



Spring 4-1-1998

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Stew Salowitz  
*Illinois Wesleyan University*

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### Recommended Citation

Salowitz, Stew, "Historian/ Author Iris Chang to Speak at Illinois Wesleyan" (1998). *News and Events*. 6972.

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1 April 1998

**CONTACT:** Stew Salowitz, 309-556-3206

## **Historian/Author Iris Chang to Speak at Illinois Wesleyan**

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. -- Iris Chang will present a program on the "Forgotten Holocaust" of World War II when she visits the Illinois Wesleyan University campus on Thursday, April 9.

Chang, the author of the 1997 book "The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II," will speak at 7:30 p.m. in room C-101 of the Center for Natural Science, 201 E. Beecher St. Chang's appearance, which is free and open to the public, is sponsored by the IWU Division of Social Science, Department of History, Women's Studies Program, and International Studies Program-Asian Studies Team.

A Champaign native, Chang is a graduate of the University of Illinois and Johns Hopkins University. As a freelance writer her work has appeared in the *Chicago Tribune*, *New York Times*, and Associated Press. Chang's first book was "Thread of the Silkworm" (1995), about Tsien Hsue-Shen, a Chinese immigrant who, forced out of the United States, pioneered the Chinese missile program.

Although she was born halfway around the world and two generations removed from the incident at Nanking, it is almost as if Chang, who now lives in Sunnyvale, Calif., has lived through it herself. She is one of few Americans who has interviewed Chinese survivors of the Asian Holocaust in China with permission of the government.

On the morning of Dec. 13, 1937, roughly 50,000 Japanese soldiers captured Nanking, China's capital city. Many residents, including Chang's grandparents, had already fled Nanking before the invasion yet, according to historians, more than half a million Chinese remained trapped in Nanking. On that invasion, the Japanese there were given the order to kill all captives and during the ensuing chaos, between 200,000 and 300,000 or more Chinese lost their lives, according to court records and historians.

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According to stories recorded in international newspapers, Chinese government and academic documents, Japanese photographs and in the diaries of Red Cross officials stationed in Nanking, the Japanese killed so many men, women and children with machetes that their arms became tired and they had to rest before they continued. The soldiers also used bayonets, machine guns, live burial and fire. Decapitation was popular and Chinese heads were fed to the dogs. Women were raped, forced to perform bizarre sexual acts, then killed. Fathers were forced to rape their daughters, and sons, their mothers. Chinese men were forced to rape corpses. Competitions took place among Japanese soldiers to see how many Chinese they could kill in one day. These horrors continued for six to eight weeks.

After World War II, the U.S. brokered secret deals with the Japanese government, according to Chang, and in exchange for their research on germ warfare and human biology, the actions of the Japanese in China and elsewhere in the Pacific would be ignored. Unlike the outrage over the actions of the Nazis, Chang says there has been little international recognition of Japanese war crimes. Only in 1995, on the 50th anniversary of the end of the war, did the Diet house of the Japanese parliament pass a resolution expressing "deep remorse" over Japan's World War II actions, noting simultaneously that such actions took place in the context of worldwide "colonial rules and acts of aggression." Soon after, Japanese Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama made a "personal" statement" expressing his remorse, in which he called Japanese actions a "mistake" which would not be repeated.

China, with its own post-World War II internal war, has done little of note to hold the Japanese responsible for its military actions and only in the last decade, since the communist Chinese government's killing of students in Tiananmen Square inspired massive protests, have American-based Chinese begun to protest publicly in their adopted nation.

"In the past, the Chinese learned from their ancestors and parents that politics can be deadly," Chang suggests. "People came to this country because of their scientific or technical expertise, and they had learned from their parents or from their own experiences that it's probably best to stay away from politics. That's why you see a tradition of Chinese political apathy in this country. But in the last few years we've seen an increase in Chinese activism."

Chang became interested in the atrocities at Nanking when her parents told her stories as a little girl. “I found it hard to believe at that time,” Chang says, “but they said that it was so bad that the surface of the Yangtze River was literally covered with bodies and blood. My grandparents were almost separated during World War II, and my mother almost died because the Japanese had bombed the hospital where my grandmother had been staying when she was pregnant with my mother in 1940. And when I was a little girl, I tried to find information on the rape of Nanking in the local library [in Illinois], but there was nothing there. In college, I tried finding information, but no one had written a book that had penetrated the mass consciousness.”

Among other discoveries, Chang has obtained the diaries of foreign missionaries and German Nazis living in China during the war, many of whom sheltered Chinese victims of Japanese atrocities. She has identified a man she calls "the Oskar Schindler of China," a German Nazi named John Rabe, as well as an American "Anne Frank," named Minnie Vautrin who committed suicide in the International Safety Zone in Nanking during the massacre. Chang points out that, according to the diaries, the atrocities in Nanking were so brutal, "even the Nazis were shocked.”

#### **About Illinois Wesleyan University**

IWU, founded in 1850, enrolls about 2,000 students in a College of Liberal Arts, College of Fine Arts, and a four-year professional School of Nursing. A \$15 million athletics and recreation center opened in the fall of 1994 and a \$25 million science center opened in fall 1995. The \$5.1 million Center for Liberal Arts, a facility housing 60 faculty offices, six classrooms, and other facilities for social science, humanities, business and economics, and interdisciplinary studies' faculty, opened in August 1997, as did a new \$6.8 million residence hall. The Carnegie Commission for the Advancement of Teaching promoted Illinois Wesleyan to a "Baccalaureate I" institution in 1994, a classification that places it among 159 highly-selective National Liberal Arts Colleges in the annual *U.S. News & World Report* rankings. *Barron's Profiles of American Colleges*, another respected college guide, rated IWU "highly competitive +" in its latest edition.