

**Launch of book “Keep My Memory Safe: Fook Soo Am, the Pagoda” on  
Thursday 15 June 2023 at 17:00 hrs at Audi Zentrum, Réduit**

Good afternoon

At the outset, let me express my sincere appreciation for the honour I have been given to officiate the launching ceremony of the book “**Keep My Memory Safe: Fook Soo Am, the Pagoda**” written by Dr. Stephanie Chitpin.

Dr. Stephanie Chitpin left Mauritius as a teenager on a Canadian scholarship and eventually settled there as a Professor of Educational Leadership at the Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa.

She is the recipient of the 2020 Research Excellence Award. She is the Series Editor of **Transforming Education through Critical Leadership, Policy and Practice**. She is also the founder of the Equitable Leadership Network: ‘**Understanding Leadership in Educational Contexts – A Case Study Approach**’, published in 2021.

The book “**Keep my Memory Safe**” is a unique immigration story of someone born in Hong Kong, grew up in Mauritius, and thrives in Canada. This is also an inspiring story, from a little helper in a Buddhist temple to a successful and renowned professor in a Canadian university.

Stephanie was determined to get an education. Despite classmates' name calling—bastard and more—, the shame of being an orphan raised in a temple, tragic deaths, and other obstacles, she persevered. She has to be good in everything. Everything mattered to her, and one wrong move could send her hurtling back to nothingness

Although Ah Pak, her foster mother had other plans for her, Mr. Chui, another benefactor, stood by her with diplomacy and tact as she pursued her education, first in Mauritius and then at the University of Guelph in Canada.

### **Ladies and gentlemen**

Stephanie forged her own path despite the many obstacles presented by poverty and being a foreigner. That she was ultimately able to create a different life for herself is a testament to her strength and perseverance; that she is able to reflect on her experiences with equal measures of wisdom and compassion is a testament to her deep faith and love of family.

Stephanie shared her stories in this memoir to reconnect with her roots, her guardians, her friends, her family, Mauritius, and Canada.

This book which recorded many significant moments in Stephanie's life is written in a simple language which makes it easy reading from cover to cover. It affords a rare opportunity to have a window into life in a Chinese home and the daily routine in a pagoda. The facts are arranged in an organised fashion, thus helping the biography to flow smoothly for the readers.

Professor Chitpin's memoir will make you laugh, cry, and be swept away by the celebration of love as it exists in real life. Stephanie's memoir is an inspiration, a

truly bright light of valour in the cause of justice. It is about relationships, feelings, betrayals and revelations. **Keep My Memory Safe** is about survival as an orphan to becoming a bright star in academia.

Stephanie Chitpin “**exposes the fragility of our lives and shows how for many children from disadvantaged backgrounds, there is no easy path to success.**” wrote Richard Barwell, Dean, Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa.

In order to give back part of what she received as a migrant orphan, Stephanie has established a scholarship in the name of Ah-Feeti-Ah Pak, to help racialized students including members of Indigenous, Métis, Inuit and visible minority communities to thrive in their academic studies. All purchases for this memoir will go to the scholarship directly.

Stephanie shared some philosophical thoughts with her readers. On page 73 she wrote “*Beggars are human beings, like you and me. We don’t know what happened to them in their past life. Nobody wants to be a beggar or homeless. But circumstances put them in the position they are in, and we need to show them we care and respect them.*”

I also appreciated what she wrote on page 100 about “*suffering*”. For her, life itself is a form of suffering. The rich who come to pray suffer because of their riches, while the poor suffer because of their poverty, those without a family suffer because they don’t have a family, and people who do have a family suffer because of their family. Those who pursue worldly pleasures suffer because of their indulgences, and those who abstain from worldly pleasures suffer because of their abstention. We all suffer, though not all suffering is equal.

## **Ladies and gentlemen**

Perhaps, our unique experiences are the most important of our assets. What we have learned about life may prove to be important for other people with similar difficulties and may become a key to a way out. On this point we come across the importance of memoirs and autobiographies: the issues expressed can contribute into the solutions of real problems.

Stephanie I am convinced that your memory will be kept safe in the pagoda. It is my pleasure to convey my congratulations to you and to launch “**Keep My Memory Safe: Fook Soo Am, the Pagoda**”. A truly remarkable book for all to read.