



**Name in English:** Denny Chin  
**Name in Chinese:** 陈卓光[陳卓光]  
**Name in Pinyin:** Chén Zhuōguāng  
**Gender:** Male  
**Birth Year:** 1954  
**Birth Place:** Kowloon, Hong Kong  
**Current location:** New York, New York

## Federal Judge

**Profession:** Federal Judge, Lawyer

**Education:** Bachelor of Arts – summa cum laude, Princeton University, 1975; J.D., Fordham University School of Law, 1978

**Awards:** 2009, Professor of the Year award, Fordham Law School; 2006, Abely Award for Leading Women and Children to Safety, Sanctuary for Families; 2006, Medal of Honor, Fordham Law School Alumni Association; 2005, Distinguished Service Award, Asian American Justice Center; 2005, Lifetime Achievement Award, New York State Division of Human Rights; 1998, Trailblazer’s Award, National Asian Pacific American Bar Association;

### Contribution (s):

Judge Denny Chin was born in Kowloon, Hong Kong, the son of refugee parents that had fled the communist takeover in China. His family moved to the United States when he was 2 years old where his father worked as a cook in Chinese restaurants while his mother worked as a seamstress. Judge Chin was raised in New York City’s Hell’s Kitchen neighborhood, attending Stuyvesant High School, a New York public school specializing in math and science, before attending Princeton University. He graduated from Princeton magna cum laude in 1975 and from Fordham Law School in 1978 where he was the managing editor of the Fordham Law Review.

After graduation, Judge Chin clerked on the Southern District of New York for Judge Henry F. Werker. He then spent two years at the law firm of Davis Polk & Wardwell before becoming an Assistant United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York in 1982. When he left the U.S. Attorney’s office in 1986, Judge Chin started a law firm with two colleagues: Campbell, Patrick & Chin. He said quite candidly about this experience that, “We never quite got the hang of developing business—that was the hard part.” Four years later, he joined the law firm of Vladeck, Waldman, Elias & Engelhard, P.C., where he specialized in labor and employment law.

In 1994, Judge Chin, at the very young age of 39, was nominated by President Clinton and confirmed as a federal judge to the U.S District Court for the Southern District of New York. He was the first Asian-American appointed as a U.S. District Court Judge outside of the Ninth Circuit covering the Western United States. Judge Chin has been

involved in several high profile cases. By 2003, he held the distinction of having had three of his cases fictionalized in the popular TV series, "Law and Order." Judge Chin was most famously the sentencing judge in the high profile case against Bernard Madoff in June 2009. Madoff was convicted of running the biggest Ponzi fraud scheme in history, estimated to have involved almost \$65 billion. Judge Chin sentenced him to 150 years in prison.

Judge Chin has served as an Adjunct Professor at Fordham University School of Law teaching legal research and writing since 1986. In 2004, the Asian American Law Students Association (APALSA) at Fordham established in his honor the Hon. Denny Chin Alumni Award for Excellence in the Legal Profession. He is currently the Treasurer for the National Asian Pacific American Bar Association Judicial Council, and he has served as the President of the Federal Bar Council Inn of Court and the President of the Asian American Bar Association of New York. He also currently serves on the Boards of Directors for the Fordham Law School Alumni Association and the Fordham Law School Law Review Association and as the Co-Chair for the Fordham Law School Minority Mentorship Program. Judge Chin is a member of the Federal Bar Council Public Service Committee, the National Asian Pacific American Bar Association, and the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund.

On October 6, 2009 he was nominated as a Circuit Court Judge on the Second Circuit Court of Appeals by President Obama. He became the highest ranking Chinese American federal judge in history on April 22, 2010 when he was confirmed by the US Senate.

**External Links:**

<http://law.fordham.edu/faculty/2345.htm>

[http://www.law.virginia.edu/html/news/2003\\_spr/chin.htm](http://www.law.virginia.edu/html/news/2003_spr/chin.htm)

<https://www.princeton.edu/~alco/CTNAT/2007/chin.html>

<http://dealbook.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/09/10/madoffs-sentencing-judge-to-be-appellate-court-choice/>