FROM THE INSTRUCTOR

Dave Sebastian completed my WR 150 course, "The Rhetoric of Freedom," in the spring of 2016 when he was a first-year student in the School of Communications. At the time, Dave was also a reporter for Boston University's *Daily Free Press*, where he evidently became comfortable as writer and curious as a researcher. A hallmark of Dave's work was his intellectual independence: for both of his research papers in Writing 150, he selected subjects that made sense within the thematic parameters of the course but that also required extensive research and reading beyond our syllabus. In my comments on Dave's first draft of the essay, I wrote, "This is a strong and promising draft! There is so much to admire here. From the intellectual independence you displayed in locating this worthwhile subject to your careful scholarship in well-chosen primary and secondary sources, this work is impressive." I did, however, urge Dave to provide greater help to readers unfamiliar with his subject, Madame Chiang Kai-Shek (Mayling Soong.) "You need," I wrote, "to explain more about her rise to prominence and her education and life." Dave acted on this advice—and the result was a final paper that was far more accessible to an educated but general audience. In the introduction to his final portfolio, Dave explained how much he learned from making the essay accessible to unknown readers—and how motivated he was to research his subject. "Through multiple drafts," Dave wrote, "I have learned how to introduce Madame Chiang, a complex figure, to unknowledgeable readers by writing a potent problem statement that includes a short biography of Madame Chiang. This skill of setting common ground with readers will be beneficial in my endeavors as a journalist, as I would need to be able to report on complex matters in an understandable language. Most notably, my passion for my essay subject is evident through my research: I spent nights at the library delving into books from the 1940s, analyzing the intricate yet stylistic rhetoric of Madame Chiang, who published numerous articles in the American media." A product of intellectual curiosity and careful library scholarship, Dave's essay models what students are capable of achieving when they are both independent intellectually and responsive to feedback on a draft.

Thomas Underwood
WR 150: The Rhetoric of Freedom in America

FROM THE WRITER

One may wonder how my China-related essay could correlate with the topic of "The Rhetoric of Freedom in America." The United States of America—whether through imperialism, trade, or religious missions—has spread its ideals across seas. Resulting from that unwavering influence, American rhetoric has not only been crafted by Americans themselves but also by those who are familiar with American thoughts. The American-educated Mayling Soong, who was the First Lady of the Republic of China, served an epitome of the West's entrenchment of ideals in the East. When I conducted my research, I could easily find Soong's rhetoric on library shelves and online—her rhetoric, both in speech and in writing, was widely publicized around the time of World War II, charming Westerners with her flawless English. But Madame Chiang Kai-shek, as Soong was popularly known, did not merely instill American values in her rhetoric; she strived to elevate China's position among nations, ameliorating prejudices against Chinese people in America. I believe Madame Chiang's rhetorical efforts can serve a lesson for today's prejudice-ridden America: One need not be of a particular race, nationality, or belief to excel.

DAVE SEBASTIAN ventures through words and adventures by slicing comma splices. He is a rising sophomore majoring in journalism in the College of Communication and also studying business administration. Born and raised in Jakarta, Indonesia, he spent six years at an all-boys' Catholic school and is fond of Asian history and politics. Aside from his "nerdy" predilections, he jogs by the Charles River and plays the trombone in his spare time. He would like to thank Dr. Marie McDonough, of WR 100, who taught him clarity in writing and guided him in transitioning to the American curriculum; Dr. Thomas Underwood, of WR 150, who allowed students to pen through unconventional essay topics; and Dr. Veronica Ellis, of COM CO 201, who elucidated grammar conventions in the clearest way possible.

DAVE SEBASTIAN

BATTLING AGAINST STIGMATIZED AMERICAN ORIENTALISM: AN ANALYSIS OF MAYLING SOONG CHIANG'S RHETORIC OF CHINESE PRINCIPLES

Various imprints of the Orient are palpable across the United States: its languages, its spiced cuisines, its Chinatowns. The prevalent Asian-American heritage in the American society further enhances America's image as a melting pot of cultures. Yet Asian culture did not integrate into America's cultural pot instantly. Asians, especially the Chinese, have been subject to blatant discriminations in the U.S. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, for instance, prohibited immigration of Chinese laborers into the U.S., claiming that such influx of foreign workers "endangers the good order of certain localities within the territory thereof."[1] Sixty-one years later, however, a petite Chinese woman donning a black *cheongsam* dress stood confidently before the U.S. Congress. "We in China, like you, want a better world, not for ourselves alone, but for all mankind, and we must have it," said the woman, Mayling Soong.[2] Born in 1898 in Shanghai to a wealthy Christian family and educated in America, Soong spoke fluent English with a thick American Southern accent. Being the First Lady of China through her marriage with Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, the leader of the Republic of China from 1927 to 1975, Soong was also popularly referred to as Madame Chiang Kai-shek. Her appearance before Congress was part of her 1943 U.S. tour, which aimed to garner American support for China's war against Japan in World War II. But most of Madame Chiang's rhetoric, which frequently echoed the principles of democracy, were merely publicity stunts, according to Christine Rosen, a fellow at the Ethics & Public Policy Center, in her article "China Doll: Madame Chiang and her times."[3] "Beloved by some and reviled by others, [Madame Chiang] always insists that her goal is to promote democracy, even though she is also clearly perfecting the art of promoting herself," Rosen wrote. Being "a political figure in her own right," Rosen argued, was Madame Chiang's utmost priority.[4] Nevertheless, Madame Chiang's prowess still contributed to the positive perception of the East in the West.

During the heyday of her popularity in the late 1930s to early 1940s, Madame Chiang ardently delivered speeches and wrote articles for both Chinese and international audiences. Having spent a decade of her formative years in the U.S., Madame Chiang had been familiar with Western thought—she briefly attended Wesleyan College in Georgia and studied English literature and philosophy at Wellesley College in Massachusetts. In May 1942, she wrote an essay for the *Atlantic* entitled "China Emergent," which starts by decrying the calamities of war, particularly the brutal

---

[1] "Transcript of Chinese Exclusion Act (1882)," *Our Documents* (website), accessed February 22, 2016, http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=47&page=transcript.

[2] Mayling Soong Chiang, "Soong Mei-Ling, 'Addresses To The House Of Representatives And To The Senate,' February 18, 1943," *US-China Institute* (website), USC US-China Institute, accessed February 21, 2016, http://china.usc.edu/soong-mei-ling-"addresses-house-respresentatives-and-senate"-february-18-1943.

[3] Christine Rosen, "China Doll: Madame Chiang and her times," *The Weekly Standard* 12, no. 28 (2007): 33, accessed February 22, 2016, http://search.proquest.com/docview/233001502?accountid=9676.

[4] Rosen, "China Doll," 33.

exploitation of China by Japan.[5] In asserting China's equality among nations, she condemned past exploitations of China by Western countries. She recalled the Qing Dynasty, the monarchy that ruled China before the Republican government's revolutionary foundation in 1912, powerlessly yielding to Western countries' demands of opening five trading ports—Shanghai, Canton, Ningpo, Fuchow, and Amoy—where they enjoyed extraterritorial rights. "America and Britain have already shown their consciousness of error by voluntarily offering to abrogate the iniquitous system of extraterritoriality that denied China her inherent right to equality with other nations," Madame Chiang wrote.[6] She then denounced unjust systems, such as unfair wealth distribution, that prevailed globally; however, she stressed the Chinese people's reluctance to pursue communism, relating it to authoritarianism and the absolutism of the single-party system. "China," Madame Chiang dubbed, "is the Columbus of democracy," as popular vote conferred power upon three Chinese emperors in the ancient times, long before the rise of Western democratic thought.[7] Madame Chiang stated that the Republic of China pursues a kind of socialism embedded with democratic principles through the Three Principles of the People *(San Min Chu I)*, a set of ideologies—Nationalism, People's Rights, and People's Livelihood—coined by the country's founder, Sun Yat-sen. The Three Principles of the People, the First Lady asserted, "is no mere pale reflection of Western socialism."[8] Although she admitted that Chinese democracy "will undoubtedly be influenced by the Jeffersonian views of equality of opportunity and the rights of the individual," the Chinese system will not merely imitate that of America's and will serve China's needs and traditions.[9] Madame Chiang concluded that upon the Allied Powers' victory in World War II, there should be peaceful governance of people of all races.

Responding to Madame Chiang's rhetorical products, such as "China Emergent," Rosen deemed Madame Chiang's promotion of democracy "yet another irony of history."[10] Rosen argued that Madame Chiang's emphasis on democratic ideals is misleading, as Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek's regime was, in reality, repressive and autocratic. Led by the Generalissimo, the Nationalist Party was, in effect, the sole political party of China, as the Generalissimo had been striving to rid the Chinese Communist Party[11]—the reality contradicts Madame Chiang's disagreement over the single-party system in "China Emergent." Despite these rhetorical inaccuracies, Rosen's absolute dismissal of the Chinese First Lady's war efforts is overgeneralized. Rosen overlooked the palpable aspect of Madame Chiang's rhetoric: the assertion of China's equality among other nations amid stigmatized perceptions of the Orient, especially in America.

Since the 18th century, China has been a popular trading partner for Western nations. In the early 1800s, Warren Delano, an American trader who would later be the grandfather of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, stationed himself in Canton and garnered immense wealth. During his decade in China, Delano witnessed the Qing Dynasty succumbing to Western demands, such as the ceding of Hong Kong Island to Great Britain. Most notably, he was never interested in learning the country's culture and customs. Delano believed that China was a "pitiful, drug-addicted, backward pagan mess of a place," noted historical nonfiction author James Bradley in *The China Mirage*.[12]

---

[5] Mayling Soong Chiang, "China emergent," in *We Chinese Woman: Speeches and Writings During the First United Nations Year* (New York: The John Day Company, 1943), 28.
[6] Chiang, "China emergent," 28.
[7] Ibid., 30.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid., 34.
[10] Rosen, "China Doll," 35.
[11] Ibid., 34.
[12] James Bradley, *The China Mirage* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2015), 28.

Correspondingly, China viewed itself as the most righteous, deeming Westerners as "barbarians." Delano, in accordance with the prevailing trend at that time, wished for Western traders to "[have] Christianized and westernized enclaves [in China] where they could conduct themselves as they wished, under their own rules," Bradley recounted.[13] His wish was supported by American missionaries, who had built schools and churches in China, hoping to Americanize and Christianize the Chinese.

When Madame Chiang addressed the international community, she was the quintessential representation of the "Christianized and westernized" China. Charmed by Madame Chiang, who encapsulated President Roosevelt's grandfather's vision of China, the U.S. showered China with billions of dollars of war support from 1941 to 1945. However, in garnering support for her country, Madame Chiang did not simply showcase China as an Americanized nation; she stressed that the "China" she represented was not the same imperial dynasty that caved in disgracefully to Western exploitation, but a revived nation that embodies its inherent democratic values. "Any governmental policy in China ought to take cognizance of the all-important fact that we are an agricultural nation,"[14] wrote Madame Chiang in "China Emergent." She mentioned that under Republican China, the Chinese people have advanced toward better standards, such as accessibility to education, shelter, and hygiene. In practice, according to Rosen, such standards were not met due to the Generalissimo's corrupt and polarized government. Nevertheless, Madame Chiang, together with her husband, made efforts to revive the Chinese people's mentality. In 1934, Generalissimo and Madame Chiang launched the Chinese people's guidebook of social renewal entitled the *New Life Movement*, which revived the ancient Chinese virtues of etiquette *(Li)*, justice *(I)*, integrity *(Lien)*, and respect *(Chih)*. Written before the Japanese aggression in China, the guidebook aimed to reinvigorate the Chinese people's spirit after years of domestic unrest due to warlordism, wrote Madame Chiang in her book "China Shall Rise Again," which included a summary of the *New Life Movement*.[15] The guidebook , Madame Chiang explained, aims "to satisfy both psychological and physical needs," such as cleanliness and the promotion of cooperation.[16] These practical standards might have been influenced by Madame Chiang's education in America and Christian upbringing; she might have been appalled by the sight of Chinese people being "benumbed, impoverished, and reduced to beggary."[17] Other than reminding citizens of their "individual and collective rights, duties, and responsibilities," the *New Life Movement* also strived to repel undemocratic legacies of Imperial China under Manchu (Qing Dynasty) rule. "[T]he off-setting of the inertia caused by hundreds of years of Manchu misrule which, by excluding the masses from participation in State affairs and administration, killed national consciousness and produced an apathy calamitous to national progress and well-being," Madame Chiang declared.[18] Through her rhetoric, Madame Chiang appealed to the democratic world that China embodies its own unique democratic values, which have similarities to Western thought but are not merely replicas of Western ideals.

Through her performance as a vocal and astute first lady, Madame Chiang exposed to the world a distinct persona of Chinese women. Madame Chiang's traits as a political leader's wife were similar to those of American first ladies, such as President Woodrow Wilson's wife, Ellen Wilson, who advocated for social causes, and President Warren Harding's wife, Florence Harding, who

---

13 Bradley, *"The China Mirage,"* 23.
14 Chiang, "China emergent," 29.
15 Mayling Soong Chiang, *China Shall Rise Again* (New York and London: Harpers & Brothers Publishers, 1941), 287.
16 Chiang, *"China Shall Rise Again,"* 288.
17 Ibid., 287.
18 Ibid., 288.

spoke frequently in public, noted Daniel Paul Lintin in his University of Minnesota dissertation.[19] Other traits of U.S. first ladies, such as "overt support of their husbands' administrative policies" and "working with the media," were also embodied by Madame Chiang. Lintin wrote that "[b]ecause of similar efforts on her part, Madame Chiang Kai-shek was hailed in the United States as the First Lady of China."[20] In 1929, two years after her marriage with the Generalissimo, Madame Chiang spoke in an interview with British Movietone News, mentioning how Chinese women "have lived a more or less sheltered life."[21] The First Lady said that Chinese women had been effacing themselves by being dutiful wives and wise mothers. However, inspired by Sun Yat-sen's Three Principles of the People, Chinese women had begun to gain economic and political liberty, she said. "[T]he women themselves have been quick to realize that with this new privilege, they must fit themselves for their new responsibilities,"[22] said Madame Chiang. Thus, it may be true that Madame Chiang may have striven to become a prominent political figure apart from her husband, as Rosen argued. Yet despite her supposed motives, Madame Chiang had nonetheless ameliorated the stigma towards Chinese culture in the West through her rhetoric.

In her 1943 U.S. tour, Madame Chiang also underlined the Chinese people's persistence amid Japanese ruthless aggression. Madame Chiang, who was invited to the U.S. by President Roosevelt, clearly had the objective of garnering financial and military support for her country. Even so, she maintained China's position as equal among other nations instead of desperately kowtowing to Western demands. Lintin wrote that "[t]hrough her rhetorical actions, both in word and deed, Madame Chiang demonstrated her intense belief in democracy and her commitment to a future democratic system in China."[23] Madame Chiang charmed her American audience by showcasing her familiarity with the American people. In her speech before the U.S. Congress, Madame Chiang used the beginning "Let us" in an anaphoric manner for four times, all of which condemn Japanese atrocities; such rhetorical device is also used in the U.S. Declaration of Independence's indictment—and later in Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech in 1963. "Let us not forget that during the first four and a half years of total aggression China has borne Japan's sadistic fury unaided and alone," said Madame Chiang. She further projected her familiarity with the American people by recollecting her American education and praising America as "the cauldron of democracy" and "the incubator of democratic principles."[24] Then, she conjoined her ideological references with those of China's, such as Sun Yat-sen's encouragement for "the fortitude to carry on."[25] In essence, she emphasized China's equal standing among nations by underlining the importance of cooperation. "Since international interdependence is now so universally recognized, can we not also say that all nations should become members of one corporate body?" Madame Chiang inquired, reiterating the 1942 Declaration of United Nations by the Allies of World War II, which China had been part of. With that being said, she appealed for Congress to help China in its war efforts against Japanese aggression, stating that the Allies should not easily succumb to mere convenient solutions at the cost of the failure to bring peace. "We shall have faith that, at the writing of peace, America and our other gallant Allies will not be obtunded by the mirage of contingent

---

[19] Daniel Paul Lintin, "From First Lady to Dragonlady: A Rhetorical Study of Madame Chiang's Public Personae Before and During Her 1943 U.S. Tour" (PhD diss., University of Minnesota, 2001), 112.
[20] Lintin, "From First Lady to Dragonlady," 112.
[21] British Movietone. "President of China," *British Movietone* video, 2:56, July 29, 1929, http://www.aparchive.com/metadata/youtube/961012ace2f1444a9d564dc5407e1454.
[22] British Movietone.
[23] Lintin, "From First Lady to Dragonlady," 213.
[24] Chiang, "Addresses."
[25] Ibid.

reasons of expediency,"[26] Madame concluded. As she brought home full-fledged American support, Madame Chiang also implanted China's revived image on American soil.

The Republic of China government under Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek may have been riddled with considerable shortcomings: its corruption, its nepotism, its failure to actualize its demagogic rhetoric. The Chinese people themselves had been outraged by Chiang's unjust regime—following the Chinese Communists' victory in the Chinese Civil War, Generalissimo and Madame, with the entire Nationalist government, relocated to the island of Taiwan in 1949, never to set foot again on mainland China. Nevertheless, Mayling Soong's rhetoric, especially during World War II, contributed toward the correction of Westerners' misperceptions of China—nine months after Madame Chiang's Congress speech, President Roosevelt repealed the Chinese Exclusion Act, regarding the gesture as "a manifestation on the part of the American people of their affection and regard."[27] Rosen's dismissal of Madame Chiang's contributions as "an irony of history" belittles the struggles of the Chinese people in acquiring a valid position on the world stage. Mayling Soong's rhetoric serves a symbol of the Orient's desire to thrive among and beyond the Western world.

---

[26] Ibid.

[27] Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Statement on Signing the Bill to Repeal the Chinese Exclusion Laws," *The American Presidency Project* (website), The American Presidency Project, accessed March 3, 2016, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=16354.

WORKS CITED

"Our Documents – Chinese Exclusion Act (1882)." *Our Documents*. May 6, 1882. http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=47&page=transcript.

Bradley, James. *The China Mirage*. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2015.

British Movietone. "President of China." *British Movietone* video, 2:56. July 29, 1929. http://www.aparchive.com/metadata/youtube/961012ace2f1444a9d564dc5407e1454.

Chiang, Mayling Soong. "China emergent." In *We Chinese Woman: Speeches and Writings During the First United Nations Year,* 28–34. New York: The John Day Company, 1943.

---. "Soong Mei-Ling, 'Addresses To The House Of Representatives And To The Senate,' February 18, 1943." *US-China Institute*. February 18, 1943. http://china.usc.edu/soong-mei-ling-"addresses-house-respresentatives-and-senate"-february-18-1943.

---. *China Shall Rise Again*. New York and London: Harpers & Brothers Publishers, 1941.

Lintin, Daniel Paul, "From First Lady to Dragonlady: A Rhetorical Study of Madame Chiang's Public Personae Before and During Her 1943 U.S. Tour." PhD dissertation, University of Minnesota, 2001.

Roosevelt, Franklin D. "Statement on Signing the Bill to Repeal the Chinese Exclusion Laws." *The American Presidency Project*. December 17, 1943. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=16354.

Rosen, Christine. "China Doll: Madame Chiang and her times," *The Weekly Standard* 12, no. 28 (2007): 33–36. Accessed February 22, 2016, http://search.proquest.com/docview/233001502?accountid=9676.