Britain's Chinese come out on top: Advanced English:

Britannia's Chinese come out on top!

Just behind Trafalgar Square, not far from Piccadilly Circus, lies Soho, famed as the centre for London's night life, with its bars and restaurants and theatres. But these days Soho is famed too as the heart of London's "Chinatown". Walk down Gerrard Street, where the road signs are in Chinese and the phone boxes have tiled roofs, and you could easily imagine yourself in Hong Kong. Britain's Chinese community has taken root in the heart of the capital, and is doing very well, thank you.

Martin Chow, a student at London university, is perfectly frank.

"My parents came to Britain over 25 years ago, from Hong Kong. My dad couldn't speak much English, and my mum couldn't speak a word. She still doesn't speak it very well. But they pushed me through school, and made sure I got to university. In June, I'll be graduating with a degree in computer engineering. I should be able to get a very good job quite quickly."

In a year's time, Martin will almost certainly have joined the ranks of the well-educated well-paid Chinese British, who make up one of the biggest success stories in modern Britain.

Forty years ago, most of the Chinese immigrants in Britain were poorly educated, and worked in arduous conditions in relatively poorly paid jobs, notably in catering; but according to a survey published last Spring, Britain's 170,000 Chinese are now the best qualified, most highly educated and most economically successful ethnic group in the United Kingdom.

Over 50% of all young Chinese British now get university degrees or other higher education diplomas — about double the national average; and unemployment among
Chinese British is lower than for any other ethnic group. Martin Chow has good reason to be confident.

Like many of the Hong Kong Chinese who came to Britain in the 1960's and 1970's, Wu Chow, Martin's father, arrived almost penniless. Working long hours as a cook in a restaurant, and living very frugally, Wu nevertheless managed to save up some of his meagre earnings, and within five years had enough money in the bank to be able to open his own restaurant.

Wu's Chinese Takeaway was certainly not luxurious; however, situated near the middle of a small town in the English Midlands, it provided a service that no other local restaurant (except for a fish 'n' chip shop) was providing: carry-out food at affordable prices; it soon became popular.

The takeaway was very much a family business, the Chows lived in a flat near the shop, and Wu and his wife served Chinese food from 10 a.m. until 10 p.m. six days a week. Sometimes, the shop would stay open later, till 11 or midnight. Martin and his brother Brian would help out after school most days, running errands, chopping vegetables, or washing the pans.

In spite of this, Wu made sure that his children did their schoolwork properly; if something had to be learned for homework, Martin and Brian were not allowed to go to bed until they knew it.

"Yes, we had to work hard even when we were quite small," says Martin, "But it seemed quite normal to us. Everyone in the family worked hard. Chinese people believe in hard work and in family values; it's part of our tradition, and I think that's why we're successful."

The experience of the Chow family was mirrored by thousands of other Chinese immigrant families all over Britain. While most Asian and West Indian immigrants tended to group together and form concentrated ethnic communities in specific towns and cities, the first generation of Chinese immigrants dispersed nationwide, specialising in restaurants and takeaways, and determined to make sure that their own children would never experience the poverty and hardship that they often had to endure.

Sociologists point out that other immigrant groups in history have followed the classic "rags-to-riches" path; but none before has ever done so in the space of a single generation.

Today's young Chinese British are ambitious and hard-working; and it is not just the young men. Unlike some other ethnic groups, Chinese parents in Britain are as keen to encourage their daughters as their sons, and plenty of young Chinese women are now graduating as lawyers, doctors and accountants. Indeed, the differences in qualifications and earnings between men and women among "second generation
Chinese British" are less than they are for any other ethnic group, including "ethnic British".

Martin's girlfriend, Tania (born to Chinese parents in Singapore) should qualify as a lawyer next year.

"I think we can look forward to a fairly comfortable life, for us and our children" says Martin. "That's the reward for hard work, and its part of our way of life. Look at Hong Kong and Taiwan and Singapore, and look at the way China's booming now people have a bit more freedom!"

"Would you go back and live in the Far East?"

"Maybe, but I don't think so. After all, I was born in England, and I like it here. I know I'm Chinese, but I've got a British passport! I feel I'm English too!"

**WORDS**

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STUDENTS' WORKSHEET

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Blank-fill exercise:

_Complete these extracts from the article, filling in the blanks with alternative expressions to those in the printed article. Think creatively in order to find appropriate alternative expressions to use._

"My parents came to Britain________________________, from Hong Kong. My dad couldn't speak much English, and my mum________________________.
She still doesn't speak it very well. But they pushed me through school, and made sure I got to university________________________. I'll be graduating with a degree in computer engineering. I should be able to ___________________________, a very good job quite ____________________________ "

In a year's time, Martin __________________have joined the ranks of the well-educated well-paid Chinese British, who________________________ one of the biggest success stories in ______________ Britain.....
(one paragraph omitted)

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Wu's Chinese Takeaway was certainly not luxurious; however, ______________ near the ______________ of a small town in the English Midlands, it provided a service that no other local restaurant (except a fish 'n' chip shop) was __________________________, carry-out food at affordable prices.