

A Tribute: Lucie Cheng

Suellen Cheng & Munson A. Kwok

Prof. Lucie Cheng's impact on our Los Angeles Chinese American cultural and educational community was far reaching, though possibly largely forgotten today except by a few. Personally, she was our mentor and dear friend. For us in Chinatown, Lucie must be considered a catalyst and visionary.

During her tenure as the Director of the Asian American Studies Center at UCLA, Lucie solidified the principle that as a key part of the activism of the Asian American Movement, academia must reach out and partner with the community. Lucie insisted that her mission be brought to Chinatown, and she sought to accomplish that action through the then-new Chinese Historical Society of Southern California. She suggested an oral history project because so little was known and documented about the elder generation at that time. So the Southern California Chinese American Oral History Project was born as a joint effort of UCLA and CHSSC.

As the visionary, she knew that it was well past time to capture that history for posterity, that, as a professor, she knew it would be essential for establishing a public identity for this culture and community for the next generation and for the sake of legacy. As an exceptional leader, Lucie carefully assembled her team and entrusted her staff to carry out her vision. Out of the Project began the efforts in creating a Collection, an almost unavoidable by product of the interviews. So CHSSC created the goal to become a collector of documents, photos, and artifacts. The Project lasted about 5 years with over 400 interview tapes to UCLA and summaries deposited at the library and at CHSSC. At the same time hundreds of historical photographs were collected.

She was not done. "Now, the oral history collection must be used." At that time, Lucie was also an aggressive champion for Asian American women. She was a role model and a true leader. What better than to engage young Asian American women to examine the collection and write about their findings about the 68 women interviewed. So, a book was published. The publisher was CHSSC, beginning a tradition that would yield many illustrious moments in the future. The publication team included Russell Leong, the talented writer/editor, and the Society's past presidents Ella Quan, Angi Ma Wong, Eugene Moy, and Munson Kwok.

The book was of course *Linking Our Lives!* And, where are those young women today? One is a Congressperson (Judy Chu); two are professors (Susie Ling and Sucheta Mazumdar); another a former UCLA dean (Feelie Lee); a University academic research librarian (Marjorie Lee), and a Museum Director and Head Curator (Suellen Cheng). Some great choices on Lucie's part!

Her pioneer spirit and vision made the sharing of collective community memories possible, She had inspired many of us to continue her mission. Lucie may not be here with us physically, she lives on in our hearts. We should not forget the legacy she created in her moment in **OUR** community.

Suellen Cheng

Museum Director & Curator
El Pueblo Historical Monument

Munson A. Kwok

Former President, Chinese Historical Society of Southern California