



October 2025

Chinese American political thought: An intellectual biography of Y.C. Hong



Speaker:
Vivian Yan-Gonzalez



**Y.C.
Hong**

Los Angeles lawyer Y.C. Hong is well known in Chinese American history for his impacts as the community's leading immigration lawyer and as a lobbyist who fought for fairer immigration laws with the Chinese American Citizens Alliance. His support for the Republican Party is also well documented—yet the interaction of his political work and his community advocacy has been almost completely overlooked. In this talk, Dr. Yan-Gonzalez draws on the extensive Hong family archives at the Huntington Library to explore Hong's political thought and activities, offering a broader intellectual context for understanding how his C.A.C.A. activism informed his political advocacy as a leading community Republican. She argues that although Hong was inspired by the principles of justice and equality and believed in the American democratic system, he was a racial pessimist who was deeply skeptical of white Americans.

WHEN: Wednesday, October 1st

TIME: 7PM - 8PM

WHERE: Zoom

RSVP via Eventbrite on CHSSC
website: <https://chssc.org>

 Chinese Historical Society
of Southern California

南加州華人歷史學會



Chinese Historical Society of Southern California

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DISCOVERING MY COMMUNITY

I joined CHSSC in early 1976. I was just 27. I had already been involved in a small way in some community activities, in historic preservation, in some of the local community planning and environmental politics in my Long Beach neighborhood. I knew only a tiny bit about Chinese American history and L.A. Chinatown history. I knew that in the 1870's, per Sarah Bixby Smith, a Chinese peddler "...walked the dusty miles from Los Angeles..." to her family's ranch house in the pre-Long Beach era, bringing fresh vegetables and products from China, like tea and porcelains and baskets, and that he socialized with the Chinese cook and the laundryman at the ranch. My first job out of college was at this ranch house, which had become a city museum.

I became an active member of the LB Historical Society, but still didn't know much about L.A. Chinatown, other than that I was born at the French Hospital, and that my maternal grandfather lived in the rooming house above Little Joe's Italian American Restaurant. So, when I saw a little announcement in the L.A. Times in the Spring of 1976 that a new Chinese Historical Society was having a meeting, in the Cathay Bank basement meeting room, I came. I met some new and really interesting people. I joined and paid the dues, not realizing I had become a Charter Member, those who joined in the first full year. Since then, it has been an unbelievable journey of discovery, of involvement, of advocacy for community. I learned about my personal heritage, about our common, shared heritage. and our shared journeys. I found my community.

In a few weeks, on November 8, the CHSSC will have its 50th Anniversary Gala. We will have a chance to meet and chat, not only with Charter Members, but also the many friends who have become part of the community I have come to know and love. I look forward to seeing you there.

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Mission Statement

The purpose of the Chinese Historical Society of Southern California, Inc. shall be:

- to advocate for a wider understanding of the significance of the role of Chinese and Chinese Americans in the history of Southern California;
- to bring together people with a mutual interest in the Southern California history of Chinese and Chinese Americans;
- to perform all the functions required to acquire, preserve, and communicate knowledge of this important history; and
- to promote a better appreciation of our rich multi-cultural society.



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Vivian Yan-Gonzalez is a historian of race and politics in the 20th-century United States and Assistant Professor of Asian American Studies at Chapman University. Her current book project examines the first generation of Chinese and Japanese American voters in California, tracing their political ideas, strategies, and coalitions from their emergence in the 1920s through their maturity in the post-World War II years. An Orange County native, Professor Yan-Gonzalez was a Mellon Mays fellow at the University of Southern California and received her Ph.D. in History from Stanford University in 2022. She was a Postdoctoral Research Associate at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, and held a Short-Term Research Fellowship at the Huntington Library before joining Chapman University in fall 2023.



Celebrants at our August 16 picnic admire the sheet cake donated by Phoenix Bakery



The 140th Anniversary Commemoration of the 1885 Rock Springs Chinese Massacre

By Ricky Leo

One of the darkest chapters in American history occurred in my hometown of Rock Springs, Wyoming back in 1885 and I didn't even know about it growing up there. It wasn't until my wife Grace and I attended the 150th anniversary celebration of the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad in Utah in 2019 that I learned about the massacre of the Chinese coal miners and the burning down and looting of the Chinatown from Chuimei Ho. We also met Professor Dudley Gardner there. He taught at Western Wyoming Community College in Rock Springs and has been doing excavations of the Chinatowns in Rock Springs and Evanston for the past 40 years.

The subject of the massacre came up a few years ago when we met Professor Laura Ng at the Chinese Historical Society building in Los Angeles Chinatown. She grew up in Lincoln Heights, was once an intern at CHSSC, and is now teaching at Grinnell College in Iowa. She first brought up the idea about organizing a commemoration of the Rock Springs massacre.

On one trip back to my hometown, Grace and I went to visit the Rock Springs Historical Museum. We saw the design for a statue by artist David Alan Clark that had been selected by the city for the 140th anniversary of the massacre. Grace mentioned to Professor Gardner that she didn't like the design because the figure depicted, Ah Say (Leo Wing Jan), looked like a homeless person. He got us in contact with the artist. Soon after this, Professor Gardner told me that the artist asked if I would be the model for his statue. I was honored and they flew me to Portland, Oregon for a 3D scan.

The massacre came up again in late 2023 when Professor Emerita Sue Fawn Chung invited me to speak about the influence of the 1885 Rock Springs massacre on the Leo clan at the 1882 Foundation's Rural Chinatowns Conference in Salt Lake City, Utah in June 2024. I found out that about forty percent of the Chinese in Rock Springs at the time of the massacre were from the Leo clan. After this conference, Grace and I, along with Laura and Dudley, began to plan the commemoration event.

Through the research efforts of Laura and Peter Lau, a retired biomedical engineer and researcher of the people who migrated to North America from Taishan, China, I was connected to Leo families who once lived in Rock Springs, relatives in my ancestral village in Taishan, and descendants of coal miners in Rock Springs. One of these coal miners, Leo Lung Man, survived the massacre in Rock Springs and his son, Leo Yee Litt, was also a coal miner who retired in the late 1920s. Peter and Laura were able to determine that they were in my family tree, deepening my connection to the massacre.

The commemoration event, from August 28 to September 2, 2025, took place in Salt Lake City, Evanston, Fort Bridger, Green River and Rock Springs. It brought together over seventy attendees, including scholars, historians, artists, authors, reporters, politicians and past residents of Rock Springs from the Leo (Lew) clan. It concluded with the unveiling of the Requiem statue. You can watch it here: <https://tinyurl.com/Requiem-Dedication>

A special thank you to Professor Dudley Gardner; Professor Laura Ng; Peter Lau; Liisa & Patty Anselmi, owners of the Holiday Inn in Rock Springs; Jennifer Messer, Rock Springs Historical Museum Coordinator, David Mead, Sweetwater County Historical Museum Executive Director, Amanda Romero, Community Fine Arts Center, Margaret Yee, Chinese Railroad Workers Descendants Association; Karen Zhou, photographer; Mark & Susie Leo, owners of the China Garden Restaurant; and our many friends, volunteers and attendees.



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Visit at the Joss House in Evanston Wyoming



Requiem Statue
L to R: Grace Leo, David Alan Clark
(artist), M.J. Clark, Ricky Leo

Dedication Ceremony
L to R: Cindy Yee, Jessica Mei, Anita
Lee, Gordon Hom, Grace Leo, Ricky
Leo, Mei Ong, Ernest Low





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50

CHINESE
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY
OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Join us for our
50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION
"Saving Our History"
1975-2025

Saturday, November 8, 2025

4:00 pm to 6:30 pm, - Cocktail Reception & Archival Exhibits

6:30 pm to 9:00pm - Dinner & Program

Golden Dragon Restaurant
960 N. Broadway, LA Chinatown 90012

Tickets

Individual Sponsors - \$175

Purchases can be made via our website at CHSSC.org

or you can send checks to:

411 Bernard Street

Los Angeles, CA 90012

Please make checks payable to:

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and note "50th Anniversary Sponsorship" in the memo line



Scan to buy tickets





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50

CHINESE
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY
OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

50th Anniversary Celebration – Events

4:00 pm to 6:30 pm – Video Room and Exhibition Room

To RSVP (if you're not attending the Dinner): info@chssc.org



VIDEO PRESENTATIONS

Admission to the Video Room by Dinner Attendee or RSVP
(Please select your Videos you wish to attend (Videos are in-person))

4:30pm – *Revisiting East Adams*

4:45pm – *Chinatown Two-Step*

5:06pm – *Edmund Soo Hoo – Heart of Chinatown*

5:24pm – *Hong Kong Cafe*

5:41pm – *Paper Son*

5:52pm – *Congressional Gold Medal Presentation*

6:05pm – *Tyrus Wong – Kites*



MUSEUM EXHIBITIONS

Admission to the Exhibitions Room by Dinner Attendee or RSVP

Exhibits Hours: 4:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

Tyrus Wong Murals,
Archaeological artifacts and photos from Old Chinatown,
Southern California Oral History Collection,
Robert A. Nash Collection,
Duty and Honor Collection,
Chinese American Restaurants in Los Angeles Menu Collection,
Castelar Elementary School Collection,
and much more!



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411 Bernard Street, Los Angeles CA 90012

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Community Events

Oct. 10, 5:00 PM "Chinese Life on the Old Rancho Santa Anita", [free, no RSVP] presented by Prof. Susie Ling for the Arcadia Historical Society at the Gilb Museum of Arcadia Heritage, 380 W. Huntington Drive, Arcadia

Oct. 24, Commemoration of 1871 Anti-Chinese Riot and Massacre. Chinese American Museum. Details coming at <http://camla.org>