

Cal State LA graduating student aims to improve the criminal justice system with psychological insight



Charmaine Chui, 16-year-old Alhambra resident, will pursue a J.D. at Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law in the fall. (Photo credit: Robert Huskey/Cal State LA)

Alhambra resident Charmaine Chui hopes to be able to make a difference in the community as a prosecutor whose training in psychology will allow her to have a broader, more comprehensive outlook on future cases against individuals accused of crimes.

"It is very important that those working in the criminal legal system have a greater understanding for the psychological influences that may affect eyewitness testimony and thus be more analytical of a statement that can potentially send an innocent individual to jail," she said.

The 16-year-old Chui graduated with dual bachelor's degrees in psychology and criminal justice with summa cum laude honors from Cal State LA this spring. In the fall she will pursue a Juris Doctor at the Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law at Arizona State University with a full scholarship and designation as an O'Connor Fellow.

Ms. Chui is one of the youngest graduates in Cal State LA's Class of 2021.

Ms. Chui's aspiration has always been to pursue a career that would allow her to effect positive change in the lives of others and in the community. Her goal is to bring "justice for people who could not do so for themselves and use prosecutorial discretion for good."

"As students and future professionals, it is our responsibility to create a better future for the communities around us," she said.

Ms. Chui was 12 years old when she enrolled at the university through the Early Entrance Program. The program, which has accepted highly gifted students as young as 11 years old, is administered by the Honors College.

When she applied to Cal State LA, Ms.

Chui was yearning for "academic rigor in the company of like-minded peers who similarly enjoyed learning."

"I had longed to have friends my age who I believed I could fit in with, and the Early Entrance Program was the perfectly balanced fit for me," she said.

While she originally intended to study clinical psychology, Ms. Chui later decided to double major in psychology and criminal justice with an emphasis on forensic psychology. Despite the challenge of a heavier course load, she was excited to be able to combine the knowledge she gained in both academic disciplines.

Ms. Chui recalled being intrigued by a poster in King Hall, which is home to most of the university's psychology labs.

The poster featured a study using a field-simulation paradigm that the Forensic Psychology Lab pioneered. The simulated approach explored situational pressures placed on eyewitness testimony and identification during a mock crime investigation.

"I was fascinated by the field-simulation paradigm ... and it was truly eye-opening to learn more about false memories and how the confidence of eyewitnesses could be easily manipulated and altered," Ms. Chui said. "After joining the lab, I gained a deeper understanding of what forensic psychology actually was and, in fact, it was not what was portrayed on [TV]."

For her Honors College senior thesis, she examined the effects of personality on eyewitness performance. She also presented her research findings at the university's Annual Student Symposium on Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activities.

"Despite being only 14 when she came to work with me, Charmaine fit in well with my lab composed mostly of graduate students," said Professor Mitchell L. Eisen, who directs the Forensic Psychology Lab in the College of Natural and Social Sciences. "She held her own at every turn and made significant contributions to our research."

At Cal State LA, Ms. Chui was named a Joseph Drown Scholar and received a William Hobson and Evelyn Troup scholarship. She was named to the Dean's List and was a member of the Phi Kappa Phi honor society and the Alpha Phi Sigma criminal justice honor society.

With a commitment to serving the community, she is a member of the Formosa Association of Student Cultural Ambassadors, an international nonprofit organization that focuses on cultivating leadership skills, developing deeper knowledge of Chinese culture and promoting community service. She also served as a volunteer chair for the Early Entrance Program Club at Cal State LA. She has earned the national gold-level President's Volunteer Service Award for two years.



The Color of Hope artists and scholarship recipients.



From left are Alejandra Perez Barros from Actitud News; Michael Dergar, founder of the Academy of Special Dreams; Dory Perdomo, BAUPRES Cultural Group; and José Ángel Tostado Quevedo, director del Instituto de Cultura, Turismo y Arte de Mazatlán.

'The Color of Hope' art exhibition a testament to diversity

"The Academy of Special Dreams was honored to support 'The Color of Hope,' an inclusive art exhibition featuring the artwork of artists from around the world," said academy founder Michael Dergar, sponsor of the event. "This exhibition is another testament of diversity and inclusion."

During the ribbon cutting ceremony, The Academy of Special Dreams Foundation presented four scholarships and grant awards to upcoming artists from Mexico and Colombia. This financial support will help these young artists to establish their first-ever micro business in the arts.

The exhibition includes the work of 50 national and international artists, including 12 pieces by artists from Sucre, Colombia,

and 38 artists from various countries. The artwork was created using different techniques and purposes.

"On behalf of the academy, we thank our sponsors, the Alhambra Chamber of Commerce, Helen Woo, Isabel Carlos, Bianca Cruz, Megan Hutchinson Moloughney (The Alhambra), *Actitude* magazine, and the academy friends and family for believing in our mission of inclusion and art," Mr. Dergar said. "Special thanks for this wonderful opportunity go to Dory Perdomo from Baupres Gallery, Walther Arrubla Hoyos, and José Ángel Tostado Quevedo, director del Instituto de Cultura, Turismo y Arte de Mazatlán Cultura Mazatlan for the honorable collaboration."

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renowned teachers. She has appeared in all possible venues over an extensive career in concerts, films, musical theater, lecture-concerts and cabaret showcasing her vast range in all aspects of Spanish dance and flamenco.

Mr. Yee, who is also an award winning ACF chef also owns the Alhambra Culinary School and popular L.A. Omelets Catering Services. He is a High Honors graduate of prestigious Le Cordon Bleu College of Culinary Arts and is also their past two-term president of the Alumni Association. He is a recipient of several local Chef of the Year Awards and the 2019 ACF National Presidential Cutting Edge Award. His background in music started when he learned how to play the violin at age 8 and with the Columbia School of Music performed at Carnegie

Recital Hall at age 12. With the advent of the Beatles, he taught himself the guitar and performed with several popular Brooklyn, New York, rock bands. While living in Honolulu for several years, he created and became the promoter of the Honolulu Downtown Jazz Festival featuring the top jazz performers in Hawaii.

He combines music and food by inviting his Le Cordon Bleu chef alumni and apprentices to provide free refreshments during the intermission.

Admission is a \$15 donation at the door or free if RSVP by Aug. 10.

Sage Granada Park United Methodist Church is located at 1850 W. Hellman Ave., Alhambra 91803.

Please RSVP by e-mailing bizwind@yahoo.com. For more information, call 626-230-5435.

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