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Bill Schlotter

UCSB’s California Ethnic and Multicultural Archives Acquire Papers of Noted Asian American Writer-Dramatist Frank Chin

The manuscripts, letters, unpublished scripts, and other papers of Frank Chin, one of America's foremost Asian American writers, have been obtained by the California Ethnic and Multicultural Archives, based at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

Chin, a native Californian and a graduate of UCSB, is the author of "The Chickencoop Chinaman," the first play authored by an Asian American to be produced on a New York stage. He has also written other plays, novels, short stories, documentaries, and literary criticism. He is one of the founders of San Francisco's highly acclaimed Asian American Theater Workshop, now the Asian American Theater Company, which just celebrated its 30th anniversary. The papers of the AATC are also preserved by CEMA.

"By making my papers available to the public, I hope that my efforts to treat knowledge of Asia and America as equally important will be seen and used," Chin said. " Asian American writing in 2003 is still undeveloped, pre-literate, and pre-literary.

I hope that my collection of research, letters and experimental manuscripts will stimulate a more traditional study of Asian American literature, beginning with an introduction to the Asian children's stories shared by China, Korea, and Japan since pre-historic times, and the vernacular novels developed to spread Chinese heroic tradition of the Ming, as a conscious expression of the myth of civilization throughout Asia."

CEMA director Sal Guerena and UCSB Asian American studies librarian Gerardo Colmenar said the Chin Papers – 45 boxes of them – will be an important resource to literary researchers.

"This unique collection will provide Asian American scholars and other researchers with a rich source of primary materials of paramount importance to a deeper understanding of the complex nature of cultural and literary production by Asian Americans," Colmenar said. "We anticipate this collection will bring many researchers to UCSB."

Chin received a bachelor's degree in English from UCSB in 1965.

His other plays include "The Year of the Dragon," "Gee, Pop!," "Chinatown Mortuary," and "Oofty, Goofty."

His non-theatrical writing includes the novels "Donald Duk," and "Gunga Din Highway," and a book of short stories, "The Chinaman Pacific & Frisco R.R. Co."

He also was a co-editor of "Aiiieeeee!: An Anthology of Asian American Writers" and "The Big Aiiieeeee! An Anthology of Chinese American and Japanese American Literature."

He has taught Asian American history and is the founder of the Los Angeles-based East/West Players.

The California Ethnic and Multicultural Archives is a permanent program founded in 1988 and is part of the University Libraries' Department of Special Collections. Its collections document the lives and activities of the State's major ethnic groups.

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