

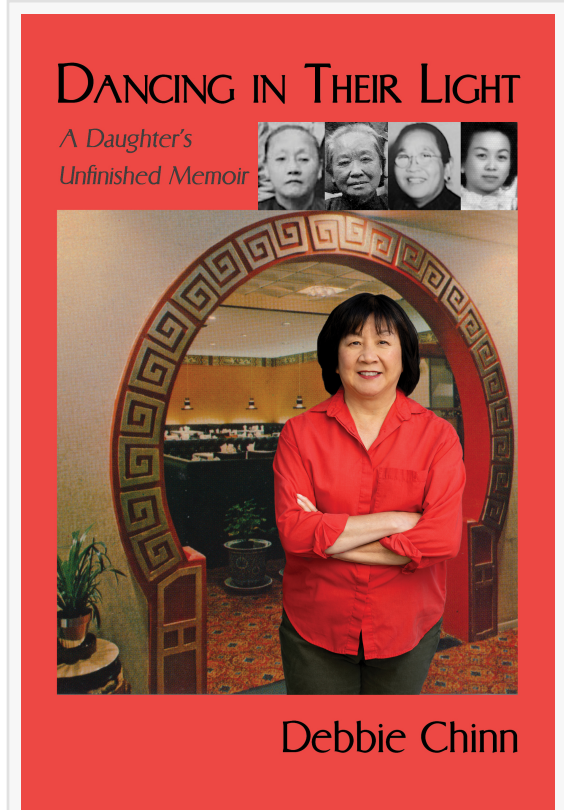
# New Book "Dancing in Their Light" Brings to Life the Golden Age of "Polynesian" Floor Shows in the 1960s and 70s

*Arts & Cultural Leader Debbie Chinn Publishes Moving and Illuminating Memoir about Her Family's Chinese Immigrant Experiences in Long Island, New York.*

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA, USA, September 15, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- While other children enjoyed sleepovers, summer camps, and sports activities growing up, [Debbie Chinn](#)'s childhood in Syosset, New York, was spent at The House of Mah Jong, her family's Chinese restaurant. She entered the workforce at the age of three, selling cigarettes, and by six, was promoted to inserting umbrellas into cherries and pineapple slices for an assortment of exotic drinks while sitting on a bar stool. As the family business grew in popularity and fame, she was thrust into the land of the South Seas as the restaurant evolved into a Polynesian nightclub with floor shows, a ubiquitous dining experience in the 1960's and 70's. Chinn became an exotic hula and sword dancer performing weekly at nights after a full day at middle school and then high school.

All of this and much more is brought to vivid life in Chinn's new book - [Dancing in Their Light](#): A Daughter's Unfinished Memoir (available everywhere books are sold) - which traces the author's lineage back 13 generations and features more than [170 rare family photos](#). It includes the fascinating story of Chinn's great-grandmother (born c.1850) who, as a young child, was discovered in a church lying next to her deceased mother. They were fleeing the Taiping Rebellion (1851-1864) in Peking, China, making their way to Shanghai. The first of many twists of family fate arose when a Southern Baptist missionary rescued and adopted her, and named her Mary Hartwell.

The book also sheds light on how Chinn found her calling and - after moving to the San Francisco



The book captures the era of "Polynesian" nightclubs with floor shows in the 1960s and 70s, and traces the author's lineage back 13 generations with more than 170 rare family photos.

/ Bay Area - has built a distinguished, 30-year career as an arts activist, a non-profit consultant, and CEO - leading some of the country's most renowned cultural institutions and their programs and championing equity and inclusion. A business philosophy long modeled by her father - long before the emergence of the DEI acronym.

"In their quest to assimilate in the United States," says Chinn, "my parents stressed a strong work ethic, fanatical hospitality, relationship-building, supporting organizations in the community, and always taking care of others. It was a family ethos that is known today as philanthropy."



Chinn tells the story of her great-grandmother (born c.1850) who, as a young child, was discovered in a church lying next to her deceased mother. A Southern Baptist missionary rescued and adopted her, naming her Mary Hartwell (2nd Row, 2nd from right).

Adding to her long list of accomplishments in the arts and cultural world, on August 25, Chinn was named executive director of TheaterWorks Silicon Valley in Palo Alto, California. Over the past 25 years, she has held a series of C-suite positions as executive director of Opera Parallèle at the Carmel Bach Festival, and as managing director of California Shakespeare Theater, Baltimore's Center Stage, Shakespeare Theater of New Jersey, and, most recently, of Anna Deavere Smith Projects.

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*Debbie Chinn - author,  
advocate, arts & cultural  
leader*

She also has served on the boards of the San Francisco Community Music Center, Playwrights Foundation, the Chinese Cultural Center of San Francisco, and more recently as Board President of Theater Bay Area.

For more information about Debbie Chinn, *Dancing in Their Light* and her non-profit leadership work, visit her website.

To request a review copy of the book and/or to arrange an interview with the author, please contact Scott Busby / [scottb@thebusbygroup.com](mailto:scottb@thebusbygroup.com) / 310.600.7645

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