

Niamh Hartley

Jung Chang is a bestselling author originally from Chengdu, China and was an English-language student at Sichuan university (1). Her book, *Wild Swans – Three Daughters of China*, tells the tale of three generations of Chinese women during the rise and fall of Mao. According to *Asian Wall Street Journal*, it is the most read book about China and Chinese history. Jung Chang came to the University of York in 1978 and obtained a PhD in Linguistics in 1982 (2). She was the first person from the People's Republic of China to receive a doctorate from a British University (3). Growing up during the Cultural Revolution meant Chang worked as a peasant, a "barefoot" doctor, a steelworker and an electrician (4).

After travelling to the UK and experiencing how different the two cultures were, Jung Chang was inspired to tell her and her family's stories. In relation to her time spend studying abroad, Chang expressed her surprise; "to keep an open mind was a bombshell" (5). Although this could relate to the environment in communist China, it also shows how her time in a different country was able to give her a new perspective on the world.

By reflecting on her past and wanting to educate people on the history of China she wrote her family history in *Wild Swans*. By coming to England for her PhD, she could educate people on her country, opening the communication across cultures and countries.

Furthermore, her book has been translated into more than 30 languages (6). This is an extreme example of how studying abroad can help connect cultures and allow different nationalities to empathise with each other. Empathy can lead to the respect of other cultures and traditions which can reduce prejudice.

Jung Chang has continued to work in the UK following her doctorate at the University of York; publishing more books related to Mao and communist China alongside her English husband.

Jung Chang has inspired me to seek out countries with drastically different cultures to learn from and experience them first-hand. Studying abroad immersed Jung Chang into the life of a York student and inspired her to tell her story for the world to listen. She is now a bestselling author and has an honorary fellowship at SOAS University of London (7).

1. <http://www.jungchang.net/biography>

2. <https://www.york.ac.uk/news-and-events/events/public-lectures/summer-2012/jung-chang>

3. <https://www.londonspeakerbureauasia.com/speakers/jung-chang/>

4. Chang, Jung Wild Swans – Three daughters of China; Harper Collins, 1991

5. <https://www.yorkpress.co.uk/news/9768663.how-york-study-gave-writer-an-open-minded-bombshell/>

6. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2005/may/26/biography.china>