



Speaker survives cultural revolution for education

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Becky Watts / Photography by Grace Nast



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Ming Wang had to endure many trials to survive in China during the Cultural Revolution. Not only did he go on to receive an education and become a doctor, in order to survive Wang learned how to play the Chinese violin and ballroom dance.

The Chinese Cultural revolution took place during 1966–1976 under the reign of Emperor Mao Zedong. The goal of the Cultural Revolution was to combat all old ideas the Chinese once identified with.

Zedong built an army of young people, who were named the Red Guards, to enact his policies. The Red Guards sought and destroyed temples, arrested and tortured educators, and murdered anyone who stood in their way. One example was Chinese woman Fang Zhongmou.

Zhongmou was beaten, taken from her home, and then humiliated in front of a crowd, when her son and husband accused her of criticizing Zedong. After this she was taken to the outside of town where she was shot to death, according to TheGurdian.com.

Under the Cultural Revolution all colleges were shut down. Zedong did not want the people to gain an education and rally against him. This is the environment that Wang comes from.

"The communist government believed the best way to keep on governing is to actually destroy the educational process of all of the young people," Wang said.

"Destroying means when students graduated from junior high or senior high, instead of allowing them to go to college, they forced all the young people to the poorest part of the country and condemned every one of us to a lifetime of poverty."

Zedong's reasoning for sending students to farms was for them to learn from the peasants how to do hard labor, according to CNN.com.

Wang said once they were there they were only allowed to work jobs that paid one or two dollars a month. Over the course of 10 years this process destroyed the lives of 20 million people.

"During what we called this Cultural Holocaust, I attended elementary through junior high and when I was finished in 1964, I was not allowed to go to senior high or to college, so I was going to be deported by the communist government just like everyone else. But it turns out one way to avoid deportation is through a musical talent," said Wang.

Wang went on to learn how to play the Chinese violin and how to dance as a way of survival. He tried to get into the communist singing and dancing group, but he did not get in because by that time the government realized that young people were learning these talents to avoid deportation. As a result, the Chinese government stopped allowing students to be taught musical skills.

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"My parents then sent me to the only medical school that was still allowed to be open, without any prospect of being a doctor. At age 15, I was learning medicine for no reason, because if I was on the streets they would deport me."

Unfortunately, the communist noticed Wang studying medicine for the sake of knowledge and expelled him.

In 1976 the Cultural Revolution died with its leader Zedong. China understood what mistakes Zedong made and reopened all of the schools, which gave Wang the opportunity to graduate and come study in America.

In America he attended Harvard University and MIT. He developed a fascination with the eye and became an ophthalmologist.

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