

would never claim it, Burt Stein himself was one of the primary contributors to that vigor.

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JOHN DRAGON YOUNG  
1949–1996

John Dragon Young was a dedicated and talented scholar and a gifted teacher inspiring students and colleagues as well as the wider community to which he contributed so much in the course of his academic career. Beginning his academic career as a historian of Chinese History, John viewed history as a necessary and significant dimension to the understanding of the modern world. Through this understanding, he believed that the disturbing and perplexing issues of the day could be disentangled, put in perspective, and would encourage a dialogue between all segments of society. In this he attained the ideal of a unity between thought and action, between the rationalism of academia and the society of which it is a part.

Born in Beijing, raised in Hong Kong, John set sail for the United States to study for a higher degree—a B.A. *Magna Cum Laude*, M.A., finally attaining the Ph.D. at the University of California at Davis in 1976. This voyage set the course for an abiding concern of John's life—the interaction and dialogue between East and West. His pioneering book, *Christianity and Confucianism: The First Encounter*, won him the respect and admiration of scholars internationally.

John returned to take up a post at the University of Hong Kong in 1977, first as a Research Officer of the Centre of Asian Studies and as a teacher in the School of Professional and Continuing Education. Accepting a senior position at the Hong Kong Baptist College, as Head of the Department of History, John steered the department's program in History and Chinese Studies through the CNAA's validation process achieving Honors status, the first steps toward the promotion of the College to University ranking. He also found the time to cofound the Modern Chinese History Society of Hong Kong, whilst serving as its first president.

Subsequently he chose to continue his academic career as a Professor in the Graduate School of Journalism at Chu Hai College, reflecting his increasing involvement as a political analyst and commentator on local affairs as Hong Kong's future was negotiated between Britain and China.

Faced with the certainty of an uncertain future, John returned to the United States in 1992, to become an American citizen, as an advisor on Asian affairs for the San Francisco Mayor's Office as well as an interpreter and translator for the mayor and the local media. Like other members of his distinguished family, Gladys and Xianyi Yang, John recently took up a position in the Department of Translation at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Honored by appointments to Visiting Professorships at distinguished universities abroad, publishing widely in leading academic journals as well as the local press, attending major conferences, and lecturing by invitation throughout the region, John's academic career was rich and varied, influencing and inspiring many of us here today.

But John was no narrow specialist. His vision of a fair and democratic society and his deep concerns over the future of Hong Kong prompted him to run for the Shatin

District Board in 1988, winning his seat in a resounding victory. The first university lecturer to serve in that capacity, John dedicated himself to improving the welfare of his constituency. At times he became disheartened that he couldn't do more as he battled the inertia and unresponsiveness of government to local needs.

Learning from this experience, he became increasingly vocal in the media on many issues affecting the the people of Hong Kong. Perhaps, remembering his own family's flight to Hong Kong in 1950, he wrote the Governor David Wilson over the forced repatriation of Vietnamese refugees, opening a sustained and amicable dialogue with the Governor on local affairs, becoming a frequent guest at Government House.

John became active in nascent political groups such as the Hong Kong Affairs Society and later, the United Democrats as debates over the Basic Law became increasingly contentious. Yet John's instincts and training, untrammelled by narrow parochialism led him to stand as an independent candidate for the first Legislative Council elections in 1991. Running against well-financed and organized political campaigns, he lost. But the community gained as he turned his disciplined mind to improving electoral policies and regulations, confident that democracy had taken firm root in Hong Kong.

In May 1989, John attended the Commemoration of the 70th Anniversary of the May 4th Movement in Beijing. He returned to Hong Kong excitedly describing the gathering of students in Tiananmen Square, their hopes for a more open and democratic society, and their disgust with the corruption of an unaccountable government. John viewed these bright rays of promise bursting through the weight of ages for a freer, if not democratic, society in China, from May 4th to Tiananmen, as historical continuity and fulfillment. He was devastated, as many of us were, on June 4th, when that promise came to an end. Yet, John turned his considerable energies to ensuring that the Basic Law would protect Hong Kong people in the transition to Chinese rule. He also came to a full and mature realization that scholars and commentators had missed the evolution of a Hong Kong identity, a distinct and powerful force for change that would have important consequences in the coming years.

John was a man of integrity, courageous and gifted who touched many lives with his ideas, his love and friendship, with his common sense and sense of humor, with his many talents and knowledge.

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