

Culture to Culture Foundation Chinese American Mental Health Scholarship 2007

Speech by Mimi Wong

Ladies and Gentlemen:

My name is Mimi Wong and I'm currently a 2nd year student in the Clinical Psychology PhD program at California School of Professional Psychology. I would like to thank the Culture and Culture foundation for their support of those of us who firmly believe in the importance of multicultural competency in the mental health field.

According to the National Center for Health Statistics in 1994, "women confronting the impact of immigration and acculturation reported a higher level of depression than those women without such conflicts. First generation immigrants seem especially prone to isolation as a result of the impact of acculturation. Having immigrated to the United States with my family when I was eight years old, I can truly understand the plight of the new immigrant and appreciate the challenges facing them and their loved ones. Unfortunately, many Chinese monolingual clients encounter difficulty in finding a mental health professional with bicultural and bilingual skills. The Culture-to-Culture Foundation recognizes this shortage in culturally competent mental health providers and has established the Chinese American Mental Health Scholarship program to encourage those with the necessary skills to enter the field.

My current practicum placement is at Richmond Area Multi-Services (RAMS), home to the National Asian American Psychology Training Center, recognized for their program strengths in cultural competency, particularly, in regards to working with Asian, Pacific Islander, and Russian-speaking minorities. Similar to the mission statement at Culture to Culture, they have a strong commitment "to providing community-based, consumer-guided, culturally competent and multilingual services" to the local community. My training at RAMS has helped me to further appreciate the impact that the immigration process has on an individual. In addition to issues of isolation and the lack of a social support network, as a result of acculturation, many new immigrants also experience difficulties such as family relationships, financial pressures, parenting, and academic performance. These issues can have both direct and indirect impact on their individual and family functioning. With appropriate interventions from a mental health provider who has the necessary bicultural skills, escalations of negative influences may be reduced.

With the support from organizations such as the Culture-to-Culture foundation and RAMS, I would like to continue to enhance my multicultural competency and to offer my services to the underprivileged, especially the Chinese American immigrants in my local community.