all over to cover the happenings.

In one particularly heated and dramatic real-life scene early on, one advocate of "Official English" threw a copy of the U.S. Constitution in the face of Mayor Chen during a city council meeting in 1984. (She was also mayor at the time when a gas station owner in the city displayed a sign that read: "Will the last American leaving Monterey Park please bring the flag?")

According to John Horton's book, which was published in 1995: the ethnic transformation of Monterey Park began slowly with the migration of domestic minorities from the city to the suburbs. In 1960, Monterey Park was an Anglo town (85%) giving way to the suburban aspirations of primarily native-born Latinos (12%) and Asian Americans (three percent). By 1970, Monterey Park had become a middle-class home for Mexican Americans from nearby working-class East Los Angeles and for Japanese Americans from enclaves in the east and west sides of L.A. and from regions of forced wartime internment and exile. There was also a migration of Chinese from the old Chinatown located just west of Monterey Park. The migration of Asian and Latino minorities to the suburbs was the combined result of postwar economic mobility and the legal and informal erosion of discrimination.

Today, the city that measures about 7.73 square miles has a population of about 60,000 people—37,125 of whom, according to the 2000 U.S. Census,

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(English," from page 4)

identified themselves as Asian Americans, with 24,758 people considering themselves Chinese. That means Monterey Park is more than 40 percent Chinese, making it the community in the United States with the largest population of people claiming Chinese descent. It also reportedly has the distinction of being the only city on the U.S. mainland with an Asian majority.

Ruth Willner, who has lived in her southeastern Monterey Park home for 50 years, said that while people of other ethnic groups have moved into the city over time, the Chinese have been the most controversial because they were able to buy up large swaths of commercial property and create an exclusive consumer culture and enclave for themselves.

Yet Mike Eng noted that displays and expressions of xenophobia and suspiciousness are not limited to longtime residents with nativist and conservative leanings. The state lawmaker, who grew up Chinese American in Hawaii and specializes in immigration law, found that when he went out canvassing on behalf of his wife, State Board of Equalization Chair Judy Chu, during the time when she was running for a seat on the Monterey Park City Council, the first question out of the mouths of many Chinese residents was: Where was she born? That was followed by: Does she speak Chinese? The asking of such questions, he said, indicated that even among the Chinese community, people wanted to make clear distinctions between the native-born and the overseas born.

In her prepared statement, Chen noted that the transformation that began in the 1980s, when she was a council member and, later, mayor, of Monterey Park, is now complete. Three of the five members of the city council are Chinese; all three are foreign-born (one a native of Canada, and that one, Mitchell Ing, is currently mayor pro tem). She called on Chinese American elected officials to work together to show our ability to govern and act as responsible Americans who are contributing to their adopted homes.

The China-born Chen, who in 1984 became the first Asian American female mayor in the United

States, also issued an ominous warning during this tough economic time, saying that in an economic downturn, immigrants are always the scapegoat.

Jose Calderon underscored that while the English Only movement in Monterey Park is typically associated with the city's Asian residents, it had repercussions for the city's sizable—nearly 30 percent—Latino population as well, especially since public backlash against services such as bilingual education and the availability of multilingual official documents often targets members of that community, which, for its part, especially in California, is usually the subject of calls for immigration reform.

Earlier, in her opening remarks, Annette Lee noted that during the course of writing her play, she realized that while it is easier to simply vilify the English Only contingent, the reality is a much more complicated story of established residents who became convinced of their need to wage this campaign in order to protect their way of life.

The event wrapped up with a spirited question-and-answer period, followed by a brief ceremony so that panelists could receive CHSSC certificates of appreciation. Assemblyman Eng reciprocated the gesture by issuing an official proclamation thanking the Chinese Historical Society of Southern California for its tireless efforts at raising public awareness of Chinese American history and for its many contributions to the community. Closing out the evening was a light reception of Asian fare provided by the Westwood-based restaurant Feast from the East.

If CHSSC members are interested in attending the December 5, 6, or 7 performances of *ENGLISH ONLY*, Annette Lee, is offering a special deal:

“\$12 per ticket, and if there is a group of at least 10 CHSSC members who attend together on a given night of its New LATC run, a special shout out to you will be made before the show begins. Please contact lindachong@juno.com if you would like more information or if you'd like to attend.”

December 5 and 6 @ 8:00 p.m., 7th is a matinee show
LATC, 514 S. Spring Street, Los Angeles
\$15 to \$35, 213-489-0994 ext. 135



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Acknowledgements

- We thank Mei Ong, Susan Sing and Winne Lew for providing refreshments at the November 5, 2008, program meeting.
- Last month Dr. Betty Gaw and husband Sin Hock Gaw donated their 1989 Mazda minivan to CHSSC. Their grandkids are now old enough to drive and no longer need Grandpa and Grandma as chauffeurs. It was driven to the Bob Wondries Ford and was sold in a matter of days. CHSSC received a check for \$800 from the sale.

Friends of the Chinatown Library



Please come to our book sale. New & used books and DVDs for adults, teens and children plus holiday decorations and others.

Saturday, December 6, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. 639 N. Hill Street in Los Angeles Chinatown, 213-620-0925.

Additional copies of *Mei Ling in China City* by Icy Smith are available at CHSSC. We accept cash, check or VISA/MC. Call 323-222-0856 or email chssc@earthlink.net.

Chinese Chamber of Commerce of Los Angeles

Presents

Charity Fashion Show Luncheon

Benefiting CHSSC

Saturday, January 3, 2009

San Gabriel Hilton
225 W. Valley Blvd.
San Gabriel, CA 91776

Fashion will be modeled by the 2009 Miss Los Angeles Chinatown contestants and kids of Families with Children from China.

Please send payment and reservation by December 26, 2008, to the Chamber of Commerce of Los Angeles, at 977 N. Broadway, G/FI Suite E, Los Angeles, CA 90012.

\$75 per guest or \$750 per table of 10.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____

Email: _____

Please reserve ____ seat(s) @ \$75/seat = \$ _____

Contributions are tax deductible under Chinese Chamber Cultural Foundation, Inc. 501 © (3).

For more information please call 213-617-0396

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Community Calendar

November 6 through December 7, 2008

East West Players

120 Judge John Aiso Street, Los Angeles, CA

Play: **The Joy Luck Club**

November 15, 2008 – ongoing

Masters of Adornment: The Miao People of China

Bowers Museum, 2002 N. Main Street, Santa Ana, CA

This important collection of exquisite textiles and silver jewelry on loan to and from the Bowers Museum's permanent collection highlights the beauty and wealth of the Miao peoples of southwest China. Symbols of status and culture, the elaborate textiles in this exhibition include finely pleated skirts, complex batik pat-

tered cloth, intricate silk embroidery and shining textiles woven with metal. Over 50 examples of ornately designed and created silver bracelets, necklaces and decorative ornaments compliment and complete the exhibition of late 19th and 20th century Miao regalia. More than an examination of masterful techniques and beautiful style these objects reveal hundreds of years of Miao history and tradition and, the patience and dedication to achieve beauty.

Monday, December 1, 2008, 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm

The China Society of Southern California

An illustrated talk on Chinese clothing—the last three thousand years.

Theresa Sun, the presenter has a PhD. In Asian Studies and has taught at USC. Most recently she has developed a series of lectures for the Princess Cruise Lines on Chinese culture.

Golden Dragon Restaurant (dinner is optional)

960 N. Broadway, Los Angeles Chinatown

RSVP required, call Dorothy Brown, 323-463-1396

\$15 per person

Advance payment much appreciated, make check payable to Dorothy Brown and send to 301 North Windsor Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90004

Lecture starts @ 8:00 and is free

December 6, 2008, 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Confucius in Modern Asia

Panel Discussion:

- **David Schaberg**, Co-Director of UCLA Chinese Studies Center
- **Robin Wang**, Director of Asian and Pacific Studies at Loyola Marymount University
- **Samuel Yamashita**, professor of Asian History at Pomona College

Followed by audience participation in small discussion groups.

Pacific Asia Museum

46 N. Los Robles Avenue, Pasadena, CA 91101

\$7 general admission, \$5 seniors, **FREE for students**

RSVP: 626-449-2742 x 31

Saturday, December 6, 2008, 10 am—4 pm

Friends of the Chinatown Library Book Sale

639 N. Hill Street

Los Angeles Chinatown

Sunday, December 7 and 21, 2008, 2:00 pm - 4:00 pm

Chinese Cultural Performance

Stunning martial arts and Chinese acrobatic acts in a FREE performance in Chinatown's historic Central Plaza. Chinatown's Shaolin Warriors (monks from the famous Shaolin Temple in China) will be showcased, together with acrobats from China.

Free to the public

Central Plaza

943-951 N. Broadway, Central Plaza, LA Chinatown

Parking around the area is plentiful, and is also easily accessed via Metro Gold Line rail from the Chinatown Station.

January 3, 2008 @ 11:00 a.m.

Chinese Chamber of Commerce of Los Angeles

Charity Fashion Show Luncheon

San Gabriel Hilton

See page 6 for details.

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(*"Community Calendar," from page 7*)

January 26, 2009

Lunar New Year 4707

Year of the Ox

January 31, 2009

Golden Dragon Parade

Los Angeles Chinatown, 2:00 p.m.—5:00 p.m.

January 31 and February 1, 2009

Lunar New Year Festival

Los Angeles Chinatown

February 8, 2009

Los Angeles Chinatown Firecracker 5K/10K Run

Chinatown, 8:00 a.m.

Benefits various community organizations in Chinatown such as the public library and the CHSSC



Calling Student Writers!

**Silk Road Student Essay Contest
for 6th to 12th graders**

Come to Pacific Asia Museum and explore Journeys: The Silk Road. Write a short essay inspired by your observations and research, and you may be one of six winners to receive a prize and have your essay appear on Pacific Asia Museum's website. Submissions must be received by 5 pm Tuesday, March 31, 2009. To download a flyer, go to www.pacificasiamuseum.org/calendar/pdf/Silk_Road_Essay_Contest.pdf.



**Chinese Historical Society
of Southern California**

415 Bernard St.

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