

# The Ordinary

## Message from Department Head

*Dr. Margaret F.Y. Wong*

This message was written in Feb. 2020, at a time when HK, and practically, the whole world, was hit by the outbreak of the new coronavirus. In the two months since the outbreak started in Jan. 2020, it seems like our entire city has already been turned upside down, consumed by a cloud of uncertainties and desperation.

It was also during this time, in search of a quiet moment, a retreat and peace of mind, that I came to recognize faces and things which have always been there but I was oblivious to in the past.

There is this maintenance worker in the housing estate, meticulously sweeping the floor, gathering the fallen leaves, clearing the flower beds, watering the plants, emptying the garbage ..... life for him goes on as usual. The storm will pass, like any typhoon, he knows. Except for now, of course, he is wearing a face mask.

There is also this street lined with Red Kapok, or known as "hero tree" or "wood cotton tree". Never have I noticed these tall trees until now. The huge daringly red flowers flare high up on the branches, blooming furiously. Their fiery appearance evokes audacity and courage, letting the world know that they can conquer anything and that the world belongs to them as much as it belongs to us.

As social workers, we are trained to have our eyes and minds open, to recognize individual uniqueness, to pursue kindness and truth even in most challenging and desperate circumstances. We are also tasked to discover the strength and beauty of the "ordinary"- people and things which seemingly appear to be insignificant but actually embody the essence of life, reminding us of where strength, stability and resilience lie, especially in difficult times.

It is apt therefore that we decided to name our Department newsletter, "The Ordinary".

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The Social Work Department of the SYU had a humble and “ordinary” beginning, when it was founded by Dr. Henry H.L. Hu and the late Dr. Chung Chi Yung in 1971.

Over the years, the passion and dedication of our founders have enabled the Department of Social Work to evolve from offering a Diploma in Social Work to the now much acclaimed and accredited Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) program in Hong Kong. Our graduates are now working in different social service sectors, supporting children, youth, families, and the disadvantaged populations in our community, upholding the values and beliefs required of a Registered Social Worker.

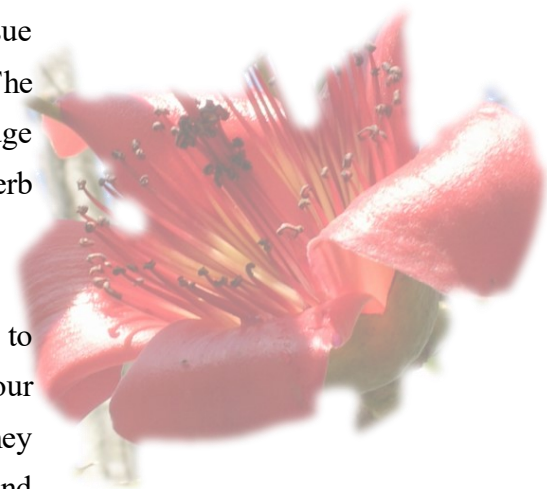
Our hope for our graduates is that they will become competent and compassionate social workers, always in pursuit of the uniqueness, the beauty and kindness of all things and all people, ordinary or otherwise.

The feature article “Embrace the Ordinary” by Dr. Lina Chow walks us through the development of Shue Yan as a small University, reminds us to treasure every modest moment in our lives and continue to be reflective and sensitive. The article written by our alumna Sin Yee Szabo Yip takes us on the wonderful journey of a Shue Yan graduate who is now a social worker in Stockholm, Sweden, reminding us of the values and beliefs of a social worker. We are proud of you, Sin Yee!

In future issues of “The Ordinary”, we shall continue to include a topical feature article, news from our students, Alumni and community partners, and updates about our Department.

I must take this opportunity to thank the Editorial Board members: Dr. Lina Chow (Convenor), Ms. Andrea Hope, Dr. Ben Liu, Dr. Tabitha Ng, and Mr. Anderson Yuen for spearheading this first issue of the Department newsletter. Without their great efforts, “The Ordinary” would not have been born! I am also proud to acknowledge our 2019 graduate Kennie Fu Jing Ci who came up with the superb design of this first issue, making it so special and extraordinary.

Yes, the storm will pass and the hero trees will continue to bloom. We shall continue to provide the best possible education for our future generations of social workers to ensure that, in their turn, they will continue to search for the beauty, compassion and meaning behind “ordinary”.



## ***“Embrace the Ordinary”***

***Dr. Lina Chow Kit Ling***

The Department of Social Work was established nearly 50 years ago. It has developed from a small department of 4 full-time teaching staff to a larger department with 12 teaching staff and 4 administrative staff today, and from a small cohort of about 25 students to a current intake of around 50 to 70 students per year. Having worked with the Department for over two decades, I would like to share some unforgettable highlights of its development here.



Initially Shue Yan College offered a four-year Diploma in Social Work, with the majority of teaching staff coming from a modest academic background. Most of the staff then held Master's Degree in Social Work and had considerable frontline practice experiences. In those days, our duties were mainly teaching and supervising students in their three fieldwork placements including the summer block placement. As students tended to submit assignments in the evening right before supervision, we often had to go through all the paperwork late at night in order to prepare for the supervision next day. The workload was pretty heavy!

### ***Teaching***

### ***Teaching and PhD Study***

When the Department was accredited to offer a four-year Bachelor Degree in Social Work, teaching staff had to attain a PhD qualification. During that period, a number of colleagues were pursuing their PhD studies while teaching at the same time, including Dr. Sandra Cheung, Dr. Linda Mok, Dr. Tabitha Ng, and I. Frankly, teaching and studying for a British-style PhD at the same time is daunting, challenging, and lonely at times. I needed to balance my time among teaching, studying, and family obligations, and I know this applies to the other colleagues as well. Despite the hardships, all of us eventually achieved the PhD qualification.

## ***Teaching, Research, and Publication***

In line with the University's academic policy, teaching staff face another new challenge in recent years. Apart from teaching, as social work educators, we are obligated to promulgate informed practice and enhance teaching through our research work. For those of us at professorial rank, in addition to conducting research, we also present papers at regional and international conferences. Some of us are invited to act as ad hoc reviewers for peer-reviewed journals.



Gradually, we are being recognized by the international communities and have the opportunities to work collaboratively with experts, scholars, and academics from different countries. To construct a research topic and have the findings and study published in academic and professional journals is of course a source of great satisfaction.

## ***Graduation Dinner***

Many of our students who were admitted to Shue Yan prior to 2002 had narrowly missed the admission threshold in the Advanced Level Examination to be eligible for admission to a government-funded undergraduate degree program. Enrolling in Shue Yan took a lot of resolution on our students' part too, as the Social Work Diploma was a four-year program instead of a three year degree program at other local universities. Shue Yan graduates who held a Diploma in Social Work were employed at the rank of Social Work Assistant (SWA) rather than Assistant Social Work Officer (ASWO) like the degree holders. Their career prospects and salary levels were comparatively lower than their peers even though they had completed a four-year program. Nevertheless, none of this deterred our graduates from making considerable contributions to the community in the field of social work as well as university education. In fact, both Dr. Hu and Dr. Chung treated our graduates as de facto Bachelor Degree graduates.

At that time, Dr. Henry H.L. Hu (the President) and the late Dr. Chung Chi Yung (the Vice-President) made it a tradition to attend our annual graduation dinner to show their staunch support for the new social work graduates. Needless to say, this meant a lot to our Department and our graduates.





This special graduation dinner was held in 1997 which marks the end of the British Administration.

In the middle is Dr. Henry H.L. Hu, the President.

The gentleman sitting next to Dr. Hu is our former Dean, Dr. James Patrick Mace, who has returned to the States.

The gentleman sitting on the left was the late Dr. James M.N. Ch'ien, who contributed significantly to our Department.

Three graduates visited their Alma Mater in Nov. 2019. Can you recognize them in a more recent picture below?

## ***Journey of Offering a Master Degree Program***

In line with our Co-founders' vision and mission, the Department of Social Work collaborated with the University of Alabama in offering a Master of Social Work program in 1981. Shue Yan College was one of the pioneers in introducing such joint program initiatives. Upon the completion of the first year curriculum that was taught during two summers in Hong Kong, Diploma graduates would attend their final year of study in Alabama for the award of the Master in Social Work degree. While some of our MSW graduates returned to Hong Kong, quite a number of them chose to stay behind and practice in the US and other countries. Among this group is Sin Yee, our alumna, who has been a School Counselor and Development Leader for psychosocial work in Sweden for a number of years after graduating from Alabama (see her article on p.6).

## ***Broadening Horizon & Connecting with the World***

Exposure to practice and education in a foreign country is an invaluable experience for our students. During the recent years our students have much more opportunities to study in a foreign country such as Sweden for one semester or take a summer course overseas for example at Oxford University or other leading universities in England. Some students may also choose working holidays in UK or Australia after graduation.

## ***Small is Beautiful***

Shue Yan is a small private university. Small, however, does not necessarily have a negative meaning, as the economist Ernst F. Schumacher (1973) suggests in his book, 'Small is Beautiful'. Shue Yan is always striving to carve out its unique niche, and we are proud to say that all of us teaching staff, graduates, and students are doing the same! Being small, being ordinary is beautiful if we "embrace the ordinary" and celebrate all the modest moments in our everyday life!

Our 1997 graduates embracing each other at a campus visit in Nov. 2019



1997 - 2019

Then & Now

\*Zoe (right) is a housewife

\*Ava (middle) is implementing Family Support Service in H.K.

\*Joanne (left) is a Clinical Social Work Supervisor at New York

## ***"My Marvelous Journey of Diversity in Social Work"***

***Sin Yee Szabo Yip***

I would like to acknowledge my deepest gratitude from the bottom of my heart to Dr. Henry H.L. Hu and Dr. Chung Chi Yung, founders of Shue Yan, who have made possible the amazing privilege of being a graduate of Hong Kong Shue Yan College / University. It is such a huge honor to share my journey, from studying at Shue Yan in Hong Kong and in the United States to my current profession in Sweden.

I still have vivid memories of the admission interview in Shue Yan. I answered the interviewer's question about why I had chosen social work as my major by describing my passion to help people in need. I am very thankful that I became a social work student at Shue Yan in the fall of 1991 with the student number "916255A". That was the first step in the fascinating journey of building my career as a professional social worker. Those four wonderful academic years at Shue Yan have, over the past 25 years since graduating, provided a tremendously strong foundation for my social work practice.



### **Graduation Day 1995**

Receiving honors diploma from Dr. Henry H.L. Hu at graduation ceremony remains one of the highlights of my life.

Since secondary school, I had participated in different kinds of extra-curricular activities as a volunteer. I hold a strong belief that human nature is good. This is the reason why I am willing to devote time and enthusiasm in voluntary social services. These experiences laid a solid ground for my interest in social work. Shue Yan provided the next avenue for developing my interest in volunteering and helping people, and it helped me transform that interest into professional growth. My social work training began in Hong Kong at Shue Yan and continued in the United States in the state of Alabama and then in group psychotherapy training at St. Elizabeths psychiatric hospital in Washington DC.

Without Shue Yan, I could not have developed my professional pathway to extend and integrate social work into work with a variety of other cultures in other countries. After I graduated from Shue Yan in 1995, I completed the Master of Social Work degree at the University of Alabama in cooperation with Hong Kong Shue Yan College. The program is designed to broaden and enrich the educational and cultural climate of both the University of Alabama School of Social Work and the profession of Social Work in Hong Kong.

When I was a social work intern at Saint Elizabeths Hospital in Washington DC in the United States through this valuable cooperative program in 1999, I got a chance to get in touch with different creative arts therapies in use there at the time. It was an eye-opening experience for me. I was very impressed by one of the most powerful creative therapies - Psychodrama - so I did not hesitate to submit my application for the Psychodrama Trainee Program there. I am so grateful to have had this valuable chance to obtain two years of experience in psychotherapy training. The action aptitude group interview lasted 5 hours. Once I was admitted into the program, I served as a group therapist and Psychodrama trainee. I directed and co-directed different clinical groups at the Geriatric Day Treatment Program, Geriatric Outpatient Program, Outpatient Care for Dual Diagnosis (mentally ill plus substance abuse treatment), Acute Care and in Forensic treatment units. Later on I provided training and teaching sessions using this modality to social workers and other professionals in Hong Kong between 2002 and 2006.

All those incredible experiences were an adventure and a great exposure to a variety of methods which have been useful to my professional development in a helping profession.

Sixteen years ago, in 2003, I got married and moved to Sweden, beginning a new chapter of my life in a Scandinavian country. I became a new immigrant in Swedish society. It was a very humbling process for me to learn a new language - Swedish - new culture, new norms, laws, a different political system, social welfare system, and the Swedish way of approaching the social work profession, as well as the way all these differences come together and affect the psychosocial system and create the society that people live in every day. This fabulous process of learning brought growth and change at a deeper level and enhanced the creativity and spontaneity I brought to my personal growth in the new situation.



My curiosity about understanding a new society broke through my limitations as a newcomer to social work in Sweden. My viewpoint extended outwards and upwards as I explored the new context, opening my eyes to new perspectives, and reconnecting what I had learned from past experiences. With all these explorations and experiences, I emerged into my new stage in life as a social worker in Sweden. It has become one of the most exciting moments of my life.

**Graduation Dinner 1995 - Department of Social Work**

With all my wonderful social work classmates, lecturers and staff.





**My current job in Sweden - Student Health Team at school - "Ronnaskolan"**

Back row (left to right): Mattias Wernqvist (vice-principal /study and career counselor), Nadia Barsoum (school nurse), Anna Djäknestam (special pedagogue), Henrik Ljungqvist (principal)

Front row (left to right): Martina Thelander (school nurse), Sin Yee Szabo Yip (school counselor/development leader), Daniela Addison-Smith (social pedagogue), Marcela Rodriguez Quintana (special pedagogue)

During my studies in social work at Stockholm University, I had the wonderful gift of time to reflect on what I had learned during my foundational studies in social work at Shue Yan. This strong foundation paved the way for the lifelong process of building up my professional social work knowledge. The sociological and macro-level perspective I acquired in my earlier studies allowed me to easily understand new ideas and ultimately integrate my knowledge of different systems, from Hong Kong and the United States, to the Scandinavian welfare society.

The fundamental knowledge, skills, and values of the social work profession taught at Shue Yan provided an enormous impetus for me to follow my heart and passion and continue my academic learning about social work in Sweden. The fundamental belief of social work to help people fully develop their potential and attain self-actualization is key for me, both as a person and as a professional social worker. This belief embraces a positive attitude towards human nature.

With this strong affirmation, I believe that the application of social work models, be it casework, group work, or community work, can strengthen the potential of people and help them transcend their weaknesses so that they can maintain their well-being. I have been working as a school counselor at a public Swedish school in a deprived and culturally diverse area of Stockholm (Sweden's capital city) for 8 years. Three years ago I was given the additional role of leading the development of psychosocial work from an international perspective in this school. Most of the students came to Sweden from the Middle-East, or from Eastern European or African countries. Some of their social situations are very challenging because they are refugees seeking asylum in Sweden. At the beginning of 2020, I was given another duty by the municipality's educational department to act as a coordinator for all school counselors in 25 different schools. In this role, I coordinate and support the development of student health services.

The motto of Shue Yan is - "Cultivating the virtues of benevolence; broadening horizon and knowledge" (敦仁博物). I still have a lot to learn. Without Shue Yan, my dream would never have come true and I would not be a professional social worker with genuine empathy, flexibility, and self-awareness, serving people in need in different corners of the world!



## ***Department News — Moving Forward***

### **Meeting the Increasing Demand for Social Work Training**



The Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) (Hons) program is highly regarded among employers, social care organizations and students, and thus attracts a high volume of quality applicants every year. Our Department staff team has expanded to meet the increase in student intake to ensure the provision of quality training and education to our students. Looking into the future, the Department is planning to develop a Master of Social Work (MSW) program to prepare non-social work degree holders to join the profession. The Department is very excited about this new development and will be in touch with our stakeholders to seek their insights and support for this new development.

The Department of Social Work is restructuring its existing research unit into a research-informed practice centre to provide employee training and corporate development programs. Evidence-based psychosocial wellness interventions will be provided to help employees and their families tackle workplace and caregiving-related stress. The Centre will also support corporate entities to conduct social impact assessment to ensure a positive and impactful return on their social investments.

### **Revamping Our Social Work Research Unit into a Centre for Research and Practice in Psychosocial Wellness**

### **Overseas Social Work Fieldwork Placement**

The Department will provide overseas placements in collaboration with some non-governmental organizations in Taiwan and Singapore. Students will be placed in social service organizations in Taiwan and Singapore. These organizations are mainly related to child and family service, children with special education needs, service for young people with mental health issues, and social enterprise. Overseas placements in Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom will also be explored.



## < *New Academic Staff* >

### *Dr. Josephine Fung*



Hi all, I'm Josephine (or you may use my nickname "JoJo"). It's my honor to start my new career, in the Social Work Department of Shue Yan University! I have been working as social worker in various fields including mental health service, families for ex-offenders, rehabilitation, children and youth, and new arrivals. I really enjoy working with the students at Shue Yan who are full of energy. My motto is "Play hard and work hard!". I hope I can continue to share my knowledge on mental wellness with my students and my colleagues at Shue Yan.

### *Dr. Ben Liu : "My Journey in Social Work"*

Reflecting on my social work journey using the Life-course Theory yielded four themes: 1) Cohort: Currently in the middle adulthood, hoping to nurture and guide the future generations; 2) Life events: Studying social work, community medicine, behavioral science, and organizational psychology in Hong Kong and England from the mid-eighties to mid-noughties; 3) Trajectories: Practising social work to safeguard vulnerable adults and families, conducting gerontological research with mixed methods, and teaching master's and doctoral students; 4) Transitions: Following my dreams to teach social work in London in 2008 and now back to Shue Yan University to serve people in Hong Kong.



### *Mr. Kaiser Lo*



Dear all, it is my pleasure to meet you in Hong Kong Shue Yan University. Prior to joining Shue Yan in Aug. 2020, I worked in the rehabilitation field for over 25 years in NGOs providing mental health services, vocational rehabilitation and community-based rehabilitation services for people with disabilities. It is my honor to nurture our next generation of social workers, creating a new force to meet the future demand for social workers in our community. I look forward to working closely with students and colleagues through evidence-based practice.

### ***Mr. Anderson Yuen***

Hi all, I have worked in student development services for over 10 years! My earlier experience as a practitioner for 10 years also provided me with the opportunity to work in the field of mental rehabilitation, drug abuse and support for children with special education needs. I believe our younger generation is the future of our community. This is the reason why I am so honored to be a teaching staff of the Social Work Department at Shue Yan. I want to play my part in training our future leaders! I hope our students will be able to use their knowledge and skills and contribute towards building a just and equitable society for all.



## **< New Administrative Staff >**



### ***Mr. Jacky Chan***

Nice to meet you! I am Jacky Chan, but I am not related to the martial arts legend. I studied on the first ever Religion, Philosophy and Ethics program in Asia. I would like to share my favorite quote with you, do you know who said it? "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent."

### ***Miss Joyce Wong***

Hi everyone, I am the new administrative staff of the Department.  
 "The best things that happen are always unexpected".  
 Enjoy your school life because they're the best years of your life.





## Department of Social Work

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## WHAT'S THAT?

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