

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Bonnie Ho

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
Tumultuous 2020 Oral History project

Interview # T20-V-L-2022-21

Bonnie Ho, principal of Pui Tak Christian School in Chicago's Chinatown, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Tumultuous 2020* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: April 29, 2022 Location: Pui Tak Christian School, Chinatown, Chicago, IL

Date: April 30, 2022 Location: Pui Tak Christian School, Chinatown, Chicago, IL

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Amanda Riggenbach, *Tumultuous 2020* project manager

Transcription by: _____

Edited by: _____

Transcript being
processed.

Total Pages: _____ Total Time: 3:44 / 3.73 + 1:16 / 1.30 = 5:00 / 5.03 hrs.

Session 1: Early life, immigration to U.S., professional journey, start of the pandemic

Session 2: concludes discussion of the pandemic

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on August 12, 2022.

The interviews are archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

© 2022 Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library

Abstract

Bonnie Ho, *Tumultuous 2020*, T20-V-L-2022-21

Biographical Information/Overview of Interview: Bonnie Ho was born in Hong Kong, China, in December of 1957. She spent the first sixteen years of her life in Hong Kong with her four siblings. She goes into detail about her life there and her parent's decision to move to the United States. In 1974, Ho's father and older sister moved first, since she was soon to be twenty-one and wouldn't be able to be sponsored with her family. The rest of Ho's family followed a couple months after. The family moved to Chicago's Chinatown. Her father found work outside of the city, but Ho, her sisters, and mother looked in their neighborhood businesses. Ho, being the most outgoing of the family, introduced herself to a store owner and asked for a job. When being told she was too young, she introduced them to her sister who was then hired. Then, she and her mother were hired to work on the weekends at the business's egg roll factory. During the weekdays, Ho attended high school an hour away from Chinatown, the only high school that had an English as a Second Language Program (ESL). Prior to her family's move to Chicago, Ho had begun to develop her artistic ability with traditional Chinese painting. Ho's mother, who had to leave so much behind in Hong Kong, brought several of these paintings with her to the United States. Ho's artistic ability was further developed during high school when she turned in one of these paintings for an art class. Her teacher recognized her talent and worked closely with her. Another important element of Ho's high school experience was becoming a Christian. According to Ho, this would influence the rest of her life's choices.

As Ho was preparing to graduate high school in 1978, she had to choose between pursuing art or becoming a teacher. While her parents were supportive regardless, she felt that becoming a teacher was the more stable of career choices. She completed one semester as an education major before going back to the art director at her high school and asking for help with her art school application. She was accepted into the School of the Art Institute in Chicago with a full ride scholarship, on an accelerated graduate course. She earned her Bachelor of Fine Arts in 1982 and her Master of Arts in 1984. Following her graduation, she married Dominic Ho and moved with him to Lansing, Michigan, so he could finish his PhD. She taught performance at Lansing Community College. In 1988 she began working as a radio program producer for the Christian organization, Far East Broadcasting Company. She worked her way up to executive director in 1995 until 2000 when she left the company and became the Director of Children's Ministry at the Chinese Christian Union Church—South, in Chicago. During this time, she earned a Master of Art in Biblical Studies from Moody Theological Seminary in 2004. After also working as a pre-school teacher at Pui Tak Christian School, a part of the Chinese Christian Union Church, she decided to pursue a Master of Teaching in Early Childhood Education from Concordia University. She graduated in 2012 and shortly after became the Principal of Pui Tak Christian School.

Chicago's first case of COVID-19 occurred in January and Ho describes how rapidly Chicago's Chinatown was impacted. She outlines the way Pui Tak Christian School responded to the pandemic and the myriad of ways the school was impacted. The school and the whole of Chinatown were especially impacted by anti-Asian sentiments that resulted from the increasingly toxic political culture surrounding the virus.

Subject Headings/Key Words: Hong Kong; China; Chicago, Illinois; Chinatown; Chicago

Chinatown; Far East Broadcasting Company; School of the Art Institute; School of the Art Institute Chicago; SAIC; performing arts; Broadway; COVID-19; COVID-19 pandemic; pandemic; COVID's impact on the Asian community; Anti-Asian Hate; Pui Tak Christian School; Pui Tak Center; Chinese Christian Union Church; Tumultuous 2020; Tumultuous 2020 oral history; oral history; Bonnie Ho

Notes to the Reader: Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that this is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, interviewee and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for the views expressed therein. We leave these for the reader to judge.

COPYRIGHT

The following material can be used for educational and other non-commercial purposes without the written permission of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum. "Fair use" criteria of Section 107 of the Copyright Act of 1976 must be followed. These materials are not to be deposited in other repositories, nor used for resale or commercial purposes without authorization from the ALPLM.