

Directed, Produced, & Edited by
CANDY CHAN

Produced by
ROBERT SPARKS

春 蕾
SPRING BUD

No Winter Lasts Forever

Press Kit



春蕾
SPRING BUD

Title: SPRING BUD

Genre: Documentary

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Format: Digital video

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Presented by: Self-Help for the Elderly

Production Company: Sifu Productions (HK) Limited

Languages: Mandarin, English

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春蕾

SPRING BUD

LOGLINE

Through the power of education, one woman's vision transforms the lives of a thousand girls in China's rural Shaanxi Province.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Not worth it. Not a boy. These ideas are deeply ingrained in Chinese girls. But one woman had the vision and determination to use education to change this mindset and transform the lives of a thousand girls in rural China.

LONG SYNOPSIS

SPRING BUD is a short documentary about a woman's quest to tackle deep-rooted cultural injustices against girls and how she uses education as the tool to empower one thousand girls in China's rural Shaanxi Province.

In 1986, China implemented the "Compulsory Education Law" to provide nine years of free education. However, while the education was free, learning materials such as books and workbooks were not. Many rural families could not afford this extra expense. And if they were forced to choose between educating a daughter or a son, the choice was clear: educate the boys.

In early 2000, more than 280,000 girls in Shaanxi Province did not attend school because their families could not afford these supplemental fees. Bay Area Chinese American philanthropist Rosalyn C. Koo (Roz) launched the Spring Bud project to help some of the girls return to school. Her plan was to sponsor these recipients for the duration of their education, roughly 15 years, to give the girls a real chance at success. The project ended after the girls had graduated.

Several years later, the story returns to Xian, China to check the progress of several Spring Bud recipients, many of whom have graduated from colleges and are forging ahead in their careers. Expressing a deep gratitude for Roz and the opportunities her program had brought, these young women are leading their communities and making positive changes. They are inspiring the next generation of girls, showing them that education can change the future.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT



Director Candy Chan

I was born in Hong Kong where the culture focuses on learning, and education seemed a given to me. The Chinese culture looks to Confucius as a model of behavior – so I thought improving the mind was an obvious expectation.

When I decided to study in the States, my parents fully supported me even though they barely could afford my tuition. They themselves didn't have much opportunity for further education, but it was their dream for their children to achieve academic success and they considered it a worthwhile sacrifice to finance my education as well as for all my brothers.

I took this attitude for granted, thinking it was about the importance of education, not realizing how many parents would quickly forgo educating their daughters to pave a path for their sons, if that financial choice were necessary. But this dire scenario is a reality for many girls who dream of going to school but will never get a chance because their families are too poor or would prefer to funnel all resources into bettering their sons.

I wanted to make a documentary to show girls deserve a chance at education, just as boys do. I admired Roz's longer-term commitment to help 1,000 disadvantaged girls from rural Shaanxi,

not just for one year, but for 14-15 years of support. She herself escaped the cruel ways of Chinese culture (feet-binding) and recognized her good fortune in acquiring an education while some of her contemporaries did not. In turn, she wanted to give girls an opportunity. Like Roz, I am fortunate my parents not only loved but valued me – my story could have taken a different turn.

When I traveled to Xian for production, I met several of the Spring Bud project's participants. These girls and their families had endured so much financial hardship in their villages. Each girl told me similar stories of how much they loved learning, the devastation they felt when they could not go to school because their families were too poor or had decided to send their brothers instead. But for them, Roz changed their trajectory from a dismal, bleak existence to a future with hope and empowerment. You could sense the girls' outpouring of love and deep appreciation for her.

Although the Spring Bud project has ended, I wanted the film to serve as a tribute to Roz who had transformed these lives and to inspire others to help educate girls around the world.

ABOUT SPRING BUD PROJECT

Though a nine-year compulsory education from elementary to junior high school has been implemented by China's government since the 1950s, education funding is limited and varies between provinces. Parents must still pay a small, supplemental fee for books and other expenses such as transportation, food, and heating. But this extra fee is out of reach for many rural families, as they often must choose between basic necessities and education.

In the early 2000s, more than 280,000 girls in Shaanxi Province did not go to school due to poverty and the culture's deeply embedded gender bias. Although Rosalyn Koo realized that she could not fully remedy the problem for even one province, she believed that enabling 1,000 girls in one province to finish primary school could have a significant impact. In 2001, Koo and a group of philanthropists selected 1,000 girls from 44 poor rural villages in Shaanxi Province of China and started the girls' life-changing journey at 4th grade in 22 primary schools. She and the 1990 Institute, a non-profit organization she co-founded to support girls' education in China, took on an impossible mission. At an annual cost of 400 yuan per student, Koo had to raise at least 1.2 million yuan (about \$150,000) each year. She didn't just give scholarships to these girls, she would put together trips

for the American sponsors to travel to China to meet the girls, hold graduation ceremonies for them, mentor them, and monitor their progress. Koo's goals were to provide rural girls with vocational skills to become economically independent and change the mindset of the local population regarding girls and education. When they graduated, the girls would go out and pay it forward, helping the next generation of girls to value education and work toward independence.

It was estimated that Koo and a handful of supporters had raised \$2M USD over 17 years.

All 1,000 Spring Bud participants finished junior high. Half of the girls graduated from high school. 200 of them completed vocational training. 178 Spring Bud participants received college degrees. The first group graduated from college in 2014.

Since the project's inception, Koo and the sponsors have always supported and continue to mentor the Spring Bud girls. Spring Bud recipients now live all over China. The project's U.S. sponsors set up an Alumnae Association to keep in touch with the girls. Although the Spring Bud Project has ended, Koo, even in her 90s, continues to keep in touch with and support them in any way she can.

PRODUCTION STILLS



Photo Credit: Courtesy of Self-Help for the Elderly

Still 1: In the early 2000s, more than 280,000 girls in Shaanxi Province didn't go to school due to poverty and the culture's deeply embedded gender bias.



Photo Credit: Courtesy of Qin Qin Li

Still 2: Qin Qin Li's parents could only afford to send either her brother or her to school.



Photo Credit: Courtesy of Self-Help for the Elderly

Still 3: Roz Koo (second from right) co-founded the 1990 Institute in the United States to support girls' education in China.

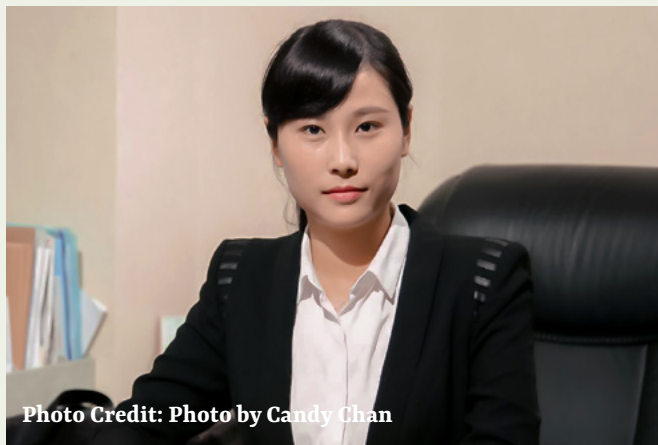


Photo Credit: Photo by Candy Chan

Still 4: Spring Bud Project allowed participants like Qin Qin Li to further her education and become a lawyer in Shaanxi Province.

PRODUCTION STILLS



Photo Credit: Courtesy of Rosalyn Koo

Still 5: In the late 1940s, Roz Koo moved to the United States from China and later earned a degree in economics from the University of California, Berkeley.



Photo Credit: Photo by Candy Chan

Still 6: Third-grade teacher and Spring Bud participant Zhen Wang (first from left) aims to empower the young children through a solid elementary education.



Photo Credit: Photo by Candy Chan

Still 7: Spring Bud participant Dan Ning Ma becomes a kindergarten principal to help impoverished children succeed.



Photo Credit: Courtesy of Self-Help for the Elderly

Still 8: In 2012, Roz Koo was surrounded by Spring Bud Project participants who had enrolled in college.

BIOS

Candy Chan

Director/Producer/Editor

SPRING BUD (春蕾) is Candy's directorial debut. She recently directed and edited a 50-minute documentary, MOUNT DAVIS: FROM CITADEL TO CAMPUS (摩星嶺下), that explores the history and stories about the site where the University of Chicago's new campus in Hong Kong is situated. Candy also has worked with Oscar-winning filmmaker Ruby Yang on multiple documentaries, including the feature, MY VOICE, MY LIFE (爭氣), which The Wall Street Journal (Chinese Edition) called one of the "five most essential films" to come out of Hong Kong in 2014. Candy also worked as associate producer on Ruby's 2016 short documentary, IN SEARCH OF PERFECT CONSONANCE (尋找完美第五度) and the 2018 mid-length feature RITOMA (仁多瑪).

Robert Sparks

Producer

Robert is a director, writer and producer who splits his time between Los Angeles, Hong Kong and China. He has spent the last decade active in the Hong Kong film industry, working with such talents as Stephen Chow, Johnnie To and Benny Chan. Robert has an ongoing partnership with RUSH HOUR producer Arthur Sarkissian. Together, they recently produced ODIIOUS, which Robert directed.

Self-Help For The Elderly

Presenter

Originally created as a "War on Poverty" program, Self-Help for the Elderly began serving seniors in San Francisco's Chinatown community in 1966. A non-profit organization, Self-Help for the Elderly now serves over 40,000 seniors each year in San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara and Alameda counties, providing comprehensive range of multicultural and multilingual services.

Sifu Productions (HK) Limited

Production Company

Sifu Productions (HK) Limited is a Hong Kong-based independent production company that produces documentary and feature projects. It produced director Candy Chan's SPRING BUD (春蕾) and MOUNT DAVIS: FROM CITADEL TO CAMPUS (摩星嶺下).

PRODUCTION

- Filmed in October 2017 in Xian, Shaanxi Province, China
- Editing and post production took place in Hong Kong



- A special screening was held at the Scottish Rite Masonic Center in San Francisco on July 28, 2018. Attendees include (pictured from left) Anni Chung, Rosalyn Koo (Roz), Qin Qin Li, Candy Chan and Hong Wang.

For screening and public performance license inquiry, please contact:

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