



B
I
K

FILMS

A Moment in Time -- Press Release

A Moment in Time, a new film by Oscar-winner Ruby Yang, is a one-hour documentary about the experience of the Chinese in America through the films they loved. It harkens back to a time when six movie theaters in San Francisco's Chinatown crystallized the memories, the beliefs, the sorrows and aspirations of Chinese immigrant families.

The principal speakers in *A Moment in Time* grew up here: Irene Dea Collier, Jimmie Lee, Chuck Gee, Cecilia Wong, Amy Chung, Norman Fong. As children they associated Chinese movies (and the Chinese language) with their parents' alien, backward world. Chinese mothers loved Cantonese Opera films in which tyrannical parents wrench young lovers apart. For them, movies were a rare break in an endless workweek. Chinese movies also translated national disasters – World War II, for example – into personal dramas of separation and loss. For Chinese immigrants they were true to life, unlike the sunny family shows on American TV.

The immigrants' American kids eventually found their own reasons to appreciate Chinese film. Partly in self defense -- because they were seen as Chinese -- the children developed a pride in Chinese things. The heartbeat of *A Moment in Time* is a series of clips from films that were hits in Chinatown. Hollywood Westerns were always popular. Wong Fei Hung, a Robin Hood character from Hong Kong, defended the weak with a smile and a bullwhip. Films from revolutionary mainland China sparked battles in Chinatown between long-haired youths and a conservative older generation. 1950s bobbysoxer films from Hong Kong proved that Chinese girls can be cool. 1960s martial arts films, notably those of Bruce Lee, sent Chinatown boys to kung fu school. Before long all American boys were going.

Chinatown movie theaters have closed. Chinese movies have broken into mainstream culture. Hong Kong directors like John Woo and Wong Kar Wai, movie stars like Chow Yun Fat and Jackie Chan are known around the world. *A Moment in Time* recalls the period when Chinese movie theaters marked a dividing line between the generations, but were also a school where American kids came to appreciate their Chinese roots.

Ruby Yang and her producer husband, Lambert Yam, are Americans born in Hong Kong. Lambert Yam managed the World Theater in San Francisco's Chinatown from 1985 to 1995, an interlude of dramatic change in Chinatown and in Chinese films. Ruby Yang's Oscar-winning documentary *The Blood of Yingzhou District*, produced by Thomas Lennon, was filmed in China, where she and Lambert Yam are now based. Yang has directed two other documentaries for American public TV – *China 21* and *Citizen Hong Kong*. She edited Bill Moyers' PBS series *Becoming American: The Chinese Experience* and Spencer Nakasako's Emmy-award-winning documentary *A.K.A. Don Bonus*. She edited two of Joan Chen's feature films, *Xiu Xiu* and *Autumn in New York*, and has worked on many other features and documentaries. For both Ruby Yang and Lambert Yam, *A Moment in Time* wraps up a great deal that is close to their hearts.

A Moment in Time was supported by grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the California Council for the Humanities, the Hong Kong Arts Development Council, the Creative Work Fund, the Chinese Performing Arts Foundation, and the Center for Asian American Media in association with the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.