



**Name in English:** Philip P. Choy  
**Name in Chinese:** 胡垣坤[胡垣坤]  
**Name in Pinyin:** Hú Yúankūn  
**Gender:** Male  
**Birth Year:** 1926  
**Birth Place:** San Francisco, CA  
**Philanthropy:** Yes

**Profession (s):** Architect, Professor, Author, Activist

**Education:** Bachelor of Arts, Architecture, 1950, University of California, Berkeley; City College of San Francisco, Engineering

**Award(s):** 2005, San Francisco State University President's Medal; 2005, Commendation for Public Service, California State Historical Resources Commission;

**Contribution(s):** Philip P. Choy is an architect, but his activism for Chinese American issues and history is what people most remember him for. He enlisted in the Army Air Corps during World War II. During his training in Mississippi, he witnessed pervasive segregation firsthand, which inspired his later efforts as an activist. After the war, he earned a degree in architecture, and was involved in residential and commercial design for fifty years.

During the Civil Rights era of the 1960s, he became president of the Chinese Historical Society of America (CHSA). In 1969, he was asked to help co-teach the first college level course in the nation on Chinese American history with Him Mark Lai at San Francisco State College (now San Francisco State University.) He also consulted on and narrated KRON-TV's six-part series about the Chinese in America, Gum Saan Haak; the first mainstream TV documentary about the history of Chinese Americans.

In the same year he spoke up at the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration of the Transcontinental Railroad. The US Secretary of Transportation had gone before him and made a speech about how only "Americans" could have built such a wonder. Knowing that Chinese American workers, many of whom had sacrificed their lives in building the railroad, were still being ignored at the commemoration, Choy angrily told the assembled dignitaries that the commemoration was distorted, inaccurate, and reflected white supremacy.

In 1974, Choy served on the China Cove Historical Advisory Committee to preserve the Angel Island Immigration Station where so many Chinese immigrants first landed and in 1993 prepared the case report that placed the station on the National Registry of Historic Places. Though he has retired from teaching, he still holds the title of Adjunct Professor of Asian American Studies at San Francisco State and remains a major presence in the preservation of Chinese American heritage, especially through his work with CHSA. He also served on

the San Francisco Landmark Advisory Board and the California State Historical Resources Commission. He has been involved as a consultant in several projects, such as the construction of the life size diorama of Chinese Railroad workers at the Sacramento Railroad Museum. Typically modest Choy said, "I do not wish to be portrayed as a success story. It was the compilation of negative experiences that propelled me into lecturing and sharing with students the authentic history of the Chinese in America and not necessarily the politically correct version."

**Publications:**

Philip P. Choy & H. Mark Lai, Outlines: History of the Chinese in America (1973)

Thomas W. Chinn, H. Mark Lai, Philip P. Choy, co-editors, A History of the Chinese in California: A Syllabus (1969)

Lorraine Dong, Philip P. Choy, Marlon K. Hom co-editors, The Coming Man: 19th Century American Perceptions of the Chinese (1994)

Philip P. Choy, Canton Footprints: Sacramento's Chinese Legacy (2008)

**External Links:**

[http://goliath.ecnext.com/coms2/gi\\_0199-6375242/Making-history-conference-banquet-tribute.html](http://goliath.ecnext.com/coms2/gi_0199-6375242/Making-history-conference-banquet-tribute.html)

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[http://www.chaffey.org/community/ontario/museum/chinese\\_in\\_california.html](http://www.chaffey.org/community/ontario/museum/chinese_in_california.html)

<http://www.chsa.org/>