



Legacy Business Registry Staff Report

Hearing Date: July 22, 2024

LIEN YING TAI CHI CHUAN ACADEMY

Application No.: LBR-2023-24-050
Business Name: Lien Ying Tai Chi Chuan Academy
Business Address: 15A Walter U. Lum Pl.
District: District 3
Applicant: Melissa Medel, Assistant
Nomination Date: June 17, 2024
Nominated By: Supervisor Aaron Peskin
Staff Contact: Richard Kurylo and Michelle Reynolds
legacybusiness@sfgov.org

BUSINESS DESCRIPTION

Lien Ying Tai Chi Chuan Academy is a martial arts studio that teaches Tai Chi Chuan, Pagua, Xing Yi, Shaolin Chuan, and weapons forms. It has been continuously operating in Chinatown since its opening in 1965. Lien Ying Tai Chi Chuan Academy stewards the cultural traditions and philosophies of Tai Chi and martial arts via private lessons, group classes, lectures, demonstrations, and educational community partnerships.

Lien Ying Tai Chi Chuan Academy was established by Sifu (Master) Kuo Lien Ying. Kuo Lien Ying immigrated to the United States from Taiwan in 1965 and settled in San Francisco's Chinatown, and his wife Simmone Kuo joined him the next year. Kuo Lien Ying started by teaching individual students in 1965 and quickly expanded the business to include more pupils, establishing the first business location at 11 Brenham Place. Together with his students, they converted the vacant storefront into a martial arts studio with living quarters at the rear. Simmone Kuo worked to achieve the requirements for being a Tai Chi instructor and helped Kuo Lien Ying run the business and teach classes.

Lien Ying Tai Chi Chuan Academy has worked with many local organizations, including the Oakland Parks, Recreation & Youth Department, Chinese Cultural Center of San Francisco, Chinese for Affirmative Action, Stanford University, and San Francisco State University. Simmone Kuo personally taught classes for the Kinesiology Department of San Francisco State University for over 30 years. They have also supported Chinatown and the Chinese American community through charitable efforts. Kuo Lien Ying supported the founding of both the Chinese Cultural Center and Chinese for Affirmative Action, including donating the building they owned at 17 Walter U. Lum Place to be the headquarters of Chinese for Affirmative Action.

CRITERION 1

Has the applicant operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years?

Yes, Lien Ying Tai Chi Chuan Academy has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years:

11 Brenham Pl. (Renamed Walter U. Lum Pl.) from 1965 to 1989 (24 years)
15A Walter U. Lum Pl. from 1989 to Present (35 years)

CRITERION 2

Has the applicant contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community?

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City Hall Room 140
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San Francisco, CA 94102
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Yes, Lien Ying Tai Chi Chuan Academy has contributed to the history and identity of the Chinatown neighborhood and San Francisco.

The Historic Preservation Commission recommended the applicant as qualifying, noting the following ways the applicant contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community:

- The business is associated with the 64 Step Tai Chi form. This is a set of combined physical movements from Taoist culture that support longevity and enlightenment.
- Lien Ying Tai Chi Chuan Academy was founded by Kuo Lien Ying, a distinguished and revered martial artist. Kuo Lien Ying was also previously a general in the army during the Chinese Communist Revolution and a congressman in Taiwan. Kuo Lien Ying trained under other famous experts, Master Li Lin and Wang Jiao Yu. The legacy of teachers goes back to the origins of the Guang Ping Yang Tai Chi style: Wang Jiao Yu was trained by Yang Banhou, who was the son Yung Luchan, the creator of the Guang Ping Yang Tai Chi style. Notable students of Lien Ying Tai Chi Chuan Academy include artist Ruth Asawa and legendary martial artist and actor Bruce Lee.
- The building is listed as a potential contributing historic resource to the Chinatown Historic District, which is eligible for both the California Register of Historical Resources and the National Register of Historic Places.
- The original location of Lien Ying Tai Chi Chuan Academy was used as a filming location for the movie The Killer Elite in 1975 which starred James Caan and Robert Duvall. The movie is considered one of the first American films to feature ninjas. Kuo Lien Ying and many of his students were cast in the scenes which were filmed on site.
- Simone Kuo herself taught a Tai Chi program for the Oakland-based KPIX PBS local television station. The episodes were broadcast to several states across the country.
- Kuo Lien Ying, Simone Kuo, and their son Chung Mei are all carved into the famous San Francisco Fountain by renowned artist Ruth Asawa. Located in a public plaza at 345 Stockton Street, The San Francisco Fountain is a bronze sculpture from 1970 that features bas relief scenes of the people, monuments, and daily life of San Francisco.
- Lien Ying Tai Chi Chuan Academy is a woman, immigrant, and minority owned business and under its original founding, it was immigrant and minority owned. Lien Ying Tai Chi Chuan Academy has served a community of newly immigrated Chinese and Taiwanese people from its founding, acting as a cultural connection from Chinatown to their heritage and traditions. Over the years, Lien Ying Tai Chi Chuan Academy has connected with the LGBTQ+, Black, and Asian American and Pacific Islander communities, as well as elderly and disabled peoples, through demonstrations, lectures, and community involvement.

CRITERION 3

Is the applicant committed to maintaining the physical features or traditions that define the business, including craft, culinary, or art forms?

Yes, Lien Ying Tai Chi Chuan Academy is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the business.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

The Historic Preservation Commission recommends that Lien Ying Tai Chi Chuan Academy qualifies for the Legacy Business Registry under Administrative Code Section 2A.242(b)(2) and recommends safeguarding of the below listed physical features and traditions.

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Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:

- 64 Step Tai Chi form.
- Hand-painted calligraphies on the interior walls.
- Hand-painted portraits.
- Historic and commemorative photographs.

CORE PHYSICAL FEATURE OR TRADITION THAT DEFINES THE BUSINESS

Following is the core physical feature or tradition that defines the business that would be required for maintenance of the business on the Legacy Business Registry.

- Martial arts training.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the San Francisco Small Business Commission include Lien Ying Tai Chi Chuan Academy currently located at 15A Walter U. Lum Pl. in the Legacy Business Registry as a Legacy Business under Administrative Code Section 2A.242.

Richard Kurylo and Michelle Reynolds
Legacy Business Program

Legacy Business Program

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Small Business Commission

Resolution No. _____

July 22, 2024

LIEN YING TAI CHI CHUAN ACADEMY

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Adopting findings approving the Legacy Business Registry application for Lien Ying Tai Chi Chuan Academy, currently located at 15A Walter U. Lum Pl.

WHEREAS, in accordance with Administrative Code Section 2A.242, the Office of Small Business maintains a registry of Legacy Businesses in San Francisco (the "Registry") to recognize that longstanding, community-serving businesses can be valuable cultural assets of the City and to be a tool for providing educational and promotional assistance to Legacy Businesses to encourage their continued viability and success; and

WHEREAS, the subject business has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years; or

WHEREAS, the subject business has operated in San Francisco for more than 20 years but less than 30 years, has had no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years, has significantly contributed to the history or identity of a particular neighborhood or community and, if not included on the Registry, faces a significant risk of displacement; and

WHEREAS, the subject business has contributed to the neighborhood's history and identity; and

WHEREAS, the subject business is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the business; and

WHEREAS, at a duly noticed public hearing held on July 22, 2024, the San Francisco Small Business Commission reviewed documents and correspondence, and heard oral testimony on the Legacy Business Registry application; therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Small Business Commission hereby includes Lien Ying Tai Chi Chuan Academy in the Legacy Business Registry as a Legacy Business under Administrative Code Section 2A.242.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Small Business Commission recommends safeguarding the below listed physical features and traditions at Lien Ying Tai Chi Chuan Academy.

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Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:

- 64 Step Tai Chi form.
- Hand-painted calligraphies on the interior walls.
- Hand-painted portraits.
- Historic and commemorative photographs.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Small Business Commission requires maintenance of the below listed core physical feature or tradition to maintain Lien Ying Tai Chi Chuan Academy on the Legacy Business Registry:

- Martial arts training.

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED by the Small Business Commission on July 22, 2024.

Katy Tang
Director

RESOLUTION NO. _____

Ayes –
Nays –
Abstained –
Absent –

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Legacy Business Registry

Application Review Sheet

Application No.: LBR-2023-24-050
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Business Address: 15A Walter U. Lum Pl.
District: District 3
Applicant: Melissa Medel, Assistant
Nomination Date: June 17, 2024
Nominated By: Supervisor Aaron Peskin

CRITERION 1: Has the applicant has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years?

☒ Yes ☐ No

11 Brenham Pl. (Renamed Walter U. Lum Pl.) from 1965 to 1989 (24 years)
15A Walter U. Lum Pl. from 1989 to Present (35 years)

CRITERION 2: Has the applicant contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community?

☒ Yes ☐ No

CRITERION 3: Is the applicant committed to maintaining the physical features or traditions that define the business, including craft, culinary, or art forms?

☒ Yes ☐ No

NOTES: NA

DELIVERY DATE TO HPC: June 18, 2024

Richard Kurylo and Michelle Reynolds
Legacy Business Program

Legacy Business Program

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City and County of
San Francisco



AARON PESKIN
市參事 佩斯金

President, Board of
Supervisors

June 17, 2024

Director Katy Tang *via email*
<Katy.Tang@sfgov.org>
San Francisco Office of Small Business
City Hall, Room 110
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlet Place
San Francisco, CA 94102

Dear Director Tang,

I write to nominate the neighborhood small business, Lien Ying Tai Chi Chuan Academy, currently located at 15A Walter U. Lum Place, to the San Francisco Legacy Business Registry.

Established in 1965 by Sifu (Master) Lien Ying Kuo, the Lien Ying Tai Chi Chuan Academy pioneered the teaching of Chinese martial arts to American students in the United States and has continued its mission to preserving and disseminating the rich cultural heritage embodied in Tai Chi for nearly 60 years.

Sifu Kuo's invaluable contribution and insight into the art of Tai Chi has garnered recognition from notable figures such as Bruce Lee, Ruth Asawa, and former President Jimmy Carter. Most notably, Hollywood Director Sam Peckinpah hired Kuo to assist with the production of *The Killer Elite* (1975) and filmed iconic scenes at the Academy's studio. Sifu Kuo's wife, Simu (Master) Simmone Kuo, later assumed leadership of the academy in 1984, and further contributed to the proliferation of martial arts and Chinese culture by teaching Tai Chi classes on television and lecturing at San Francisco State University for 30 years.

Beyond their teaching of Tai Chi, Sifu and Simu Kuo have long contributed to the development of some of Chinatown's core organizations, including a significant financial contribution to initiate the Chinese Cultural Center in 1965 and a generous donation of an adjacent building (17 Walter U. Lum Place) to Chinese for Affirmative Action to further support the momentum of the Asian American and Pacific Islander Civil Rights Movement.

Lien Ying Tai Chi Chuan Academy has been a community institution for over six decades. It is my honor and pleasure to finally nominate it for inclusion on the Legacy Business Registry.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Aaron Peskin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Aaron" being more prominent than the last name "Peskin".

Aaron Peskin



Legacy Business Registry Application



Business Information

Business name: Lien Ying Tai Chi Chuan Academy

Business owner name(s): Simmone L. Kuo

Identify the person(s) with the highest ownership stake in the business

Current business address: 15A Walter U. Lum Place, San Francisco, CA 94108

Telephone: (415) 362 – 4180

Email:

Mailing address (if different than above):

Website:

Facebook:

Twitter:

7-digit San Francisco Business Account Number (BAN): 0 0 5 2 3 9 8

Do any of these describe your business? (select all that apply)

Requires at least 51% of the business be owned, operated, and controlled by the business designation below.

☒ **Immigrant-Owned Business**

☐ **Owned by Person with a Disability**

☐ **LGBTQ+-Owned Business**

☐ **Veteran-Owned Business**

☒ **Minority-Owned Business***

☒ **Woman-Owned Business**

**Minority is defined as one or more of the following racial or ethnic groups: American Indian or Alaska Native; Asian; Black or African American; Hispanic or Latino; Middle Eastern or North African; Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander*

Contact Person Information

Contact person name: Melissa Medel

Contact person title: Assistant

Contact telephone: () –

Contact email:

Business Location(s)

List the business address of the original San Francisco location, the start date of business, and the dates of operation at the original location. Check the box indicating whether the original location of the business in San Francisco is the founding location of the business.

If the business moved from its original location and has had additional addresses in San Francisco, identify all other addresses and the dates of operation at each address.

Original San Francisco address: 11 Brenham Place (Renamed Walter U. Lum Place in 1985) Zip Code: 94108

Is this location the founding location of the business? (Y/N): Y

Dates at this location: From: June 1965 To: 1989

Other address (if applicable): 15A Walter U. Lum Place Zip Code: 94108

Dates at this location: From: 1989 To: Present

Other address (if applicable): Zip Code:

Dates at this location: From: To:

Other address (if applicable): Zip Code:

Dates at this location: From: To:

Other Address (if applicable): Zip Code:

Dates at this location: From: To:

Other address (if applicable): Zip Code:

Dates at this location: From: To:

Applicant Disclosures

San Francisco Taxes, Business Registration, Licenses, Labor Laws and Public Information Release.

This section is verification that all San Francisco taxes, business registration, and licenses are current and complete, and there are no current violations of San Francisco labor laws. This information will be verified. A business deemed not current with all San Francisco taxes, business registration, and licenses, or has current violations of San Francisco labor laws, will not be eligible to apply for grants through the Legacy Business Program.

In addition, we are required to inform you that all information provided in the application will become subject to disclosure under the California Public Records Act.

Please read the following statements and check each to indicate that you agree with the statement. Then sign below in the space provided.

- ☒ I am authorized to submit this application on behalf of the business.
- ☒ I attest that the business is current on all of its San Francisco tax obligations.
- ☒ I attest that the business's business registration and any applicable regulatory license(s) are current.
- ☒ I attest that the Office of Labor Standards and Enforcement (OLSE) has not determined that the business is currently in violation of any of the City's labor laws, and that the business does not owe any outstanding penalties or payments ordered by the OLSE.
- ☒ I understand that documents submitted with this application may be made available to the public for inspection and copying pursuant to the California Public Records Act and San Francisco Sunshine Ordinance.
- ☒ I hereby acknowledge and authorize that all photographs and images submitted as part of the application may be used by the City without compensation.
- ☒ I understand that the Small Business Commission may revoke the placement of the business on the Registry if it finds that the business no longer qualifies, and that placement on the Registry does not entitle the business to a grant of City funds.

Name: SIMMONE KUO

Signature:



Date:

1-17-24

LIEN YING TAI CHI CHUAN ACADEMY

Written Historical Narrative

INTRODUCTION

a. Describe the business. What does it sell or provide?

Lien Ying Tai Chi Chuan Academy has been teaching Chinese martial arts, including Tai Chi Chuan, Pagua (also known as Bagua or Baguazhang), Xing Yi (also known as Xingyiquan), Shaolin Chuan, and weapon forms since 1965. The Academy has been preserving cultural traditions and philosophy by teaching private lessons and contracting with education departments since it was founded.

b. Describe whom the business serves.

When Lien Ying Tai Chi Chuan Academy opened its doors in 1965, it began by servicing the local Chinatown community. Through years of demonstrations, lectures, and involvement in the community, Lien Ying Tai Chi Chuan Academy has been able to reach out to LGBTQ+, Black, Caucasian, AAPI, elderly and disabled San Francisco residents. The business has worked extensively with nonprofit, government, and educational institutions such as Oakland Parks and Recreation, Chinese Cultural Center(CCC), Chinese for Affirmative Action(CAA), Stanford University and San Francisco State University.

c. In about 2-5 words (15-30 characters), describe what the business is known for.

Making Tai Chi accessible to all people through public education and recreation services.

CRITERION 1: The business has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years

a. Provide a short history of the business, including locations and owners.

Lien Ying Tai Chi Chuan Academy was founded by Kuo Lien Ying in June 1965, originally opening up at 11 Brenham Place. Simmone Kuo (Erh Ling Su) immigrated to join him in 1966. In 1985, Brenham Place was renamed Walter U. Lum Place in recognition of the Chinese American civil rights advocate born in San Francisco in 1882. In 1989, Lien Ying Tai Chi Chuan Academy settled their current location at 15A Walter U. Lum Place.

In 1965, Kuo Lien Ying immigrated to the United States and settled in San Francisco's Chinatown, leaving his young wife, Simmone Kuo, behind in Taiwan. At the request of his first U.S. student, David Chin, Kuo began teaching a few students on the roof of a local hotel. After less than a year, Kuo returned to Taiwan to bring Simmone Kuo to San Francisco. While he was

in Taiwan, his students in San Francisco located an empty storefront at 11 Brenham Place, an alley which faced Portsmouth Square Park, which was unfortunately adjacent to a funeral parlor. The empty storefront was available due to the superstitions of the local residents who did not want to inhabit a place next to a mortuary. But according to one of his later students, Henry Look, Kuo often told him, "Don't worry about dead people, worry about live ones." The students converted the storefront into a martial arts studio, with living quarters in the rear. Kuo named his new school Lien-Ying Tai Chi Chuan Martial Arts Academy.¹

Simmone Kuo, his wife, was able to achieve the requirements for becoming a Tai Chi instructor and began helping him at the studio teaching lessons. Sifu Kuo advocated for her and, due to her fluency in English, was invited to teach an early morning Tai Chi class on KPIX. Simmone Kuo Began teaching for San Francisco State University in 1980, lecturing and hosting classes for the Kinesiology Department. For more information on her life, please check out: [Master Simu Kuo](#).

Kuo Lien Ying died in 1984 leaving Simmone Kuo as the sole owner of the business.

b. Provide the ownership history of the business in a consolidated year-to-year format.

1965 to 1984: Kuo Lien Ying; Simmone Kuo (Erh Ling Su)
1984 to Present: Simmone Kuo (Erh Ling Su)

c. Describe any circumstances that required the business to cease operations in San Francisco for any significant length of time.

Lien Ying Tai Chi Chuan Academy has maintained operations since 1965 with no break in business since it was founded. During the 1989 Loma Prieta Earthquake, the building remained intact. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Simu Kuo focused on teaching private students and was still able to maintain cash flow.

CRITERION 2: The business has contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community

a. Describe the business' contribution to the history and/or identity of the neighborhood, community, business sector, or San Francisco as a whole.

Lien Ying Tai Chi Chuan Academy is one of the few remaining Tai Chi and martial arts studios existing in San Francisco that were founded before the 1980s.

The business has contributed to the city of San Francisco by connecting education and political environments in Chinatown through the 1960s and 1980s. In 1976, President Richard Nixon visited China, inspiring a resurgence in Chinese culture. Sifu Kuo immigrated to San Francisco

¹ Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kuo_Lien-ying

during the emergence of the Cultural Revolution and brought with him knowledge and pre-revolution Chinese culture. Despite that, Sifu Kuo was still appreciated as a Chinese national hero for his work as a congressman in China. He held ties with political leaders both in China and in the Bay Area. Many people came to visit him for his advice and knowledge of Tai Chi philosophy, including Bruce Lee.

When the Chinese Cultural Center opened in 1965, Sifu Kuo gave a starting fund to help them begin. When the Chinese for Affirmative Action was looking for space to rent to begin their services, Sifu Kuo and Simmone Kuo donated a building to help the Chinese community in Chinatown. Sifu Kuo truly wanted to share the magic of Tai Chi. He encouraged Simmone to teach Tai Chi and learn English, eventually teaching for KPIX and later on at San Francisco State University.

Lien Ying Tai Chi Chuan Academy has been able to encourage a way of movement that inspired people to wake up early in the morning, exercise, and live a healthy life. In the 1970s, the San Francisco Chronicle wrote a news article noting the popularity of Tai Chi early morning in Portsmouth Square. The reporter was impressed by the vibrancy of the practice, waking up early to begin the day with positive energy and exercise. Sifu Kuo's "youthfulness" (despite his older age!) inspired many people to practice.

b. Is the business associated with significant people or events, either now or in the past?

Kuo Lien Ying was a distinguished and revered martial artist.² At the age of 12, Kuo started training in Northern Style Shaolin Kung-Fu, studying with Master Li Lin in Chang Chuan (Long Fist).³ At age 23, Kuo became one of only four inner-door disciples of Wang Jiao Yu, himself one of only two inner-door students of Yang Banhou. Yang Banhou was the son of Yang Luchan (born Guangping), the originator of what has become known as Guang Ping Yang Tai Chi and known as the founder of Yang-style Tai Chi.⁴

Kuo Lien Ying allegedly became a governor of a province in China, and later a general in the army of Chiang Kai Shek. In 1947, during the Chinese Communist Revolution, he fled to Taiwan, where he became a congressman and opened up a martial arts school.⁵ "Kuo was so confident of his fighting skills that in 1951 he issued a challenge to world boxing champion Joe Louis, to meet him for a fight. In 1972 Kuo claimed to the San Francisco Chronicle, "I could have thrown him."⁶

Kuo Lien Ying moved to San Francisco from Taiwan in 1965 and was among the first Chinese martial arts masters in America to teach Asian fighting arts to American students.⁷

² Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kuo_Lien-ying

³ https://www.chinahand.com/taichi/tc_lineage.htm

⁴ Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kuo_Lien-ying

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

Over the years, Kuo Lien Ying and Simmone Kuo have taught several notable people, including Bruce Lee and Ruth Asawa.

The movie *The Killer Elite* (1975) included scenes that were filmed at Lien Ying Tai Chi Chuan Academy. The movie stars James Caan and Robert Duvall as a pair of elite mercenaries who become bitter rivals and are caught on opposite sides of a proxy war over a foreign dignitary in the streets of San Francisco. It is considered to be among the first American films to feature ninjas. The film was shot in March and April 1974 in several locations in San Francisco, including Chinatown and Portsmouth Square.⁸ Director Sam Peckinpah hired Kuo Lien Ying and many of his students for the scenes of a martial arts school in San Francisco.⁹

c. How does the business demonstrate its commitment to the community?

Lien Ying Tai Chi Chuan Academy has made both monetary and real estate donations to numerous organizations in the city. Kuo helped start both the Chinese Culture Center – donating \$500 to help initiate its development – and the Chinese for Affirmative Action in 1965.

Simmone Kuo, taught at San Francisco State University for over 30 years. She and Kuo Lien Ying donated to SFSU for student scholarships.

On March 29, 1989, the Lien Ying Tai Chi Chuan Academy donated their second building (17 Walter U. Lum Place) to Chinese for Affirmative Action, a local organization that advocates for AAPI civil rights.

d. Has the business ever been referenced in the media, business trade publication, and/or historical documents?

Lien Ying Tai Chi Chuan Academy was the martial arts school featured in the movie *The Killer Elite* in 1975. Kuo Lien Ying and his students were hired for the scenes in the school.

Kuo Lien Ying, Simmone Kuo, and their son Chung Mei are memorialized in the San Francisco Fountain, located on Stockton Street between Sutter and Post streets, which was designed by Bay Area artist Ruth Asawa.

Simmone Kuo taught a Tai Chi program for Oakland-based PBS local television station broadcasted to several states nationally.

e. Has the business ever received any awards, recognition, or political commendations?

Simmone Kuo was recognized by Oakland Parks and Recreation for teaching Tai Chi from September 1972 to June 1976.

⁸ Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Killer_Elite

⁹ Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kuo_Lien-ying

The Kuo family was photographed and recognized by President Jimmy Carter and First Lady Rosalynn Carter as one of the initial donors during the grand opening of the Chinese Cultural Center.

Kuo Lien Ying received a Special Appreciation letter from Stanford University for a lecture he gave in the 1980s.

f. How would the community be diminished if the business were to be sold, relocated, shut down, etc.?

The Lien Ying Tai Chi Chuan Academy is one of the last remaining martial art schools left in Chinatown in San Francisco. If the business were to close, there would be a tremendous loss of history and culture in Chinatown. The Lien Ying Tai Chi Chuan Academy has stood in the same location in front of Portsmouth Square since 1965, and headmaster Simmone Kuo still continues her practice outside at 5:30 a.m. every morning. Lien Ying Tai Chi Chuan Academy stands as a monument to the relationship between Chinese history and San Francisco.

CRITERION 3: The business is committed to maintaining the physical features or traditions that define the business

a. Is the business associated with a culturally significant building, structure, object, signage, mural, architectural detail, neon sign, or any other special physical feature that defines the business?

The exterior of the building is painted yellow, while the interior is decorated with hand painted calligraphies to the philosophy of Tai Chi Chuan and photographs commemorating notable achievements during Kuo's lifetime. Through their generosity in the community, the studio is home to many hand painted portraits and gifts given to the Kuo family.

b. In a few words, describe the main business activity you commit to maintaining.

The Lien Ying Tai Chi Chuan Academy continues to preserve 64 Step Tai Chi by teaching classes and private clients.

c. What is the plan to keep the business open in the long term beyond the current ownership?

There are a few options available to business owner Simmone Kuo regarding the future of Lien Ying Tai Chi Academy. She would like to preserve the building and space as a permanent place in Chinatown to practice Tai Chi. She may also leave it to her son, Chung Mei, to manage upkeep. Her students would hope that there will be a way of preserving the space and maintaining the business either through the family or through a communal enterprise, such as a potential nonprofit.

d. What challenges is the business facing today?

The business is located in an older building which may need funding to maintain and update the facilities. Simone Kuo is still in control of most operations of the business and would benefit from help with additional staffing. The martial art practice of Tai Chi Chuan is a more traditional martial art activity and has recently faced dwindling interest with the younger generation. With more advertising and social media and a more engaged staff, it may be possible to maintain the legacy of the Lien Ying Tai Chi Chuan Academy.

Legacy Business Program staff will add the following details:

a. Features or traditions that define the business and should be maintained for the business to remain on the Legacy Business Registry.

Martial arts training.

b. Other special features of the business location, such as if the property associated with the business is listed on a local, state, or federal historic resources registry.

The Planning Department Historic Resource Status of the building at 15A Walter U. Lum Place is "A - Historic Resource Present." The building is contextually important and appears eligible for the National Register as a contributor to a National Register-eligible Chinatown Historic District through survey evaluations in 1978, 1994, and 1997.







CHINESE FOR AFFIRMATIVE ACTION DEDICATES THIS BUILDING TO LIEN-YING KUO (FORMER CONGRESSMAN IN CHINA) AND SIMMONE EING RU LOO KUO, MASTER TEACHERS OF TAI-CHI CHUAN IN THE UNITED STATES, AND TO THEIR SON CHUNG MEI KUO FOR THEIR DONATION OF THIS BUILDING AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE CHINESE AMERICAN COMMUNITY. CAA REAFFIRMS TO MASTERS KUO AND THE COMMUNITY OUR COMMITMENT TO PROMOTE EQUALITY AND JUSTICE FOR ALL CHINESE AMERICANS.

DEDICATED ON MARCH 29, 1985

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

華人權益促進會謹以本會址紀念
前國大代表、太極拳宗師郭建蔭，
夫人盧澄如，哲嗣郭中美，永誌他
們捐贈本厦及對華人社區的貢獻
我們重申，為促進華人的平等權利
，我們會努力不懈。

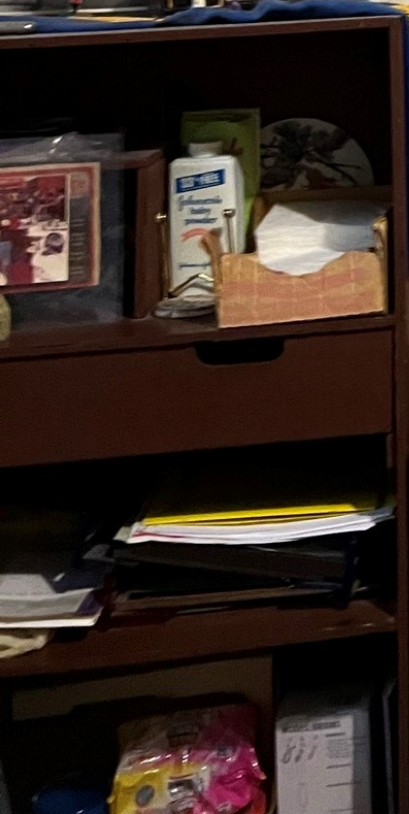
華人權益促進會謹識

一九八五年三月二十九日

加州三藩市



三國演義
赤壁之戰
長江東逝
浪花淘盡
英雄非
茂敗
青山依
在
幾度
夕陽紅

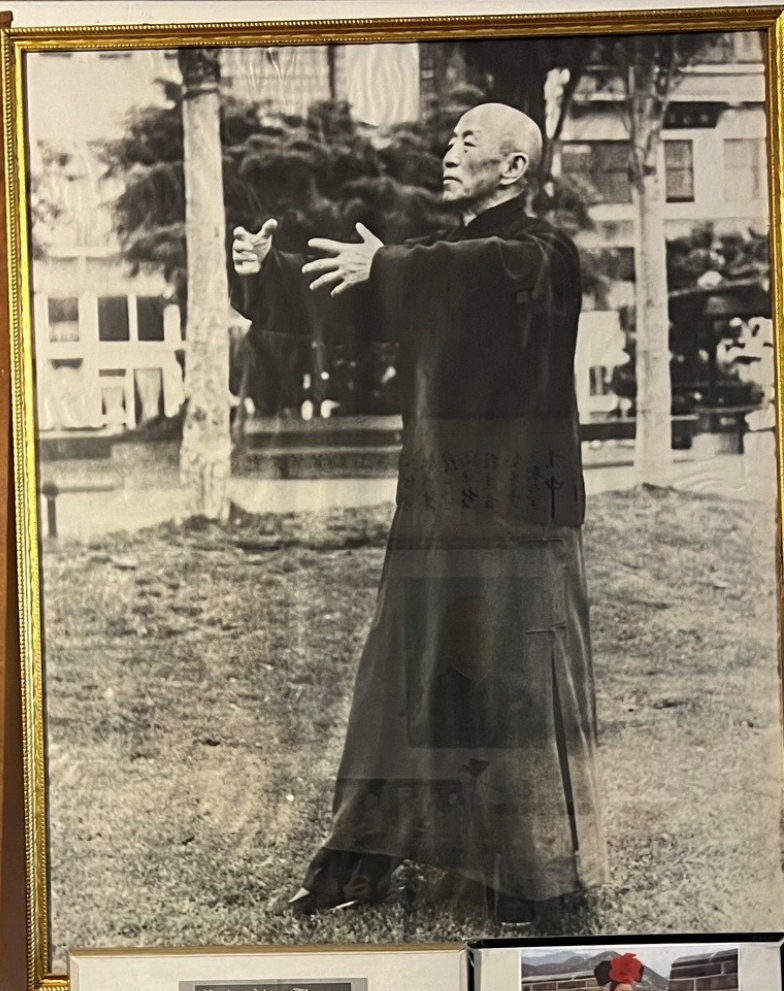


郭盧榮如女史

從中華國術揚威

先生指導之功實不可磨此中受教不忘之義云

承蒙風光 拜書



曾向世界拳王挑戰

連蔭園術大師 紀念

自十八年開始結宇宙格迄今已百五十週年而今年七十有七老亦經風骨腰剛占健

Palo Alto Times



Lunge, slash, kick-Chinese fighting art demands skill

Chinese fighting art shown to adherents of Stanford



chi chuan

chi chuan

木
大原野陳都居士亦持書與王叔洲書

宝剑鋒從磨礪出

庚子年春



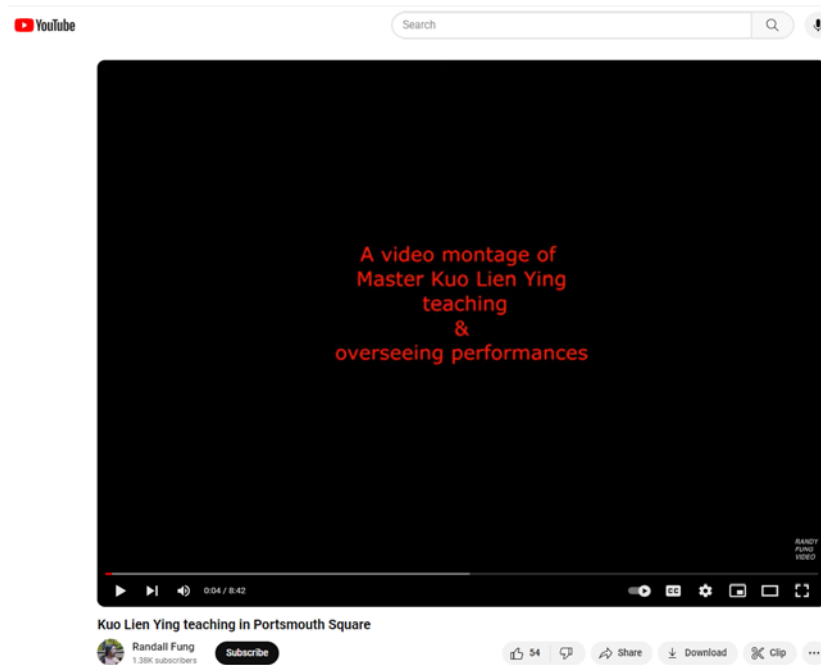
梅花香自苦寒来

太原郭隆都居士王叔洲书

連發園新大師紀念



LIEN YING TAI CHI CHUAN ACADEMY VIDEOS



Kuo Lien Ying teaching in Portsmouth Square

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MP8gkTmba0s>

Published on April 10, 2023

Posted by [Randall Fung](#)

This is a collection of video clips showing Master Kuo Lien Ying teaching and overseeing students in Portsmouth Square, San Francisco back in the 1970 and 1980's. This is another in the "historical" playlist that captures what it was really like to study under the legendary Master Kuo.

I narrated this one to give a better presentation of what you are seeing in the video clips.

These were very special times, Indeed!



A rare interview with Kuo Lien Ying on the benefits of Tai Chi Chuan

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6bDcH9s3HC0>

Published on March 26, 2022

Posted by [Randall Fung](#)

Those of us who directly studied with Master Kuo Lien Ying will always remember his voice, his laughter, his smile. Listening to the very rare footage brings back so many memories.

In 1975, Evening magazine on KPIX did a special on Sifu Kuo Lien Ying and this is a small segment of that show. Jan Yaneharo was the host and interviewed Sifu and a lady from the Chinese Cultural Center came to translate.

The interview took place early in the morning in the Studio. Sifu is sitting on the red couch that sat across from the entrance desk. He wore his favorite beret.

This is a rare chance to hear Sifu Kuo Lien Ying talk about his practice. There will be more videos like this to come in the future, but it took a lot of work with my wife to put in the subtitles as even the translator had quite an accent.

These clips are a treasure from the past.



Grandmaster Kuo Lien-ying in movie Killer Elite (1975)

Qin Luo Huang
143 subscribers

Subscribe



151



Share



Download



Clip



Save



Grandmaster Kuo Lien-ying in movie Killer Elite (1975)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=b98T3P0uX0A>

Published on April 29, 2014

Posted by [Qin Luo Huang](#)

Grandmaster Kuo Lien-ying in movie Killer Elite (1975)



Master Simu Kuo

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=luRdCalGcTo>

Published on November 17, 2020

Posted by [Chinatown Shorts: You Are Here Series](#)

Master Simu Kuo
(Short Doc/11min/2020)

A female headmaster preserves one of the oldest forms of Tai Chi Chuan by passing it down to students in her SF Chinatown studio.

Producer/Director/Editor: James Q. Chan

Camera: Emma Marie Chiang, Jeff den Broeder

Associate Producer: Dorothy G. C. Quock

Music Supervisor: Chris Chung

Production Assistant: Kaitlyn Tran

Legal/Rights Clearance: Justine Jacobs, Cecilia Mao

Footage: The Killer Elite, MGM; Tai Chi Chuan, KPIX; Tai Chi, a film by Larry Howe

Tai Chi Students: Kaitlyn Tran, Mike & Miyoko McDevitt

Special Thanks: Master Simu Kuo, Lien Ying Tai Chi Academy, Matthew Ken Scott, Pamela Kong

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www.chinatownshorts.com



Venice Tai Chi—Lien Ying Taijiquan Academy 3

To Prolong Life & Endow It With the Youth Of Eternal Spring

“The end purpose of Tai-Chi Chuan is to prolong life and to endow it with the youth of eternal springtime”, from the Song of the 13 Tai-Chi Chuan Postures.

Tai-Chi Chuan consists of 64 motions. It is good for men and women, the young and old alike. They can all practice it. When a healthy person practices it, it will make them healthy all the time. When a sick person practices it, it will cure his sickness. It can also help people to recover their mental stability and build up strength in the body.

As the motion is neither slow nor fast, it is easy to practice. You can finish practicing one set of Tai-Chi Chuan in 10 to 15 minutes. It is passive in its application. Its softness can overcome hardness; its slowness can overcome what is fast. It changes wonderfully in facing all opposing motion. The end purpose of Tai- Chi Chuan is to prolong life and endow it with the youth of eternal spring.



For Almost 40 years, William Varela has been learning & teaching Taijiquan.

History

Although we fully understand that **History is Myth** and that no one *really* knows the true history of Tai Chi Chuan...here's a little background info to spark your imagination and appreciation of this valuable cultural transmission. As you ponder story below, please remember the mysteries of the past pale in significance to the immediacy of our own reality in the **Now**:

My teacher's husband and Sifu—Kuo Lien Ying—was one of only 3 students to receive the transmission of the Wu Dang Mountain practice known as Taijiquan from Sifu Wang Chiao-Yu.

This unique 64 movement set combined Taoist longevity and enlightenment practices—such as the twisting/twining practice of Pa Kua Chang with various nervous system/energy exercises, Chinese medical theory, Buddhist derived Shaolin Chuan, Hsing-I Chuan and the essential Nei Gung practice known as...

INTERNAL SYSTEM (EXERCISE) 内功 YU CHOU CHUANG UNIVERSAL POST STANCE 宇宙椿



拳無拳
意無意
無意之中是真意
道真意不真
修道往勞身

Fist, and yet, not a fist.
Meaning, and yet, no meaning;
Within the midst of meaninglessness is the true meaning.
To speak of truth is to be intelligent of no truth;
To cultivate the Way is to leave the body of toil.
From Classic of Tai-Chi Chuan

Upon the partial re-opening of Bamboo Curtain in the early 80's Sifu Kuo Lien Ying was one of the first US based Chinese to be invited by the PRC to visit his homeland. Though a bitter rival to Chairman Mao, Sifu was renowned for his patriotism to China, as a national hero during both the Sino-Japanese conflicts and WW2, & for his attainment of the highest level of expertise in Taijiquan.

Upon returning to the land of his birth, Sifu searched long and hard for his 2 Kung Fu brothers taught together by Sifu Wang...but to no avail.

All that remained, and in a very pervasive way were the various Family named schools of Tai Chi Chuan created post 1850 at the dawn of the widespread commercialization of Tai Chi Chuan. This teaching of the general public occurred after Yang Lu Chan and his son Pan Hou left their imperial service upon the rise to power of the Empress Dowager Cixi and her subsequent cleansing of the imperial household.



The Empress Dowager Cixi

This popularization of the art form was driven by gratuitously marketing the fame of Yang Lu Chan—known as Yang the Unbeatable.

This status as folk hero's attributed to both Lu Chan and Pan Hou, was gained during their utterly forced tenure as instructor to the Ching Emperors personal guard—the royal Knights of the Empire. It's worth pointing out that the Ching Dynasty was the result of foreign conquering of China by their Northern Manchurian neighbors in 1636. And the pattern was to oppress the native Han people. Sometimes that oppression manifested as compulsory service. Which is the case with the Yang Lu Chan. Once his martial prowess had been revealed to the Emperor the coveting of this skill arose>>>leading to the forced servitude at the pain of death if resisted. It is in this pot of oppression that Yang and his son unfortunately found themselves within.

Heading back to Sifu being only 1 of 3 students of Sifu Wong, and the reason why only 3 students were taught. As both Yang & his son—due to their forced labor— secretly taught only a watered-down version of the art to the Imperial household. Out of fear of violent reprisal from the Ching, Sifu Wong dared not teach what he had been taught privately by the Yangs until after the fall of the Ching dynasty in 1916. Of particular note is that by the time the Ching had finally been vanquished Sifu Wong was 94 years old & had kept his art and practice in total secrecy. It is at this point in time that Sifu Kuo met

Wong. According to Kuo, his spirit was extremely strong & bright as he walked with a stride “as if he was flying”. After achieving the chin-2-toe posture, Kuo became a disciple and trained with Wong until his passing.

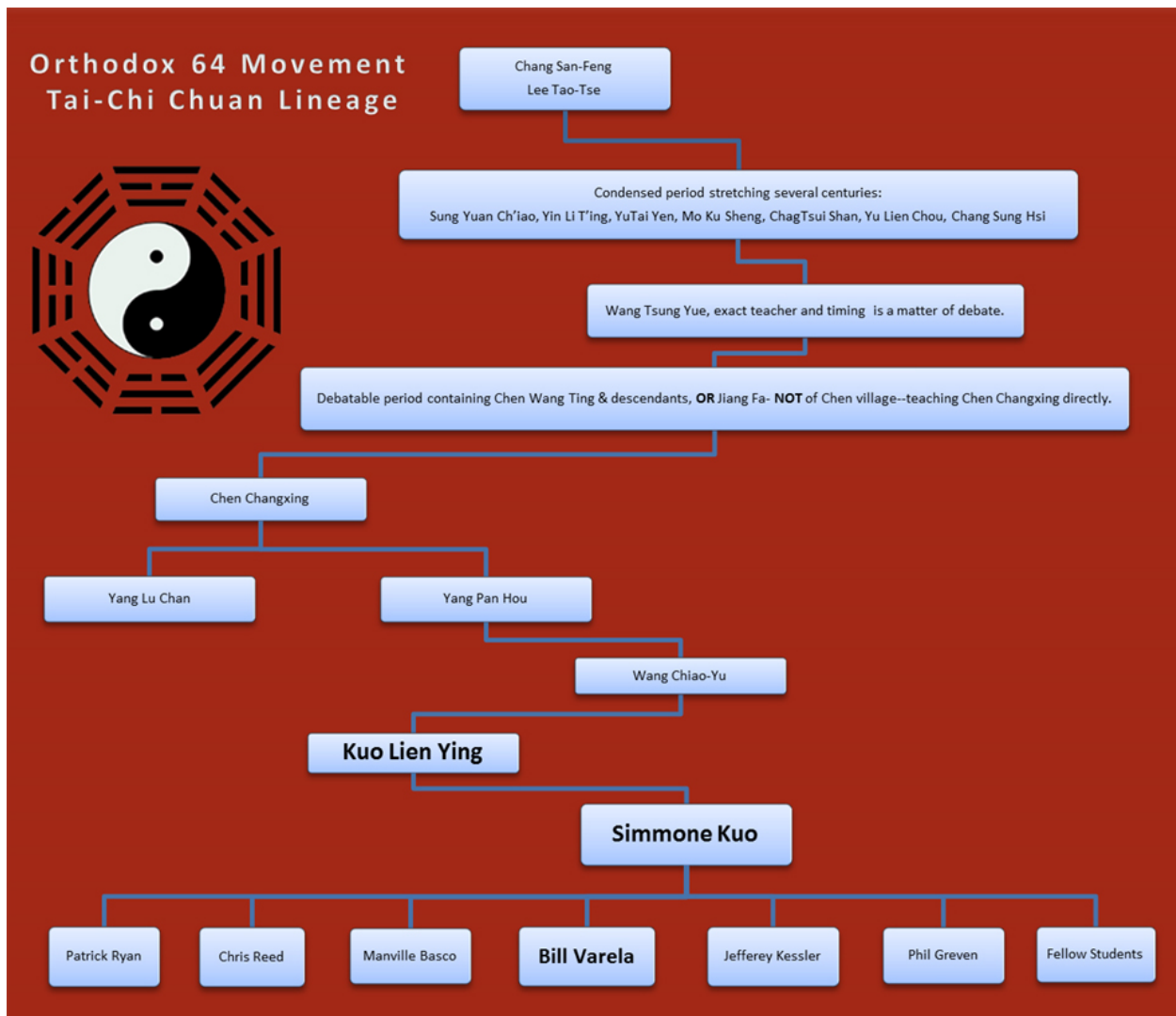


And importantly, Kuo vowed to his teacher to not alter the shape or movements of the form and to pass this treasure of China unadulterated and intact only to students of a virtuous nature.

And by the 1980's at Kuo's homecoming to China, the commercialized versions of Tai Chi had become the most popular form of exercise in the country with 10's if not 100's of million avid adherents.

To clarify, **the Taijiquan taught here pre-dates and is not borne from the popularized teachings.** Rather, our practice has continued to be handed down personally, 1-on-1, in an exacting approach to relatively few from each generation.

The video clip below was filmed at a demonstration at SF State University over 10 years ago, In this short clip Simu mentions the training of both your instructor—she calls me Bill— and his close brother in training Sifu Chris Reed. Most importantly, Simu clarifies the practice of our old school Tai Chi Chuan lineage has been lost in China since the exodus to Taiwan after the rise of Chairman Mao and the PRC.





學生們請記住

一日練一日功

一日不練十日鬆

緊練崩 慢練鬆

不緊不慢練成功！

郭連蔭留言

To My Students:

Practice, Practice Everyday

Miss One Day Lose Ten Days

No Hurry No Slack

A Well-Paced Practice

Is The Way To Success

from Sifu Kuo Lien-Ying



LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

HEARING DATE: July 17, 2024

Filing Date: June 18, 2024
Case No.: 2024-005659LBR
Business Name: Lien Ying Tai Chi Chuan Academy
Business Address: 15A Walter U. Lum Place
Zoning: Chinatown Visitor Retail Zoning District
Priority Equity Geographies SUD
50-N Height and Bulk District
Cultural District: Not Applicable
Block/Lot: 0209/016
Applicant: Melissa Medel
15A Walter U. Lum Place
Nominated By: Supervisor Aaron Peskin
Located In: District 3
Staff Contact: Claire Feeney – (628) 652-7313
claire.feeney@sfgov.org

Recommendation: Adopt a Resolution to Recommend Approval

Business Description

Lien Ying Tai Chi Chuan Academy is a martial arts studio that teaches Tai Chi Chuan, Pagua, Xing Yi, Shaolin Chuan, and weapons forms. It has been continuously operating in Chinatown since its opening in 1965. Lien Ying Tai Chi Chuan Academy stewards the cultural traditions and philosophies of Tai Chi and martial arts via private lessons, group classes, lectures, demonstrations, and educational community partnerships.

Lien Ying Tai Chi Chuan Academy was established by Sifu (Master) Kuo Lien Ying. Kuo Lien Ying immigrated to the United States from Taiwan in 1965 and settled in San Francisco's Chinatown and his wife Simmone Kuo joined him the next year. Kuo Lien Ying started by teaching individual students in 1965 and quickly expanded the business to include more pupils, establishing the first business location at 11 Brenham Place. Together with his students, they converted the vacant storefront into a martial arts studio with living quarters at the rear. Simmone Kuo worked to

achieve the requirements for being a Tai Chai instructor and helped Kuo Lien Ying run the business and teach classes.

Lien Ying Tai Chi Chuan Academy has worked with many local organizations, including the Oakland Parks, Recreation & Youth Department, Chinese Cultural Center of San Francisco, Chinese for Affirmative Action, Stanford University, and San Francisco State University. Simmone Kuo personally taught classes for the Kinesiology Department of San Francisco State University for over 30 years. They have also supported Chinatown and the Chinese American community through charitable efforts. Kuo Lien Ying supported the founding of both the Chinese Cultural Center and Chinese for Affirmative Action, including donating the building they owned at 17 Walter U. Lum Place to be the headquarters of Chinese for Affirmative Action.

Staff Analysis

Review Criteria

1. *When was business founded?*

The business was founded in 1965.

2. *Does the business qualify for listing on the Legacy Business Registry? If so, how?*

Yes. Lien Ying Tai Chi Chuan Academy qualifies for listing on the Legacy Business Registry because it meets all of the eligibility Criteria:

- a. Lien Ying Tai Chi Chuan Academy has operated continuously in San Francisco for 59 years.
- b. Lien Ying Tai Chi Chuan Academy has contributed to the history and identity of the Chinatown neighborhood and San Francisco.
- c. Lien Ying Tai Chi Chuan Academy is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the organization.

3. *Is the business associated with a culturally significant art / craft / cuisine / tradition?*

Yes. The business is associated with the 64 Step Tai Chi form. This is a set of combined physical movements from Taoist culture that support longevity and enlightenment.

4. *Is the business or its building associated with significant events, persons, and / or architecture?*

Yes. Lien Ying Tai Chi Chuan Academy was founded by Kuo Lien Ying, a distinguished and revered martial artist. Kuo Lien Ying was also previously a general in the army during the Chinese Communist Revolution and a congressman in Taiwan. Kuo Lien Ying trained under other famous experts, Master Li Lin and Wang Jiao Yu. The legacy of teachers goes back to the origins of the Guang Ping Yang Tai Chi style: Wang Jiao Yu was trained by Yang Banhou, who was the son Yung Luchan, the creator of the Guang Ping Yang Tai Chi style. Notable students of Lien Ying Tai Chi Chuan Academy include artist Ruth Asawa and legendary martial artist and actor Bruce Lee.

The original location of Lien Ying Tai Chi Chuan Academy was used as a filming location for the movie *The Killer Elite* in 1975 which starred James Caan and Robert Duvall. The movie is considered one of the first American films to feature ninjas. Kuo Lien Ying and many of his students were cast in the scenes which were filmed on site.

5. Is the property associated with the business listed on a local, state, or federal historic resource registry?

Yes, the site is listed as a potential contributing historic resource to the Chinatown Historic District, which is eligible for both the California Register of Historical Resources and the National Register of Historic Places.

6. Is the business mentioned in a local historic context statement?

No, not as of the date of this Executive Summary.

7. Has the business been cited in published literature, newspapers, journals, etc.?

Yes. As previously noted, the original location of Lien Ying Tai Chi Chuan Academy was used as a filming location for the movie *The Killer Elite* in 1975 which starred James Caan and Robert Duvall. The movie is considered one of the first American films to feature ninjas. Kuo Lien Ying and many of his students were cast in the scenes which were filmed on site. Simmone Kuo herself taught a Tai Chi program for the Oakland-based KPIX PBS local television station. The episodes were broadcast to several states across the country.

Kuo Lien Ying, Simmone Kuo, and their son Chung Mei are all carved into the famous San Francisco Fountain by renowned artist Ruth Asawa. Located in a public plaza at 345 Stockton Street, The San Francisco Fountain is a bronze sculpture from 1970 that features bas relief scenes of the people, monuments, and daily life of San Francisco.

Racial and Social Equity Analysis

On July 15th, 2020 the San Francisco Historic Preservation Commission adopted [Resolution No. 1127](#) centering Preservation Planning on racial and social equity. Understanding the benefits, burdens, and opportunities to advance racial and social equity that proposed Preservation Planning documents provide is part of the Department's Racial and Social Equity Initiative. This is also consistent with the Mayor's Citywide Strategic Initiatives for equity and accountability and with the Office of Racial Equity, which required all Departments to conduct this analysis.

The Legacy Business Program is deeply intertwined with these goals. One of the primary purposes of the Legacy Business Program is to maintain San Francisco's cultural fabric and to foster civic engagement and pride by assisting long-operating businesses remain in the city. The Legacy Business Registry was established to recognize longstanding, community-serving businesses that are valuable cultural assets of the city. These businesses, ranging from restaurants to art galleries to tire shops to community shelters, are key to sustaining the racial and social diversity in San Francisco and adding to the identity and character of our city and the many communities within it.

Lien Ying Tai Chi Chuan Academy is a woman, immigrant, and minority owned business and under its original founding, it was immigrant and minority owned. Lien Ying Tai Chi Chuan Academy has served a community of newly immigrated Chinese and Taiwanese people from its founding, acting as a cultural connection from

Chinatown to their heritage and traditions. Over the years, Lien Ying Tai Chi Chuan Academy has connected with the LGBTQ+, Black, and Asian American and Pacific Islander communities, as well as elderly and disabled peoples, through demonstrations, lectures, and community involvement.

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business

Location(s) associated with the business:

Current Locations:

- 15A Walter U. Lum Place (1989 – Present)

Previous (No Longer Extant) Locations:

- 11 Brenham Place (1965 – 1989)
 - Brenham Place was renamed to Walter U. Lum Place in 1985. The street was renamed in honor of Walter U. Lum, a San Francisco-born Chinese American civil rights advocate. This original location is the five-story building immediately next door to the current location.

Recommended by Applicant

- 64 Step Tai Chi form
- Hand-painted calligraphies on the interior walls
- Hand-painted portraits
- Historic and commemorative photographs

Basis for Recommendation

The Department recommends the Historic Preservation Commission adopt a resolution recommending the business listed above be adopted by the Small Business Commission to the Legacy Business Registry.

ATTACHMENTS

Draft Resolution

Legacy Business Registry Application:

- Application Review Sheet
- Section 1 – Business / Applicant Information
- Section 2 – Business Location(s)
- Section 3 – Disclosure Statement
- Section 4 – Written Historical Narrative
 - Criterion 1 – History and Description of Business
 - Criterion 2 – Contribution to Local History
 - Criterion 3 – Business Characteristics
- Contextual Photographs and Background Documentation



HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

DRAFT RESOLUTION NO.

HEARING DATE: July 17, 2024

Case No.: 2024-005659LBR
Business Name: Lien Ying Tai Chi Chuan Academy
Business Address: 15A Walter U. Lum Place
Zoning: Chinatown Visitor Retail Zoning District
Priority Equity Geographies SUD
50-N Height and Bulk District
Block/Lot: 0209/016
Applicant: Melissa Medel
15A Walter U. Lum Place
Nominated By: Supervisor Aaron Peskin
Located In: District 3
Staff Contact: Claire Feeney – (628) 652-7313
claire.feeney@sfgov.org

ADOPTING FINDINGS RECOMMENDING TO THE SMALL BUSINESS COMMISSION APPROVAL OF THE LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY NOMINATION FOR LIEN YING TAI CHI CHUAN ACADEMY CURRENTLY LOCATED AT 15A WALTER U. LUM PLACE BLOCK/LOT 0209/016.

WHEREAS, in accordance with Administrative Code Section 2A.242, the Office of Small Business maintains a registry of Legacy Businesses in San Francisco (the "Registry") to recognize that longstanding, community-serving businesses can be valuable cultural assets of the City and to be a tool for providing educational and promotional assistance to Legacy Businesses to encourage their continued viability and success; and

WHEREAS, the subject business has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years; and

WHEREAS, the subject business has contributed to the City's history and identity; and

WHEREAS, the subject business is committed to maintaining the traditions that define the business; and

WHEREAS, at a duly noticed public hearing held on July 17, 2024, the Historic Preservation Commission reviewed documents, correspondence and heard oral testimony on the Legacy Business Registry nomination.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Historic Preservation Commission hereby recommends that Lien Ying Tai Chi Chuan Academy qualifies for the Legacy Business Registry under Administrative Code Section 2A.242(b)(2) as it has operated for 30 or more years and has continued to contribute to the community.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Historic Preservation Commission hereby recommends safeguarding of the below listed physical features and traditions for Lien Ying Tai Chi Chuan Academy.

Location(s):

Current Locations:

- 15A Walter U. Lum Place (1989 – Present)

Previous (No Longer Extant) Locations:

- 11 Brenham Place (1965 – 1989)

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:

- 64 Step Tai Chi form
- Hand-painted calligraphies on the interior walls
- Hand-painted portraits
- Historic and commemorative photographs

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Historic Preservation Commission's findings and recommendations are made solely for the purpose of evaluating the subject business's eligibility for the Legacy Business Registry, and the Historic Preservation Commission makes no finding that the subject property or any of its features constitutes a historical resource pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5(a).

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Historic Preservation Commission hereby directs its Commission Secretary to transmit this Resolution and other pertinent materials in the case file 2024-005659LBR to the Office of Small Business on July 17, 2024

Jonas P. Ionin
Commission Secretary

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

RECUSE:

ADOPTED: July 17, 2024