

"UCLA Asian American Studies Center Pays Tribute to Lucie Cheng, Pioneering Transpacific Scholar"

"Lucie Cheng was a courageous and innovative scholar who placed Asian Americans at the forefront of class, gender and labor, breaking away from stereotypes that saw them as either the victims of their circumstances or the pawns of History."

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LUCIE CHENG, former Director of the UCLA Asian American Studies Center and Professor Emeritus of Sociology at UCLA, passed away on 27 January 2010 in Taipei, Taiwan after courageously battling cancer for several years.

Professor Cheng served as the first permanent Director of the Center from 1972-1987 succeeding then interim director, Professor Harry Kitano. She began her UCLA career as an Assistant Professor of Sociology in 1970 after receiving her Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Hawaii, Manoa, in the same year. Professor Cheng guided and championed the Center during the early years when Ethnic Studies was becoming institutionalized within the university. Hers was an often daunting task which met resistance from traditional area studies.

Under her leadership, the Center developed key areas of the Center's programming and structure, including the M.A. program which has produced hundreds of scholars, writers, and community leaders throughout the United States. Under her tenure, many of the center's founding core faculty and scholars were hired, including: Profs. Stanley Sue, Don T. Nakanishi, Robert Nakamura, Paul Ong, King-kok Cheung, Valerie Matsumoto, and the editor of the Center's Amerasia Journal, Russell Leong. During this time, the Center published publications which served as curriculum material for classes in Asian American Studies, including *Roots*, edited by Amy Uyematsu and others, and *Counterpoint*, edited by Emma Gee. Prof. Cheng also helped establish the first endowed chair in Japanese American Studies.

Lucie Cheng was a pioneering social scientist who helped to establish the field of Asian American Studies within a transpacific context. Among her many publications, the classic *Labor Immigration Under Capitalism* (co-edited with Edna Bonacich, University of California Press, 1984) situated the study of early Asian Americans within the context of international labor migration. With Paul Ong and Edna Bonacich, she also edited *The New Asian Immigration in the Restructuring Political Economy* (Temple University Press, 1994). Professor Cheng went on to become the founding director of the Center of Pacific Rim Studies at UCLA (1985-1990).

Lucie Cheng, who established a research team consisting of June Mei, Renqiu Yu, and Zheng Dehua, was one of first scholars to engage in joint research with Chinese universities, brokering fieldwork projects between Sun Yatsen (Zhongshan) University and UCLA. Her team did research in the emigrant sending area of Toison, and published works on the contributions of Chinese Americans to building railroads in Guangzhou (published in *Amerasia Journal*), and research on remittances, language, and on the bachelor society as well as on early female migrants.

Lucie also grounded her research in the local Los Angeles community: she was an active presence in the Chinese Historical Society of Southern California, working with others to support programming and publications such as the path-breaking work on Chinese American women, *Linking Our Lives*, with which many Center staff were

involved, including co-editor Suellen Cheng, and librarian Marjorie Lee. In the book, Cheng notes the courage of pioneering Chinese women in America who overcame geographic, political, and cultural adversities to settle and build their communities.

This courage to forge new thinking also characterizes Lucie Cheng's life and work as well, for she opened new scholarly ground, linking Asian Americans to their countries of origin and analyzing their experience from the perspective of class, gender, and labor. Thus, her research broke away from traditional motifs of assimilation and modes of acculturation that had characterized conventional frameworks applied to Asian Americans previously.

After her retirement from UCLA, Professor Cheng remained an active scholar on both sides of the Pacific, serving as the Founding Dean of the Graduate School for Social Transformation Studies at Shih Hsin University in Taipei. In addition, she worked as a publisher and journalist for two newspapers in Taiwan, including the Lipao Newspaper that had been founded by her father, Cheng She-Wo. In 2006, Professor Cheng established the Cheng She-Wo Institute for Chinese Journalism at Shih Hsin University, an archive dedicated to the history of journalism in China.

A joint memorial/tribute is being planned on the UCLA campus by the UCLA Asian American Studies Center and the Department of Sociology. Please check the Center's website (<http://www.aasc.ucla.edu/>) or call (310.825.2974) or email (center@aasc.ucla.edu) for forthcoming details. An online memory book has been created for people to read and to contribute at: <http://www.luciememory.org/>

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