



NEWS 'n NOTES

CHINESE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

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October 2008

October Program

The S-effects of Exclusion: Sue Jook Wong and Me

By Charles Choy Wong

This talk continues the Wong/Leong family case study, initially presented at the Society's first conference in 1992 at California State University at Los Angeles, titled, "*False Papers, Lost Lives*." The traumatic historical legacy of exclusion which I have coined as the "S-effects of exclusion," now enters the 21st century, though many Chinese American families still deny it amidst the obfuscating comfort of secular modernity, assimilation, and leisure lifestyles.

Nonetheless, our individual and collective shadow past cries out from the depths of our recorded soul experience for full exposure and resolution from our buried or forgotten family histories.

In this presentation I reveal the inner-personal lives of my mother, Sue Jook Wong, and me as we sought respectively our private "Search for Solace," yet another S-effect of exclusion, with differing conclusions. Sue Jook Wong experienced "Separated Family" resulting in immense "Sorrow." For me, it was "Suppression," resulting in "Survival-guilt complex" on the one hand; and "Soul-emotional bonding" resulting in "Somatic Scarring" on the other hand. The ties that bind Mother and Me extend to death: she died of complications from diabetes and a broken heart; most likely, I will succumb to a similar fate of diabetes. But, in between then and the future is an open destiny wherein my achieved solace may lead to healing, psychologically and physically, and liberation of this human soul experience. The Wong/Leong story unravels the Mother-Child relationship from 1914-1948, 1948-1970, and to 2004.

An excerpt from the 1975 documentary, "Separate Lives, Broken Dreams" will precede and introduce the presentation which will include new photos and graphics. Lastly, I dedicate this first talk to my mother, Sue Jook, and to Iris Chang, and Irvin Lai for their respective contributions to Chinese American history.

Wednesday, October 1, 2008 @ 7:00 p.m.

Castelar Elementary School Multipurpose Room,
840 Yale Street, Los Angeles Chinatown.

Open to the public: free admission and parking.

Enter at College Street between Yale & Hill Streets

Charles Choy Wong, Ph.D., is a sociologist from UCLA and charter member and former vice president of CHSSC, and charter member of the Friends of Chinese American Museum.

Around CHSSC

Community Leaders Honored at the Moon Festival

Irvin Lai, One of the most ardent supporters of CHSSC, a community leader and activist, was honored with Lifetime Achievement Award at the Moon Festival. Councilmember Reyes presented the award in a ceremony the evening of Chinatown Moon Festival on September 13, 2008. See pages 4 for more on Irvin Lai's contribution to the community.

Legendary actor James Hong also received the Lifetime Achievement Award. Richard Liu and Cindy Bennet were honored for their part in restoration and preservation of their buildings in Chinatown's Central Plaza.



Chinese Historical Society of Southern California

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Review of Documentary on Mazu

At the monthly program meeting September 10, Dr. Jonathan H.X. Lee presented a film that “explores the emerging transnational Empress of Heaven community in San Francisco Chinatown, among new immigrant Taiwanese-Americans. Tianhou, the Empress of Heaven, popularly known as Mazu (meaning “Mother Ancestor” or “Granny”) in Taiwan, is represented as Meiguo Mazu (“American Mazu”) and resides at the Ma-tsu Temple U.S.A. in San Francisco’s Chinatown. This film documents recent developments in transnational pilgrimage rituals linking Beigang, Taiwan to San Francisco. The appropriation of San Francisco’s Chinese New Year Parade by the temple to accommodate the annual Empress of Heaven “inspection tour” (raojing) ritual is explored. Both rituals authenticate religious, ethnic, cultural, community, and national identities, and reflect the multiple identities found within the Taiwanese-American community.”

“This film illustrates how traditional religion is altered and adjusted to meet the demands of contemporary life, in Taiwan and America. In addition, it speaks to the importance of religion in the formation of a community in the diaspora. It questions conventional definitions and conceptions of “sacred” versus “profane,” and “pilgrimage” versus “tourism.” The future contours of American civil religion and society is explored in light of the transnationalization of American identity in a globalizing world. How have changes in immigration policy, conditions of late capitalism, and the forces of globalization able to transform a local goddess cult from the rural township of Taiwan, to a transnational cult? What happens to rituals and religious experience when religion, technology, and sensory experiences are combined in new and previously unimaginable ways?”

Dr. Lee did his graduate studies at University of California at Santa Barbara and is a faculty member in the Religion Department of California Lutheran University. If anyone is interested in purchasing this film, Dr. Lee is offering CHSSC members a special price of \$20 including shipping and handling. Please contact him directly, 805-403-7562 or jonathan_lee@umail.ucsb.edu. General price is \$30 for individuals, and \$75 for institutions.

Dr. Lee will be giving another presentation on Sunday, October 12 at the Pacific Asia Museum. The topic is Confucianism in California: Philosophy and Religion, the Secular as Sacred. See Community Calendar on page 7 for more information.

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News 'n Notes Editor,

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.



October 2008

Historic Chinatowns

Progress on The Reconciliation Park in Tacoma

By Yvonne Chang



The author standing in the Chinese Reconciliation Park,
September 2008. Photo by Albert Chang

During a visit to Seattle and Tacoma I stopped by to see the Chinese Reconciliation Park which is still under construction. It was opened to the public July 3, 2008. As reported in The News Tribune of Tacoma:

“It has been two years since the groundbreaking, 15 years since planning began and more than 120 years since the wicked event itself.”

“The approximately \$12 million, 4-acre project is being built to commemorate the forced expulsion of Chinese immigrants from Tacoma in November 1885. A mob that included the mayor, a city councilman, the sheriff and a judge forced people out and burned their homes. The Tacoma City Council officially apologized in 1993.”

A book, “Driven Out: The Forgotten War Against Chinese American,” written by Jean Pfaelzer was published in 2007. In this book the author addresses profound issues such as illegal round-ups, secret detentions, racial violence, etc.

The park is a joint effort of the City of Tacoma, The Chinese Reconciliation Foundation and the State of Washington. It is situated in the John Hyde Park on the shore of Commencement Bay.

The National Guard donated the land. The City of Tacoma donated more than \$2 million for the park with additional funds coming from private sources. The ship in the background of the picture to the left is part of the National Defense Reserve Fleet. They stay in Tacoma when not in service. The Army Corp of Engineers built the seawall.

The next phase of the project will include a zigzag bridge. There are two reasons for the zigzag design. One is to direct visitors to enjoy the view from different angles as they walk along the bridge. The other is that the Chinese believe evil spirits can travel only in a straight line. Therefore, if you build a zigzag path evil spirit cannot enter. More funds are needed and the completion date of this project is uncertain at this time.

Weekend Workshops

- Due to the popularity of weekend workshops at CHSSC you must RSVP to prevent overcrowding. If necessary we may have to use another venue. Be sure to leave your contact information when making reservations. Call 323-222-0856 or email chssc@earthlink.net. The first of the 8-session Chinese American Stories workshop will be September 27, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. For details please see News ‘n Notes September 2008 edition, page 3.
- The next monthly workshop will be October 25, from 2:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the Los Angeles Chinatown Public Library, 639 N. Hill Street. (This series of monthly workshop is independent of the 8-week session mentioned above.)

Anna May Wong, Yellow Willows:
Research Using Basic and Objective Techniques
Lessons and Ideas for Your Family History Research

Elaine M. Woo talks about her 10 years, and counting, of research.



Irvin R. Lai: Community Leader, Community Activist, Local Hero

By Susan Dickson



Irvin Lai surrounded by his family, holding Life Time Achievement proclamation presented by Councilman Ed Reyes. Photo taken at the Moon Festival, September 13, 2008, by William Tham.

At the Moon Festival September 13th in Los Angeles Chinatown, former CHSSC president and chairman of the board, Irvin R. Lai, received Lifetime Achievement proclamations from Congresswoman Lucille Roybal-Allard, City Councilman Ed Reyes, and Representative Mike Eng. These certificates of recognition were for “many years of dedicated service to the community, and in appreciation of your exemplary leadership and outstanding commitment to preserving the history and culture of the Chinese community.”

Irvin’s childhood experiences shaped his views of the world. He was born in the Great Depression era near Locke, California, a Chinese town in the Sacramento delta region. Through his mother’s example, he witnessed the importance of helping the community. Irvin’s mother, Effie Lai, was an unpaid social worker who helped the many women who moved to Locke from China to navigate the social welfare system. The small community church with the missionaries that came from Sacramento was a part of daily life. Irvin attended a segregated, “Oriental” school where they had inferior books and teachers. In 1942, his family migrated to Los Angeles to take over his uncle’s café business, but he kept his strong ties to his hometown.

Irvin’s first service was to his country. In 1945, as a teenager Irvin volunteered for WWII in the United States Coastguard Merchant Marines where he achieved the rank of Chief Steward during his two years of service. In 1950 Irvin was drafted into the Korean War. He spent two years in the 4th Infantry Division 42nd Field Artillery in Germany.

Irvin began his civil rights activism when he joined the Los Angeles Lodge of the Chinese American Citizens Alliance in 1957. During his years at this civil rights organization, he rose to become the national Grand President in 1985 where he fought for political and economic opportunities and equal rights for the Chinese in America..

Irvin took a leadership role when the first trial of the murderers of Vincent Chin resulted in a light sentence. Since the Chinese American community felt that justice was not served, community representatives, Irvin and five from the National Chinese American Citizens Alliance Grand Board, went to Washington, DC to see the President and Attorney General. In a meeting with Assistant Attorney General Reynolds, the committee convinced the government that this murderous act was a violation of Vincent Chin’s Civil Rights. During this period Irvin held a reception at his Grandview Gardens Restaurant in Chinatown for Vincent Chin’s stricken mother. The subsequent trial of Vincent Chin’s murderers resulted in their being convicted of violating Chin’s civil rights, but the judgment was overturned.

Irvin Lai is probably best known for being responsible for the salvation of the Peking duck in America. In 1980 the LA Health Department began strictly enforcing the USDA code about the proper way to handle meat and food items.. Chinese restaurateurs were being forced to throw away Chinese roast duck and dim sum or receive costly citations from the health department. Irvin Lai spear-headed the community drive to change the law. As a direct result of Irvin’s testimony at the State Assembly and State Senate hearings in Sacramento, the committee unanimously agreed on a roast duck exemption to the health code. Therefore, due to the work of Irvin Lai, everyone can enjoy the traditional way the Chinese serve roast duck.

(“Irvin Lai, continued on page 5)

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("Irvin Lai," continued from page 4)

Irvin R. Lai joined the Chinese Chamber of Commerce in 1977 and has been on the Board of Directors continuously for well over 40 years, having served as President (1981-83) and Chairman of the Board. During his tenure on the Chamber he has worn many hats. He often functioned as cultural ambassador, appearing on countless TV shows explaining Chinatown and Chinese traditions. In 1989 he Council General of Los Angeles commissioned Irvin to take local Chinese leaders to China for the celebration of the 40th year of the People's Republic of China. At times he was a key planner of the Miss Chinatown contest and the Chinatown parade. His focus was always to promote Chinatown and the Chinese culture.

When the 1888 Chinese Shrine became a historical preservation issue Irvin R. Lai rose to the leadership of the Chinese Historical Society of Southern California, serving as president and later chairman of the board. After city-wide and media attention, the City Council designated the 1888 Los Angeles Chinese Cemetery Shrine Historic-Cultural Monument No. 486. CHSSC formed the Shrine Preservation Committee. Irvin Lai, as committee chair, and Randall Bloch negotiated with Evergreen Cemetery, for acquisition of the shrine. Subsequently, the committee developed a two-phase plan to restore the shrine and began fund-raising. Phase II was completed in 1997.

During his presidency, the Society moved to acquire a headquarters site on Bernard Street. With Irvin's leadership in fundraising, the Society was able to clear the mortgage in four years. During the first four years of his administration, CHSSC expanded its activities and programs.

As a mover and shaker in Chinatown, Irvin worked behind the scene to influence decisions made in Chinatown that would affect many lives. Irvin and Los Angeles Lodge President Howard Quan voiced public safety concerns in a private meeting with police chief Daryl Gates, who agreed to a police substation in Chinatown. Their efforts led to the Chinatown Public Safety Association.

Likewise, Irvin was on the ground floor to start the Asian American Education Commission of LAUSD. Starting the commission was a battle that was not easily won. Irvin testified as a parent before the LAUSD Board about the importance of having a commission that would develop curriculum for immigrants and the importance of the elevation of Asian American educators to higher positions.

Irvin Lai helped save the French Hospital in Chinatown. In the mid 80's, the French Hospital board was investigating a sale to a Japanese Real Estate developer. However, the only Chinese American board members, Dr. Diana Lee and Irvin Lai, convinced the board to give the hospital and its operation to the hospital's staff that would assume all of the debts and pay rent to the French Society. After Irvin made the motion, Dianna Lee seconded it, the French Hospital Board passed the motion to approve. The group of doctors renamed the hospital Pacific Alliance Medical Center. A year later the hospital received \$17,000,000 in past due uncompensated moneys from the government.

Irvin Lai stepped forward to fight for the Chinese American community once again as he approached his 80's. As part of the Gold Line expansion in Boyle Heights, the Metropolitan Transit Authority unearthed many graves which were part of a long lost Chinese cemetery and Potters' field. After CHSSC was told by an informant about the discovery of the Chinese graves, Irvin voiced his outrage that the community had not been informed, forcing the MTA to respond. As a member of the subcommittee charged with developing an acceptable plan, Irvin fought for preserving the artifacts that were unearthed and for creating a fitting memorial for the Chinese pioneers who will be reburied next to the Chinese shrine in Evergreen Cemetery.

These actions serve as a catalyst for Assemblyman Mike Eng to draft California bill, AB 2514, to respect human remains. In April 2008, Irvin traveled to Sacramento to testify for the bill. That bill is pending in the State legislature.

Irvin R. Lai has had a lifetime of service for the Chinese American community. He has been not only a community leader, but a hero.



Chinese Historical Society of Southern California

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August 2008 workshop—Genealogy 101

By Anna Gee

Charlotte Bocage of the Southern California Genealogy Society gave us a two-hour class in Genealogy 101 at our August workshop, imparting knowledge that she has accumulated during her 40 years of genealogy research. For those who had talked to family members and reached the limits of their knowledge, this presentation provided information about what to do next. Beginning to implement her suggestions also provides a way to prepare for the October 4th field trip to the National Archives at Laguna Niguel.

A major aspect of successful genealogical research is to keep your work organized, in order to know what you have done and what is missing. Binders, color-coded folders, pedigree charts, family group sheets, correspondence logs, and call/response logs are essential. Name variations and spelling variations on a page for each person also help track information. Summarizing your research with frequent research notes, including dates and sources is also important. Samples of the charts and forms that Charlotte reviewed will be available on the Yahoo site and at the CHSSC office, along with an eight-page resource list.

Charlotte followed with a dozen suggested sources of genealogical information, starting with the census and how to read these pages, allowing you to track your relatives back by the decade. Additional tips included: relative differences among specific libraries and research centers and electronic sites; when to use Soundex, when to look at enumeration districts to assist in looking for the correct census page, where to go if you have only one name and a date, and what to bring with you in a field visit kit (such as a compass---ask a workshop participant about why this might be useful).

One potentially valuable source of information is city directories, the forerunners to the phone book which were used by businesses to promote their enterprises. You might be able to find addresses, occupations, and places of employment for relatives in these directories. Although true for the majority population, it might be interesting to find out just how valid this might be for those of

Chinese ancestry. Another useful tip was to try the language tools on a search engine to translate when encountering documents in Chinese on various genealogical websites.

Many participants stayed to talk with Charlotte for individual consultation. She is available for individual consultation at a nominal fee and for lunch-time free workshops at the Southern California Genealogical Society. Of African American heritage, she is especially interested in developing resources for research into minority ancestries, especially when current genealogical research can tend to focus on key European groups. Her stories of her family background in Louisiana and jazz provided an interesting note.

After Charlotte's presentation, Bill Chun-Hoon handed out a list of recommended genealogical books available at the Chinatown Library and brought the Heritage Collection (books on China and the Chinese American experience) of this library to our attention. For example, you may want to look at the several books they have on Chinese surnames as part of your research, or enjoy the various fengshui and health books based on Chinese principles. Marie Chung walked us through the Yahoo site we have created so that participants can download handouts when they have missed a program, or upload good resources they have found. This site is limited to our workshop participants and their family and friends.

In September, there will be no workshop. On October 4 there will be the field trip to the National Archives at Laguna Niguel, and on October 25th we will have the last workshop of the year. After the holiday season, we will resume monthly workshops beginning in January. Check the CHSSC website and newsletter for details on the October 25 workshop.

Note: The above referenced workshop is independent of the 8-week session workshop (See page 3).

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Acknowledgements

- Refreshments at the September 10 program meeting were provided by Winnie Lew, Annie Chin Siu and Dolores Wong.
- We thank Dr. Jonathan H.X. Lee, last month's program speaker for his donations to CHSSC Library:
 1. The Jatakas: Birth Stories of the Bodhisatta
 2. Religions of China
 3. The Analects of Confucius
 4. Chinese American Death Rituals
 5. Taoism

Community Calendar

Through November 2, 2008

Saturdays and Sundays 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Historic Chinatown in Neon Postcards: An Installation

445 Gin Lin Way, Los Angeles Historic Chinatown

Admission: \$2.00

Contact DSR @ 213-628-7335

Friday, September 26, 2008

Chinatown Service Center

37th Anniversary Dinner

Empress Pavilion

Los Angeles Chinatown

For more information call Dinner Planning Committee,
213-808-1760

\$250 per ticket

Friday, September 26, 2008, 8:00 p.m.

Red Heroine

Rare 1929 Chinese martial arts silent movie

With live music

Complimentary parking and food

Pacific Asia Museum

46 N. Los Robles Avenue, Pasadena, CA

Free with admission to the museum

Reservation, call 626-449-2742 x 31

Saturday, September 27, 2008

Autumn Moon Festival

South Pasadena Chinese-American Cultural Association

South Pasadena High School

CHSSC will have a table at the Festival

Free parking on campus

Free admission

Sunday, September 28, 2008

Himalayan Family Festival

Pacific Asia Museum, in association with the Tibetan Association of Southern California, will celebrate the people of the world's highest region with hands-on crafts, music, dance, exhibitions, demonstrations, and food and crafts for sale from Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Tibet.

Pacific Asia Museum, Pasadena, CA

Free admission, RSVP not necessary.

Friday, October 3, 2008

OCA-Greater Los Angeles Chapter 17th Annual Image Awards Banquet

Omni Los Angeles Hotel

251 South Olive Street

Los Angeles, CA 90012

Call Clara Chiu for details, 213-250-9888

Monday, October 6, 2008 @ 6:30 p.m.

Slide presentation: The Jews in Harbin, China

By Albert Chang, M.D.

Golden Dragon Restaurant

960 N. Broadway, Los Angeles Chinatown

China Society of Southern California

Dinner cost \$15 per person, lecture @ 8:00 is free

Call Dorothy Brown to RSVP

(323) 463-1396

Tuesday, October 7, 2008 @ 7:30 p.m.

Chinese Garden Lecture Series

Lecture: The Emperor Views His Garden: Kangxi and the Mountain Hamlet for Escaping the Summer Heat at Chengde

Huntington Library, Friends' Hall

San Marino, CA

Free

Speaker: Professor Richard Strassberg, UCLA

("Community Calendar," continued from page 7)

Saturday, October 11, 2008, 1:00 p.m.—3:00 p.m.

Golden State Theater

417 Avarado Street, Monterey, CA 93940

\$15 per ticket

You are invited to join descendents of the villages to gather at the Golden State Theater to enjoy Chinese cultural performers who will give the community a colorful visual picture of the heritage of generations of Chinese people

For more information, contact Gerry Low-Sabado

(510) 972-3163 or (510) 378-0999

RSaturday@aol.com

Sunday, October 12, 2008, 1:00 p.m.—2:00 p.m.

Lecture: "Confucianism in California: Philosophy and Religion, the Secular as Sacred"

By Jonathan, H.X. Lee, Ph.D.

Dr. Lee will discuss the role of Confucianism in Chinese immigrant communities historically and today, as well as its current revival in China.

Pacific Asia Museum, Pasadena, CA

Free with museum admission

Call 626-449-2742, x 31 to RSVP



**Chinese Historical Society
of Southern California**

415 Bernard St.

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