

Thoughts and Observation on the Forum on “Chinese American in Texas: 150 years of Struggle, Participation and Contribution” Saturday, October 27, 2018 at UT

Thank you to all who attended the Forum. We are grateful to have speakers of such caliber to open up their hearts to share their knowledge and personal experience with over 60 attendees. We held the Forum at UT Campus to make it convenient for the students and faculty to attend. We were pleasantly surprised and honored to have UT President, Dr. Fenves and other community leaders in the audience.

Mr. Irwin Tang and Mr. Mel Brown provided us with the invaluable information about the history and life stories of the Chinese Americans who had to endure the unimaginable prejudice, exclusion and abuse to live in America in the old days. As was mentioned in the Forum, Judge Roy Bean back then actually slapped the law book shut as he announced, “There is no law against killing a Chinaman.” Yet, the “Pershing Chinese” who were able to live with their families in Texas as the result of the passage of Public Law 29, found the courage and joy to put down their root in Texas over the last 150 years. Part I of the presentation in the Forum provided us with the historical background to help us better understand the personal stories and sacrifice of generations of Chinese Americans.

In the Part II presentation, Dr. Mitchel Wong provided us with an insightful observation: Immigrants who came to this country, not knowing the language, culture, nor having the financial support from families, have to be people of great determination and personal initiative. Like these early Chinese immigrants, Dr. Wong took advantage of the fine education at UT, pursued his medical profession and honed his expertise and reputation in the eyecare community. With his many accomplishments, Dr. Wong and his family were able to make a \$20 million gift to the Dell Medical School at UT, to give back to the community that made an investment of education on him.

Dr. Eric Tang provided us his inspiration from the civil rights movement which inspired him to study the struggles of different minority groups. Dr. Tang is the Director of the Center for Asian American Studies and an Association Professor in the African and African Diaspora Studies Department at UT.

Dr. Yi Chen talked about his recent experience in participating in community meetings. His participation made him realize and appreciate the value of personal involvement in community affairs and the importance of calling out the prejudicial

comments expressed by some in public meetings and to bring them to the attention of the elected officials.

Mr. Irwin Tang talked about his emotional struggles in being raised as a Chinese American living in a racist and hostile environment he found in Texas when he was growing up. He talked about how he found his voice to speak up against racist remarks, injustice and oppression.

In Part III of the Forum, the speakers offered guidance and legal knowledge that is invaluable for interacting with immigration officers. Ms. Gerberich explained our right to refuse letting law officer into our home or searching our belongings without a warrant signed by a **judge**; our right to stay silent in the absence of our lawyer and more importantly, never to intentionally give out false information in answer to questions.

Congressman Doggett sent us his greetings after he was delayed by an event in San Antonio which prevented him from join us in person. Mr. Doggett also helped in the issuing of a Congressional Certificate to honor the achievements of Dr. Wong and his many contributions to our community.

Our first Chinese American Congresswoman Dr. Judy Chu issued a Congressional Certificate to recognize the historical effort of Army General John Pershing to help the over 400 “Pershing Chinese” to put down their root in Texas during the perilous times of 150 years ago.

The Forum was among the first ones held in Austin whose purpose was to help us understand the history of the Chinese Americans in Texas. In learning and appreciating the struggle of the forebears of the Chinese American community, we will chart a better and wiser life journey for ourselves and for the future generations of Chinese Americans to live in Texas and in the United States. We think the Forum has achieved such purpose and more.

Hui Li, Huaiyin Li and Amy Wong Mok
Members of the Organizing Committee

Attachments: Two Congressional Certificates and the Greetings from
Congressman Doggett