



Name in English: Diana Ming Chan
Name in Chinese: 张陈 维明 [張陳維明]
Name in Pinyin: Zhāng Chén Wéimíng
Gender: Female
Birth Year: 1929-2008
Birth Place: San Francisco, California
Philanthropy: Yes

Profession (s): Social Worker, Teacher

Education: Bachelor of Arts, Social Work, University of California, Berkeley; Master of Social Work, University of Minnesota

Awards: 2007, Social Work Pioneer, National Association of Social Workers; 2007, Lifetime Achievement Award, National Association of Social Workers California Chapter; 2007, California Social Work Hall of Distinction, University of Southern California, School of Social Work

Contribution (s): The circumstances of Diana Chan's early life played a major role in the passion that she brought to her social work on behalf of children in schools. Her mother had been a former prostitute, brought to California for the sex trade that had flourished in the Chinese American community following the passage of the Page Act of 1875. This law had essentially blocked the immigration of almost all Chinese women and the formation of normal Chinese families in the United States. Diana was sent to an orphanage when she was only 18 months old after the death of her mother. Later she was sent to her father who left her in the care of an opium addict in the evenings.

In these troubled circumstance she proved to be a troublemaker, "In the early years, I was a naughty child, and I did not endear myself to teachers. I raised hell. I was an unhappy child."

Diana Chan later wrote that it was in the fifth grade that a teacher invited her and other students to her home where she played for the first time in her life. The experience proved to be a turning point. She became interested in the biological sciences and worked at San Francisco's Chinese Hospital in the medical laboratory during her middle and high school years. In her first year of college, she spent time in a summer program in New York's Bowery working at the Settlement House on behalf of the YWCA working with low income students. In her youthful idealism she became set on "saving the world" and the quickest way to do that she determined was through social work by helping people to work together in groups.

Her first post graduate jobs were in California with the Oakland Recreation Department doing group work with older Hispanic, African American, and Chinese teenagers and kids and with the Richmond, California YWCA working with young married couples and

in low income housing projects among mostly African Americans. She also worked with immigrants helping them to adjust to American life.

Homesick for San Francisco she moved back and worked part time with pre-school children with hearing difficulties while pregnant with her first child. She was later left with two children when her first husband was killed in an accident in Yugoslavia during an around the world family trip. Feeling a bit lost afterwards, she became involved in life again as a social worker in Cameron House, which had originally rescued her mother from prostitution. She was the first ethnic Chinese social worker ever at Cameron House, a position that she held for 18 years.

The "War on Poverty" in the 1960s provided an influx of money from the federal government to help the Chinatown community to fund a whole range of programs and services. Diana Chan was instrumental in providing the facts and figures to prove that Chinatown should become a "targeted community" under the program as she had been involved in all aspects of social work at every range from babies to the elderly, refugees, abused women, and at-risk students throughout Chinatown for so many years. Among the organizations that were created with federal help was Self-Help for the Elderly, Chinese Newcomers Service Center, Chinatown Child Development Center, and Northeast Mental Health Services. The creation of so many new organizations brought up the need for Chinese Americans to go into social work to staff them. To meet the need for social workers San Francisco City College introduced a two-year program to train paraprofessionals for which Diana Chan taught for five years. She also taught social work at San Francisco State University.

In 1970, with the introduction of bilingual education in San Francisco, Diana Chan helped conduct workshops for teachers of the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) to help enhance their knowledge and understanding of Asian-American culture. She also introduced Chinese language courses for parents at individual schools across the school district for the proper understanding and discipline of children to combat the sometimes horrific cases of child abuse that she dealt with through her social work. She also fought against the growth of Chinatown youth gangs by creating a volunteer led program for at-risk children with a regimen of after-school tutoring, activities, and involving the parents in discussions, field trips, and other family activities.

In 1977, the passage of Proposition 13 in California, limited future sources of funding for state schools. Among the first positions to go were social workers. By the early 1980s the effects of these cutbacks were becoming clear in increased child delinquency and other problems in schools. A three year grant started a program in which Chan and another social worker worked with schools, teachers, and principals to address these problems. After the grant ran out one school dipped into its own funds to pay her to work directly with their kids.

In 1999, as she faced retirement from the San Francisco Unified School District, she became determined that she would not be the last social worker hired by the district. She and her second husband, Clarence Chan, setup the Learning Springboard

endowment (see Philanthropy below.) They also lobbied the superintendent, assistant superintendent, and other government officials to support social workers in San Francisco schools by inviting them for Chinese meals at their home. They pressed the district to put up matching funds to match their endowment to directly support two social workers rather than have it come out of individual school health budgets. This "dumpling diplomacy" as she called it worked. A city proposition that provided money for social workers and school nurses that Diana Chan also worked on later passed. From one social worker the program grew exponentially until today there are seventy social workers and forty or fifty interns covering every San Francisco school. A study on the effectiveness of social workers in city schools showed that schools with that support had higher standardized test scores.

Clarence Chan said about his late wife, "She never worried about being proud. She was a giver."

Philanthropy: In 2000, with the support of her husband, Clarence Chan, an engineer and university professor, and their son, Harrison Leong, and aided by good investments over the years, Diana Chan created the Learning Springboard endowment for the San Francisco Unified School District starting with a \$508,000 donation. The fund supports the \$67,000 cost of one social worker position annually. From 2008 onwards, this position has supported a supervising social worker oversees 12 interns, meaning the donation supports 160 to 240 San Francisco students each year. Additionally the family also committed to donate an additional \$500,000 to support the program, for a total of over \$1 million. Clarence Chan continues this legacy by donating additional money every year as needed if the fund is unable to produce the annual \$67,000.

External Links:

<http://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/Diana-Chan-legacy-school-social-workers-4189497.php#photo-4019476>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rwukszc5HoY>

<http://www.socialworkers.org/pubs/news/2001/02/chan.htm>

<http://www.naswfoundation.org/pioneers/c/chan.html>

<http://www.socialworkhallofdistinction.org/honorees/item.php?id=42>