

## THE HISTORY OF THE ORIENTAL HOME (1888–1942)

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Long before 1888, when the Woman's Missionary Society (WMS) of the Methodist Church established the Chinese Girls' Rescue Home (later renamed the Oriental Home) in Victoria, British Columbia, child prostitution existed as a "Chinese Problem" in local Chinatowns.<sup>1</sup> In the late nineteenth century, child prostitutes were in great demand for the "flesh trade" that thrived in North American Chinatowns. At the time, Chinese immigrants were discouraged from bringing their wives and families to North America. This created a great demand for child prostitutes to be brought from China to North America. Consequently, human trafficking of these "Chinese slave girls" or "yellow slaves" plagued cities along the west coast, notably from San Francisco, California in the United States up to Victoria, British Columbia in Canada.

When the founder of the Oriental Home, John Endicott Vrooman Gardner (1863–1943),<sup>2</sup> came from San Francisco to Victoria as an interpreter for a Chinese trial, he was shocked to see the plight of child prostitutes and established the Chinese

1. The Woman's Missionary Society of the United Church of Canada, *7th Annual Report*, 54. Based on this report, Gardner began to rescue child prostitutes in Victoria more than two years before the establishment of the Home. Henceforth, The Woman's Missionary Society of the United Church of Canada will be abbreviated as WMSUCC. See also Ikebuchi, *Slave Girls*, 4, 11. Ikebuchi argues the actual rescue work began in 1886.

2. Osterhout, *Oriental in Canada*, 76; Ngai, *The Lucky Ones*, 250. Gardner was a direct descendant of a Presbyterian missionary. He used his stepfather's name, Vrooman, to work in America, but he was known as Gardner or Gardiner after he arrived in Canada. See FamilySearch, "Personal Details."

Girls' Rescue Home under the auspices of the WMS in 1888.<sup>3</sup> Chinese girls who lived at the Home were eventually joined by Japanese children and women whom the matron, Miss Kate Morgan, began to take in for safekeeping and education.<sup>4</sup> Later, the Home residents also included Japanese "picture brides" who experienced marital problems with their husbands with whom they had been matched for arranged marriages after having only exchanged photographs.<sup>5</sup> To reflect this broader undertaking, the Chinese Girls' Rescue Home was renamed the Oriental Home in 1909.<sup>6</sup> The Home came under the auspices of the United Church of Canada when the Methodists merged with the Presbyterians and the Congregationalists in 1925; however, it closed down after the Japanese girls were forced to relocate in 1942 due to internment.<sup>7</sup>

Combining the voices of Chinese and Japanese residents at the Oriental Home and the archival data of the WMS of the Methodist Church (later the United Church) will give us a more accurate picture of the Oriental Home. A reading of residents' first-hand accounts reveals that the Home's strategies for combating prostitution and domestic violence relied on inter-

3. Whiteley, *Life and Letters*, 66; *The Christian Guardian*, 7 January 1885, 11; "Home Saved Hundreds," *The Victoria Times-Colonist*. The *Victoria Times-Colonist* article is available at the Vancouver United Church Archives as well as online at Proquest.com.

4. The Woman's Missionary Society of the Methodist Church of Canada, *14th Annual Report*, 23. The Home accepted a Japanese girl, Mitsi (Mitsu) Kassawan, for the very first time. Henceforth, The Woman's Missionary Society of the Methodist Church of Canada will be abbreviated as WMSMCC. See also WMSMCC, *16th Annual Report*, lxi. Morgan reported there were two Japanese boarding houses at her time.

5. WMSMCC, *24th Annual Report*, lxxxiv. Japanese picture brides were detained at the Home by the immigration officials for fear of catching contagious diseases. See also WMSMCC, *34th Annual Report*, xc. The Immigration officials stopped sending Japanese picture brides to the Home in that year.

6. WMSMCC, *29th Annual Report*, lxxi-lxxiii. The Home was still called the Chinese Girls' Home in the *28th Annual Report* of 1908-1909 on 31 August 1909.

7. WMSUCC, *1st Annual Report*, 189; Airhart, *Church with the Soul*, xviii; WMSUCC, *18th Annual Report*, 121.

cultural contact between Anglo-Canadian female missionaries and the Chinese and Japanese residents. The Home's strategy was bound-up in an evangelism that focused on converting all Home residents to Christianity as well as including efforts to eradicate vice and emancipate women from "yellow slavery" and domestic violence. This intercultural encounter between Christian workers and Japanese and Chinese Home residents helps to transcend the negative stereotypes associated with the "yellow peril" through its efforts to Christianize the social order in Chinatown and extend "the Lord's Dominion" to include Chinese society. In regards to the study of the Home's history, Rosemary R. Gagan and Marilyn Färdig Whiteley depict the merits of the Methodist women's missionary work, while Shelly Ikebuchi critiques the racialization and assimilation inside and outside of the Home.<sup>8</sup> Reconciling these two paradoxical statements, I further argue that the humanity in the Protestant social reform movement at the Home echoed the three norms of interculturalism that Bouchard and Taylor advocate: equality, mobility, and reciprocity.<sup>9</sup> Interculturalism acclimatized the Home girls' integration into Canadian society. Similarly, the Home evangelism helped many Chinese and Japanese female immigrants overcome their hardships and discover a better life.

### *Historical Background*

In the mid-nineteenth century, immigration was open to Asian labourers because of the urgent need to build a railroad across North America. However, driven by the economic insecurity and the business interests of their constituents, politicians eventually put in place immigration policies that prevented the entry of so-called "Asian aliens."<sup>10</sup> For instance, the Japanese Gentlemen

8. Whiteley, *Life and Letters*, 66–91; Whiteley, *Canadian Methodist Women*, 8–9, 157–80; Whiteley, "Eminently Woman's Work"; Airhart, *Serving the Present*, 21; Gagan, *A Sensitive Independence*, 161–212; Ikebuchi, *Slave Girls*, 3–199.

9. Bouchard and Taylor, "Building the Future," 115.

10. Wang, *His Dominion*, 1; Lee, *At America's Gates*, 23; Day, *Alien Capital*, 1–39.

Agreement of 1908 decreased the numbers of Japanese immigrants to Canada and the internment camps in 1942 stopped Japanese competition in the job markets.<sup>11</sup> In Canada, a head tax was levied on Chinese immigrants that eventually rose to a maximum of \$500.<sup>12</sup> The Chinese Exclusion Act was implemented from 1882 to 1943 in America and from 1923 to 1947 in Canada.<sup>13</sup> From the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century, both Chinese and Japanese immigrants were racially discriminated against and labelled as the “yellow peril.”

These immigration policies severely reduced the number of Chinese women available as marriage partners. Consequently, the population of Chinese female immigrants had dropped significantly in both the United States and Canada, turning the Chinatowns of North America into bachelor societies. The single Chinese sojourners suffered from being parted from their families and sought comfort from Chinese prostitutes to provide them temporary companionship and a physical outlet for sexual desire.<sup>14</sup> Not surprisingly, this created a great demand for prostitutes and secret societies that worked in the flesh trade.

*Prostitutes in Late Nineteenth-Century San Francisco  
Chinatown*

To provide a supply of Chinese prostitutes in the sex trade, the organizers of the sex trade either approached Chinese parents to sell their daughters for quick cash to relieve their economic hardships, or they simply kidnapped young girls in China.<sup>15</sup> These child slaves were brought overseas to North America to be sold among the brothels in Chinatowns and contributed to the spreading of venereal diseases.

11. Makabe, *Picture Brides*, 18; Day, *Alien Capital*, 1–39.

12. Sugiman, *Jin Guo*, 27.

13. Huang and Jeffery, *Chinese Canadians*, 5; Tong, *Unsubmissive Women*, 9.

14. Tong, *Unsubmissive Women*, 13.

15. Starr, “A Report.”

*The Establishment of the Home in San Francisco, America and  
Victoria, Canada*

Having resolved to clean up the sex trade in Chinatown, Reverend Otis Gibson, a missionary in China in the mid-nineteenth century, founded the Methodist “Chinese Domestic Mission.” The goal for the WMS of the Pacific Coast was saving what the organization viewed as heathen women and raising funds for the work to help Chinese women who were forced into prostitution. The Chinese women residents at the Mission paid for their living costs by sewing and cooking, and they were also taught the living skills of speaking and reading English and Chinese.<sup>16</sup>

The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 effectively cracked down on the entry of Chinese prostitutes into America; however, the Chinese began using Canada as a backdoor for entry into America. Consequently, human trafficking of Chinese girls was on the rise in Victoria, the largest city on the west coast of Canada. Child prostitution rose due to poverty, social and gender inequality, and the widespread use of opium. Having volunteered in the Chinese Mission in San Francisco and having seen the suffering of the child prostitutes, Gardner planned to build a rescue home in Victoria similar to the one in San Francisco.

In order to persuade influential figures to found the Chinese Girls’ Rescue Home, Gardner provided his free service to the Methodist Mission in Victoria. After he had done great work in Victoria, he was therefore in a position to speak to important figures such as Reverend John E. Starr in 1885. Starr then informed the Board of Managers of the WMS about his plan to eradicate immoral human trafficking through the Church.<sup>17</sup> Following this, Gardner borrowed funds from the Methodist Church at Pandora Avenue to set up a Chinese Girls’ Refuge, where Gardner placed girls who had been rescued in 1886, and later had Methodists appeal to the WMS.<sup>18</sup> Eventually, the WMS

16. Staley, “Gum Moon,” 4–25.

17. Starr, “A Report.”

18. WMSMCC, *6th Annual Report*, xiii; Whiteley, *Life and Letters*, 66–67.

decided to start the Chinese Rescue Home under the auspices of the Methodist Church with a goal, at the WMS's inception in 1881 at a national level, to convert Chinese women, train them to become home and foreign missionaries, and raise funds to sustain the home and foreign missions.<sup>19</sup>

### *Autonomy*

To sustain its autonomy, the Home functioned as a temporary shelter for its rescued residents, having them sew or cook to defray their living costs or have someone else, who wished to marry them, pay for their living costs. Based on the written object of the WMS, the initial goal of the society was to train rescued residents to become foreign or home missionaries. However, the Home found this goal was too far-fetched because prostitutes were often unable to be accepted for practicing sacred services. Therefore, the Home lowered its standards to educate Home residents to become good wives and mothers in order to establish a Christian family or to prepare them to live an independent life. Above all, the Home was required to balance its accounting books to maintain the society although it initially received donations.<sup>20</sup> To cut down costs, the Home would dismiss a resident when she had a marriage offer or was ready to be on her own. In order to have its residents live a respectable life, the Home converted them to Christianity and instructed them to attain living skills so they did not have to go back to their previous lives as prostitutes.

19. WMSMCC, *1st Annual Report*, 30. The object of the WMS was to “engage the efforts of Christian women in the evangelization of heathen women and children; to aid in sustaining female Missionaries and Teachers, or other special labourers in connection with mission work, in foreign and home fields; and to raise funds for the work of the Society.”

20. WMSMCC, *8th Annual Report*, 55–56.

*Innate Racism*

Racism clearly underlies the WMS and Home's intentions and strategies as they were originally laid out: the superior white women were to assimilate the inferior yellow slaves to accept Christian values. As one of its Christian values, the Home followed contemporary Victorian moral standards to defend and maintain the pure bloodline of "white supremacy"; therefore, interracial transgressions such as miscegenation were prohibited. To demarcate racial lines, Chinese and Japanese missions and churches were separated; similarly, Chinese girls were to marry Chinese men, and Japanese girls were to marry Japanese men in order to establish their respective Christian families. In the same vein, a bi-racial girl having an Indian mother and a Chinese father, Emily, was defined as a morally "bad" girl when she left her Chinese husband to live with a white man: her interracial transgression between white English and yellow Chinese-Indian was not permitted.<sup>21</sup> Putting white missionaries in a supervisory position to train yellow "inmates," the Home re-inscribed the racial superiority of the white women over the heathen women.

Nevertheless, in the white men's foreign missionary work, some ministers committed miscegenation. More than a hundred years prior to the founding of the Home, a Presbyterian missionary went to China to bear a half-white and half-Chinese girl who then gave birth to the founder of the Home, John Endicott Gardner.<sup>22</sup> In Canada, Gardner was at the top of the Home hierarchy. However, after he returned to America, he was labelled as a member of the "yellow peril" by white mainstream society, while also being seen as part of the "white supremacy" in Chinese society. He was thus often attacked by both racial groups. Trying to remove vice in Victoria's Chinatown, he became a target of assassination; having a Chinese mother, he was accused of being disloyal to white mainstream American society.<sup>23</sup> Despite Gardner's precarious standing in white society, he had a high degree of control over the Home's

21. Ikebuchi, *Slave Girls*, 6.

22. Ngai, *The Lucky Ones*, 250.

23. Lee, *At America's Gates*, 63.

organization. He was responsible for terminating the first matron of the Home, Annie Leake (1839–1934), a woman with whom Gardner did not get along.<sup>24</sup> In this way, the Home's racial politics seem to privilege a gendered hierarchy over a racial one. Even though she was white, Leake's standing in the Home was below that of a bi-racial man.

### *Gender Inequality*

Under the Home hierarchy, the white men were on the top of the social class, and the white women followed next under the white men. The hierarchy was modelled on the San Francisco Home, where Reverend Otis Gibson asked Methodist women to organize a rescue mission; similarly, Gardner and Starr interviewed Leake to have her pioneer the Victoria Home.<sup>25</sup> This explains the gender dynamics in the running of the Home: only women could do the job; however, the gendered politics at the Home allowed men who were incapable of doing the job to possess the power of assigning a woman to the position. Therefore, stronger white men ordered weaker white women to rescue yellow slave girls. These Chinese prostitutes were trained to do domestic duties to defray their living costs at the Home in both San Francisco and Victoria. Women at the Home were trained doing the secondary jobs such as domestic chores because they belonged to a lower social class. Applying the same norms of gendered work inequality to further humiliate men from the "yellow peril" society, Chinese men in North America were only allowed to do businesses of washing and cleaning, and they belonged to an inferior group as weak as a women's group.

### *Freedom at the Home*

Other than receiving the criticism of racial and gender inequality, the Home was also questioned about its residents' freedom.<sup>26</sup>

24. Whiteley, *Life and Letters*, 69.

25. Staley, "Gum Moon," 4–25; Whiteley, *Life and Letters*, 67.

26. Ikebuchi, *Slave Girls*, 86.

Ikebuchi implies the Home girls were held against their will just like “inmates” were held captive by the prison guards at the Home. In fact, the WMS annual reports clearly state that the Home matrons never refused to help anyone who sought the Home’s help but many refused the Home’s help.<sup>27</sup> Not everyone liked the Home’s governance: the residents’ freedom was restricted while they were under the supervision of the Home. On the other hand, the Home did not insist on keeping the Home residents because this would mean risking an imbalance between revenues and expenses. If the Home went through all the trouble to keep a specific “inmate,” there was only one reason for that: the Home needed to defend its goal of maintaining Christian values, explained as Victorian morals. Therefore, the Home put a wired screen on Emily’s window to prevent her running away from her wedding since she had escaped many times from the Home before. Nevertheless, Emily broke this moral rule to eventually live with a white man.<sup>28</sup> This incident explains why Emily was not serious about living in the Home: she used the Home to attain her personal goal to elope with a white man. Because the barbed wire screen on Emily’s window was an isolated case and the Home residents could enter and leave the Home of their own free will, the generalization of the Home residents’ tenuous freedom is not convincing. The barbed wire fence could have been there to prevent male intrusion into the Home to coerce Home girls to escape and can be viewed as a symbol of the Home’s resistance to outsiders’ intervention. Therefore, I will instead select six other former Home girls to explain how they were treated when they took refuge in the Home.

27. WMSMCC, *20th Annual Report*, xciv.

28. Ikebuchi, *Slave Girls*, 6.

*A Target Research Group*

Hana Murata (1895–?), a Japanese picture bride;<sup>29</sup> Margaret Chan (1902–1989), a Chinese slave girl;<sup>30</sup> Eva (1863–1923), a Chinese prostitute;<sup>31</sup> Victoria Cheung (a.k.a. Chong or Chung: 1897–1966)<sup>32</sup> and Agnes Chan (1904–1962), Chinese foreign missionaries;<sup>33</sup> and Annie (a.k.a. Kiku) Nakabayashi (1901–1986),<sup>34</sup> a Japanese home missionary, represent five categories of the 562 Home residents that the Home had taken in from 1888 to 1942.<sup>35</sup> Murata's oral history provides an important clue into

29. Hana Murata, Interview by Tomoko Makabe, 5 February 1980, Audio Tape JAP-6475-TAK, Multicultural History Society of Ontario Archive, Toronto, Ontario, Canada; Makabe, *Picture Brides*, viii. In her 1980 interview, Murata revealed that she was born in 1895 which was not recorded in the Home register. According to Makabe, Murata died before 1993.

30. Sugiman, *Jin Guo*, 27; The Oriental Home Register (1886–1936), Box 563, file 4a, reg# 282, Oriental Home and School fonds, Bob Stewart Archives, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. The reference numbers (reg#) in these archive materials correspond to the registration numbers in the Oriental Home Register book given to every Oriental Home girl when she entered the Home. Margaret entered the Home on 30 April 1917 and her birthday was made 30 April 1906 by the Home.

31. Based on the Home Register, it is more likely that Eva was born in 1863 and contracted cataract shortly before her death in 1923. The Oriental Home Register (1886–1936), file 4a, reg# 23, 56, Oriental Home and School fonds, Bob Stewart Archives, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

32. The Oriental Home Register (1886–1936), file 4a, reg# 61, Oriental Home and School fonds, Bob Stewart Archives, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada; Chan, *Rediscover the Fading Memories*, 87.

33. The Oriental Home Register (1886–1936), file 4a, reg# 170, Oriental Home and School fonds, Bob Stewart Archives, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. Based on the Home Register, Agnes Chan was born on 19 February 1898; Chan, *Rediscover the Fading Memories*, 65.

34. The Oriental Home Register (1886–1936), file 4a, reg# 75, Oriental Home and School fonds, Bob Stewart Archives, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada; Switzer and Switzer, *Gateway to Promise*, 289. Hereafter, each Home girl was referred to by her last name. However, I use first names for Margaret and Agnes to differentiate their common last name, Chan. Also, when I mention Agnes Chan and Annie Nakabayashi at the same time, I use their first names. I call Mrs. Wong Ah Dick "Eva" because I suspect Mr. Wong had multiple wives whom he forced into prostitution.

35. "Home Saved Hundreds," *The Victoria Times-Colonist*.

the organization of a Women's Home in Victoria.<sup>36</sup> In her interviews with Tomoko Makabe, a sociologist who is well-known for her interviews of surviving Japanese picture brides, Murata recounted how she took refuge from her violent and mentally ill second husband in 1920 in the "Women's Home."<sup>37</sup>

Murata's story at the "Women's Home" connects readers to the Oriental Home that was articulated by Margaret in her oral history and opens up the door for researchers to study the history of the Home through the United Church Archives. Margaret's account was not written in the WMS annual reports, but was in a textual oral history recorded by Christina Chu, of the Chinese Canadian National Council (CCNC), who travelled across Canada to interview Chinese female immigrants such as Margaret in 1986. According to the interview, Margaret was sold into slavery in Canada, and she ran away to the Home in 1917 after she found out that she would be resold to a man having seven children.<sup>38</sup>

Based upon the WMS archival data of the WMS annual reports and the Home Register, Eva (a.k.a. Mrs. Wong Ah Dick) escaped to the Home with another household slave-girl, Ah Moi, and her baby boy, but returned to her home less than a month later in 1891.<sup>39</sup> However, Eva was rescued again in 1899 by Matron Morgan and Cheung's mother from a Chinese hut.<sup>40</sup> Cheung's mother had studied in a Chinese Christian school when she was still in Canton, China. To bring Jesus' love to the Home, she taught the Bible at the Chinese school and rescued slave girls such as Eva at the Home.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, Cheung's father became a

36. Murata, Interview.

37. Ibid.

38. Sugiman, *Jin Guo*, 9, 27–28; The Oriental Home Register (1886–1936), file 4a, reg# 282, Oriental Home and School fonds, Bob Stewart Archives, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

39. WMSMCC, *10th Annual Report*, xl–i.

40. The Oriental Home Register (1886–1936), file 4a, reg# 23, Oriental Home and School fonds, Bob Stewart Archives, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

41. WMSMCC, *18th Annual Report*, lxxxix–xc; WMSMCC, *19th Annual Report*, xcii. Victoria Cheung's mom's position was important at the

devoted official at the Methodist Church as a consequence of Gardner's preaching in Victoria, and Cheung had been under the care of the Home since 1901.<sup>42</sup>

Both Agnes Chan and Annie Nakabayashi were often mentioned together in the WMS annual reports for their success in passing provincial examinations, and they were considered by the Home to be examples of the real effects of the Home's educational program, and eventually served as missionaries. Agnes came to the Home as a slave girl to escape her owner's mistreatment in November 1908.<sup>43</sup> In contrast, Annie was brought to the Home by her mother in 1901.<sup>44</sup> Hereafter, I refer to this target research group as the Home girls.

### *Latent Equality*

The egalitarian doctrine of sisterhood depicted in the Gospel of Matthew as Jesus' teaching eventually created latent equality between the Home missionaries and the Home girls.<sup>45</sup> To foster this sisterhood, Matron Leake initiated a language program: she learned from the rescued girls to speak Cantonese herself and at the same time taught them to communicate with her in English.<sup>46</sup> Similarly, by the first year of the second matron's term at the Home, the singing at the Methodist church at Pandora Street was always in two languages.<sup>47</sup> Spoken classes and printed scriptures

Home because the dates of her missed pay were recorded in the WMS annual report.

42. WMSMCC, *21st Annual Report*, xcvi; Wang, *His Dominion*, 49.

43. "The Story of Miss Agnes Chan, R.N.," Box 563, file 4a, 1-2, Oriental Home and School fonds, Bob Stewart Archives, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada; WMSMCC, *28th Annual Report*, lxxvii; WMSMCC, *30th Annual Report*, lxxxv.

44. WMSMCC, *20th Annual Report*, xcv.

45. "But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous" (Matt 5:45).

46. Whiteley, *Life and Letters*, 89 quotes from a missionary leaflet she published on 22 August 1889.

47. WMSMCC, *12th Annual Report*, 50.

in Chinese and Japanese helped the Home evangelists transform their missions into a cross-cultural study. Their mutual understanding was increasingly strengthened through the language programs and the inter-cultural contacts at the Home. The cross-cultural study changed Leake's attitudes towards Chinese slave girls: Leake used to think they were "dirty"; she then discovered she could learn many things from them.<sup>48</sup> Subsequently, the Home girls communicated with one another in English through the training of the language program.

Through the Home's education, Murata built her confidence while the Home staff showed sympathy for the racial discrimination against the Home girls outside of the Home. Murata defrayed her living costs at the Home by babysitting a white boy while his parents were busy working. After the white boy grew up, he went to visit Murata to thank her for her care.<sup>49</sup> The "Women's Home" provided Murata employment information that she shared with her Chinese and Japanese roommates. Without differentiating one another's racial or cultural backgrounds, the Chinese and Japanese women supported one another to pursue the betterment of their lives.<sup>50</sup> This was why Murata could not feel the racial discrimination against her: she got along with her clients, roommates, and the Home staff, and she was proud of her valuable work, feeling she was not any different than any other races around her.

Gagan notes the difficulty of breaking the grip of drug addictions without any specialized scientific knowledge in her analysis of the diligent experiments of the fifth matron (1901–1909), Mrs. Ida Snyder, to rescue Eva (Ah Yute) from her

48. Whiteley, *The Life and Letters*, 69.

49. Murata, Interview; The Oriental Home Register (1886–1936), Box 563, file 4a, reg# 320, Oriental Home and School fonds, Bob Stewart Archives, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. Murata was admitted at the Home on 14 January 1920 for around five months. One of the families she served was Richardson's at 935 Moss Street.

50. Murata, Interview.

addiction.<sup>51</sup> Eva had an “opium-dimmed intellect” and was not the type of “inmate” that Snyder liked to train; however, Snyder put up with Eva for more than ten years.<sup>52</sup> When the Home decided to transfer her to China, she expressed her appreciation for the benevolence that she received from the Home matron and staff saying she would be in a Chinese heaven different from the Canadian heaven where the Home staff would be.<sup>53</sup> However, Snyder believed that Jesus would take anyone with Him into heaven regardless of whether she was Canadian, Chinese, or Japanese.<sup>54</sup>

Although Snyder thought it would be difficult for her to supervise Chinese and Japanese women together because their countries were antagonistic to one another, there were no reports stating Chinese and Japanese inmates did not get along.<sup>55</sup> Murata was at the Home when Margaret, Agnes, and Annie were still there. Margaret observed that the Chinese and Japanese at the Home shared the same kind of plight; Murata worked well with Chinese girls or Japanese women.<sup>56</sup> Annie and Cheung grew up together when they were just toddlers at the time. At the Home, they were taken care of by Eva, who babysat them to defray her living costs. Annie and Agnes were living together at the Home from 1908 and went to public school and Normal School (a school for training teachers) at the same time.<sup>57</sup> When they saw each other for the last time in 1930 at the Home, Annie was helping in the kindergarten.<sup>58</sup> The Home staff treated the Home

51. WSMCC, *18th Annual Report*, xci; WSMCC, *19th Annual Report*, xcvi; *The Missionary Outlook*, February 1900, 47; Gagan, *A Sensitive Independence*, 173–75.

52. WSMCC, *20th Annual Report*, xciii; WSMCC, *23th Annual Report*, lxxvi; WSMCC, *32nd Annual Report*, xcix, c, cii; “Home Saved Hundreds,” *The Victoria Times-Colonist*.

53. WSMCC, *32nd Annual Report*, c.

54. WSMCC, *20th Annual Report*, xcvi.

55. *Ibid.*, xciii.

56. Sugiman, *Jin Guo*, 28; Murata, Interview.

57. WSMCC, *21st Annual Report*, xcvi; The Oriental Home Register (1886–1936), Box 563, file 4a, reg# 75, 100, Oriental Home and School fonds, Bob Stewart Archives, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

58. WMSUCC, *5th Annual Report*, 323.

girls with selfless love, and the humanity in their missionary work inspired the Home girls to work with one another without racial prejudice.

The intercultural contacts between Anglo-Canadian female missionaries and the Chinese and Japanese residents also enabled latent gender equality between the white males and females in the North American society. Methodist women at the Home organized door-to-door evangelism to collect a list of slave girls to be rescued, performed language programs to help in communication with the Home girls, and provided education and medical supports to emancipate the Chinese slave girls from yellow slavery.<sup>59</sup> The Home girls proved their abilities to be intelligent school girls, capable business women, good wives and mothers, and courageous human beings in their determination to break away from severe drug addictions. The Home staff and the Home girls demonstrated the fact that they were as strong and useful as their male counterparts. Eventually, white women were allowed to vote in 1916 in Canada and in 1920 in America. The recognition of white women's gender equality helped the Home girls to transform their latent racial and gender equality into quasi racial and gender equality. These provided them strength to mobilize their social stratification from low to high even after they left the Home.

### *Mobility*

The Home mobilized the social class of the Home girls who took refuge in the Christian message of faith: that Jesus gives a new life to anyone who believes in Him.<sup>60</sup> Murata evolved from a Japanese picture bride who had suffered two failed marriages and had fled (half naked) to the Home to become a successful business woman; she went on to establish two businesses and supported herself financially for the rest of her life.<sup>61</sup> Even

59. WMSUCC, *10th Annual Report*, xlii, xliii.

60. "So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see everything has become new" (2 Cor 5:17).

61. Murata, Interview.

though Murata was unable to build a Christian family, the Home evangelism trained her to gain mental and physical strength in order to live an independent life without tolerating domestic violence. Therefore, Murata served as an example of the third-level conversion at the Home, achieving independence without establishing a Christian family.

As a slave girl sold by her opium-smoking father, Margaret ran away to the Home, attained her public school certificate and teaching diploma, and was even matriculated to a university.<sup>62</sup> However, she never received a scholarship to go to a university because of fierce competition at the Home to become a missionary. Even though she experienced the hardships of dealing with her unhappy marriage and rearing her children, she strived to be a good wife and mother and to build a Christian family. Therefore, she reached the second-level of conversion at the Home.<sup>63</sup>

I speculate that Eva was sold to the polygamous household of Mr. Wong Ah Dick and drugged so as to be forced into prostitution. She was heavily addicted to opium more than ten years prior to 1899.<sup>64</sup> In 1913, the Home transferred her to Canton, China where they expected that death would call upon her any time because she had been physically reduced to a shell of an individual. Even though she had been an opium user and a prostitute, her willingness to break away from drugs and prostitution made her qualified for the fourth-level conversion at the Home where she was given a new life as Jesus promised her.

62. The Oriental Home Register (1886–1936), Box 563, file 4a, reg# 282, Oriental Home and School fonds, Bob Stewart Archives, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

63. At the Home, there were four levels of conversion. The first ideal level was to become a Christian and then go out to convert others. The second level was to go out and establish a Christian family. The third level was to be an independent Christian. And finally, the lowest level was just to be a Christian staying away from prostitution and drugs.

64. WMSUCC, *19th Annual Report*, xciv; Snyder, "Chinese Work," 47; WMSUCC, *21st Annual Report*, xcvi; WMSUCC, *32nd Annual Report*, xcix, c, cii.

Cheung was born into a social class that was labelled as the “yellow peril,” but was accepted into the white mainstream society in her time. In 2012, Victoria City Council proclaimed her birthday on 8 December, “Dr. Victoria Chung Day.”<sup>65</sup> She is a heroine not only in the Chinese community but also in the white mainstream society in Victoria, not only in Canada but also in China. When Canadian missionaries were not allowed to stay in China during the Second World War, the civil war, and eventually Mao’s rule, Cheung played an invaluable role as a foreign missionary in south China. Similarly, Agnes’ social status moved from that of a slave girl to a foreign nurse missionary in China. Agnes was not only remembered for her benevolent missionary work in China but also remembered for her work in the Chinese community with the Methodist women who nurtured her and brought her up in Canada. In 2013, she was remembered once again by a descendant of her adopted children who was invited to support the book launch of a third-generation Chinese writer, Denise Chong. Chong writes about how Chinese families’ lives in Canada were affected by Canadian immigration policy, the head tax, or the Chinese exclusion act.<sup>66</sup>

Victoria Cheung, Agnes Chan, and Annie Nakabayashi belonged to the first-level conversion at the Home. They achieved the Home evangelical goal to become missionaries and worked to convert Chinese and Japanese people in their missions. Since Annie was a year old after her mother died in 1901, Snyder nurtured her and fully supported her from the age of nine when her father died. Annie went to public school and Normal School and worked at the kindergarten at the Home from 1921 to 1925. As a missionary, she was able to go to university and worked at the Home again from 1930 to 1931. When Annie accepted the Home’s conversion program, she believed in Jesus and was allowed to stay at the Home to have a better living environment.

65. Chan, *Rediscover the Fading Memories*, 90.

66. Chong, *Lives of the Family*, 1–217.

*Reciprocity*

Since gratitude is Christians' basic attitude, the Home girls reciprocated the Home's grace with their expression of "thanksgiving."<sup>67</sup> During her five-month stay at the Home, Murata worked as a housekeeper for Methodist families, was moved by the strict Methodist discipline, converted from Buddhism to Christianity, and remained a devout Christian until the very last day of her life.<sup>68</sup> To express her gratitude to Jesus and the Home for rescuing her, Murata regularly visited her church to donate on Sundays and on special dates in commemoration of her family members' birthdays.

Matron Martin helped Margaret receive education from Canadian public school and Normal School, lent her money to teach abroad, and was always there to help Margaret. Without Martin's intervention, Margaret's life would have been much worse: she could have been sold and resold among the Chinese brothels like many other Chinese slave girls. In return for Martin's favor, she spoke to the Chinese communities nationwide about Martin's private philanthropy and the Home's good deeds that saved many destitute Chinese and Japanese women at the time.

Through the correspondence between Charles Selden in China and Maggie Smith at the Home, we discern the Home arranged monthly medical care payment from 1913 to 1923 and burial fees in 1923 for Eva. In addition, a handkerchief and letter, symbolic of the Home's compassion, were sent to Eva; in return for the Home's generosity, Eva made herself useful doing fine sewing to the last day she lived.<sup>69</sup> In regards to the financial relationship between the Home and Eva, it was to Eva's advantage to have received the Home's payment for her living costs in

67. "As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live your lives in him, 'rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in "thanksgiving"'" (Col 2:7).

68. Murata, Interview; The Oriental Home Register (1886–1936), Box 563, file 4a, reg# 320, Oriental Home and School fonds, Bob Stewart Archives, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

69. Selden, "Letter to Maggie."

the Victoria Home and as well as in a Canton hospital for a total of 24 years. Her belief in going to heaven shows she was a genuine Christian, very grateful towards the Home.

Having grown up in a Chinese Christian family, Cheung lived up to everyone's expectation to obtain a scholarship to study medicine at the University of Toronto in 1917 and then reported to the WMS at Kongmoon, China in 1923.<sup>70</sup> In 1930, Cheung freed up her education funds from the WMS to make her scholarship available for other students.<sup>71</sup> In wartime, she wrote to Miss Buck, the assistant secretary of the WMS Dominion Board, to request extra funds to manage the Kongmoon foreign mission; in return, she raised hens and pigs to feed friends and refugees.<sup>72</sup> Cheung remained on her post until the last day of her life in Kongmoon, China.

The Home helped Agnes to get financial aid from a Bible class in Crystal City, Manitoba to pay for her boarding at the Home;<sup>73</sup> Agnes helped the Home by going to Chinatown to interpret for the missionaries and being an outstanding student. When Agnes planned to quit school to redeem her baby sister, who had been sold by her parents, the WMS in Toronto lent her money to redeem her sister. In return, Agnes established the Springfield Orphanage to care for abandoned children and orphans in Fatsan, China. To Agnes' orphanage, the Home girls later sent dolls in 1931.<sup>74</sup> From then on, Agnes remained active in doing missionary work in China until the very last day of her life.

Unlike Agnes Chan and Victoria Cheung, who worked for the Home to the last day of their lives as missionaries, Annie's missionary life at the Home was short lived. Annie contracted tuberculosis in the last year of her university life and ceased to be a home missionary after 1931. She then recovered from her

70. WMSUCC, *40th Annual Report*, cxxiv; Chan, *Rediscover the Fading Memories*, 87–90; Sinclair, *Crossing Worlds*, 6.

71. Sinclair, *Crossing Worlds*, 7–8, 40–72.

72. *Ibid.*, 40–72.

73. WMSUCC, *30th Annual Report*, lxxxv.

74. WMSUCC, *7th Annual Report*, 324.

illness at the Home, and attained her personal freedom to move to Tokyo in 1935. I speculate that the Home was unable to allow her to keep her teaching position because of her health condition. In 1942, Japanese girls at the Home were interned, and the Home ceased to exist. After that, Annie would have been unable to return to Victoria. In the 1970s, she retired in Toronto helping disabled elders at a Japanese senior home and was eventually buried with her parents at Rose Bay Cemetery in Victoria.<sup>75</sup> Annie expressed her gratitude for the Home's grace by demonstrating the effect of the Home teaching and her Christian womanhood: social justice and social welfare to the Chinese and Japanese communities in Canada. The reciprocal relationship between the Home and the Home girls persisted even long after the Home closed down in 1942.

### *Conclusion*

The Oriental Committee (renamed Ethnic and Intercultural Ministry in 2012) at the United Church had a goal to acclimatize immigrants to their new lives in Canada through interculturalism long before Bouchard and Taylor wrote their report of interculturalism in 2008. Although not everyone who had lived in the Home liked the way the Home imposed its cultural values on others, the Home was a living necessity to the group of Chinese slave girls who were sold by their natural parents into forced prostitution and Japanese picture brides who experienced unhappy marriages in Canada. Even though some Home residents preferred their previous lives as prostitutes, Benson Tong believes the majority of Chinese prostitutes endeavored to get out of the sex trade to establish their own families. He also applauds the white female missionaries for their selfless love to rescue many Chinese prostitutes in San Francisco.<sup>76</sup> Similarly, Jeffrey L. Staley's mother-in-law also benefitted as one of the children who was raised and nurtured by the San Francisco

75. Switzer and Switzer, *Gateway to Promise*, 289.

76. Tong, *Unsubmissive Women*, 183–91.

Oriental Home, which had rescued 353 women and girls from 1870 to 1896.<sup>77</sup>

The women missionaries at both Homes showed great humanity towards their residents. Their hope was to give freedom to destitute Chinese and Japanese women who entered the Home by converting them to Christianity. Some true converts would become missionaries like themselves, but even those who resumed their former pursuits benefitted from the Home's philanthropy. At a time when few other church groups, government agencies, or social welfare organizations provided help to such women at risk, the Home lived up to the ideals of Protestant social reform. The compassion shown to the women and children who found their way there is remembered by their descendants and researchers, and will be remembered by future generations of Chinese and Japanese in Canada.

The argument can be made that the Home matrons (Methodist women before 1925; United Church women after 1925) behaved in a manner reminiscent of important biblical figures: they maintained the Home's financial autonomy as Martha focused on practical things; they administered the Home with wisdom and strength like Deborah "Mother in Israel"; they manifested the egalitarian doctrine of sisterhood as Mary chose to sit at Jesus' feet to intently discern his teaching.<sup>78</sup> Based on this sisterhood, the Home's evangelism provided latent and quasi equality to the Home girls and mobilized their social class. Consequently, the relationship between the Home and the Home girls was both spiritually and financially reciprocal. Therefore the Protestant social reform movement carried out between the Anglo-Canada, Chinese, and Japanese women at the Home possessed three normative elements of interculturalism: equality, mobility, and reciprocity. Moreover, the Home assisted Chinese and Japanese communities to be integrated into a larger Canadian environment while the two communities frequented the Home services. This interculturalism between the Home and its residents and its

77. Staley, "Gum Moon."

78. Whiteley, *Canadian Methodist Women*, 1-2; Luke 10:38-42; Judg 5:7.

residents' respective communities helped the early Chinese and Japanese immigrants to acclimatize themselves to their new life in Canada. The Oriental Home model, initiated over a hundred years ago and carried out by the Christian social justice and social welfare movements, still has lessons for us to learn in promoting respect and recognition between races in our multicultural society in Canada.

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