



Shattered Identity and Marketing Femininity: The Changing Experiences of Women during China's Economic Modernization

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YJean Chambers Hall, Student Union & Library, 3rd Floor
Purdue University Calumet
Hammond, Indiana

About the Presentation

The economic modernization in China during the last three decades has engendered phenomenal changes in women's lives. While generating unprecedented opportunities for some women in terms of education and occupational choices, it has also created significant challenges and dilemmas for others by resurrecting some traditional cultural concepts and practices. China's economic reforms have arguably contributed to the polarization of women in that they have given rise to an increasing divide between educated, professional women and their working-class counterparts as well as between urban women and their rural counterparts. There is no longer a common denominator that underscores the collective experiences of Chinese women; instead, their identity has by and large been shattered by the waves of modernization.

This presentation contends that one of the ironies of China's modernization lies in the fact that many working-class women have seen their legally stipulated rights compromised, if not deprived, during the process of modernization, especially in the areas of employment and social security that had been all but guaranteed during the Maoist era. It concludes that that convergence of China's Confucian tradition, communist ideology and the growing commercial culture during the country's socioeconomic transition has created a peculiar set of circumstances, which have in turn contributed to the increasing economic inequality and social disparity among Chinese women.

About the Speaker



Yi Sun is an associate professor of history at the University of San Diego, teaching primarily East Asian history and U.S.-Asia Relations. She has published a number of articles on women in contemporary China, Sino-American relations and China's economic reforms. She has co-authored a book on the changing historical experiences of Chinese Americans in the U.S. and is currently completing her manuscript tentatively entitled *Confucianism, Communism and Commercialism -- Mapping the Changing Political Culture and Women's Rights in Contemporary China*. She is also serving as the director of the Asian Studies Program at her university as well as the associate editor of the Asian section for the *Journal of Third World Studies*, a peer-reviewed journal with world-wide circulation.

RSVP: Kris Mihalic, 219-989-2393 or kmihalic@calumet.purdue.edu by 4:30 p.m., October 23, 2009.