

Professor the Honourable Leung Mei-fun Priscilla

Honorary Fellow Citation



*To climb over the tall mountain
and cross the vast ocean
be it endless scorched earth
or desert most desolate
I still hold high my ideal
my hope
even at the cost of my last drop of energy
I still must reach the other end of the universe*

These simple and innocent lines, penned over four decades ago, foretold the story of a daring and iron-willed individual who would go on to make invaluable contributions to both country and city.

Priscilla Leung's story began in Fuk Loi Estate, Tsuen Wan, where she lived through the everyday challenges and struggles of a working-class family. Her early academic distinction, combined with her desire to receive the best education, soon won her a place at St. Paul's Co-Educational College in Mid-Levels. However, unlike many of her peers who would invariably enter the University of Hong Kong, she opted for The Chinese University of Hong Kong instead. She started off reading English Language and Literature at CUHK, but was soon hit with an existential crisis in her year of exchange at Dickinson College, USA, where she took courses in international relations, and soon discovered she could not speak as adequately about her motherland as her European peers could about theirs.

Upon her return to CUHK, Leung promptly switched to the Department of Government and Public Administration. There, inspired by her mentor Professor Chang Chak-yan, and driven by an urge to understand China first-hand, she took

the then very bold step of heading north – to pursue postgraduate studies in law at Renmin University of China, forgoing seemingly more attractive opportunities for further studies overseas. At Renmin University, she studied with Professor Xu Chongde, one of the most prominent law professors of China and a key drafter of the Hong Kong Basic Law. Her peers were now the best and brightest of the entire country. She immersed herself in the complex realities of China, harsh in terms of material conditions, but stimulating and liberating in intellectual atmosphere. Her intimate encounters with China at the end of the first decade of reform and opening up, and her direct experience with the turbulent student movement in 1989, gave her a longer-term perspective on the country's development, and a full understanding that a huge country with a population of over a billion can only accomplish its reform through technological development and with the abundant patience, endurance and perseverance of its people.

Leung joined the Faculty of Law at the City University of Hong Kong in 1989, dedicating herself to mediating between China's socialist civil law system and the common law system since. At the beginning of her academic career, she saw the urgent need for the wider world to understand the complexities of China law. Hence, she initiated the monumental project of translating select court judgments

of China into English. The significance of the *China Law Reports*, which provided the English-speaking world access to the court judgments of China, was manifold. The reports would help the world understand how a socialist country is ruled under the rule of law, how a judicial system with Chinese characteristics works in practice, and the progress of legal reform in China. They would also promote legal research, legal education and the training of legal personnel concerning foreign matters related to China, making a critical contribution to judicial reform during China's opening up to the West. For her contributions to the project, which was completed in 1995, Priscilla Leung was honored with the Ten Outstanding Young Persons Award in 2000. An important extension of the project was *Selected Edition of China Law Reports 1991-2004*, which covered additional court judgements from 1996 to 2004, many having to do with economic issues, intellectual property, real estate and cases involving foreign investors. As editor-in-chief of the English edition, Leung presented a succinct overview of Chinese legal concepts, the Chinese legal hierarchy and landmarks in legal reform since 1979.

Priscilla Leung has distinguished herself by helping the local community understand aspects of China law relevant to their concerns. She has compared in detail China's

Administrative Procedure Law and the judicial review process in Hong Kong, highlighting differences in legal concepts as well as the role of the court. She has also researched on the laws of marriage, inheritance, adoption, and intellectual property of mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, to help resolve legal cases involving the three regions. Shortly after China announced the Belt and Road Initiative in 2016, Leung helped establish the International Academy of the Belt and Road, to enhance understanding of the laws of Belt and Road countries and facilitate the setting up of dispute resolution mechanisms. She is currently an arbitrator of the China International Economic and Trade Arbitration Commission and an internationally recognized mediator, in addition to being a barrister-at-law.

Priscilla Leung's contribution to the law extends to legal education. She has been a fierce advocate for understanding the Hong Kong Basic Law in conjunction with the National Constitution of China, and the relationship between the two laws. Her monographs on the Basic Law, in both English and Chinese, have been an essential reference on the Basic Law and the tensions between Chinese and Anglo-American approaches to its interpretation. She has been a member of the Hong Kong Basic Law Committee of the National People's Congress Standing Committee since 2018.

After almost two decades of total devotion to legal practice, research and education, Leung decided to take on another role to serve the community. In 2008, she was directly elected to the Legislative Council to represent the Kowloon West constituency. She has brought her wide expertise in legal scholarship and higher education to her role as legislator, which she holds to this day. She has served as chairperson of the Panel on Administration of Justice and Legal Services and of the Panel on Education. She was instrumental in bringing about changes to the Legislative Council Ordinance and the Rules of Procedure.

Priscilla Leung's commitment and passion for the welfare of both China and Hong Kong have been admirable. She would boldly defend the nation in times of challenge even if her stance may have been unpopular at the time. She was vocal in condemning the violence and the unlawful activities carried out under the pretext of civil disobedience in 2019. She has been resolute in enhancing mutual understanding of China and the world in a trying political climate worldwide. She was a rightfully staunch defender of Hong Kong in her 2021 and 2024 video addresses to the United Nations Human Rights Council, in which she calmly, objectively, and resolutely clarified the strengths of "One Country, Two Systems" and the rationale for the Hong Kong

National Security Law.

Priscilla Leung's active engagement with the University dates back to her student days when she served as President of the United College Student Union and as Deputy Editor of the CUHK Student Magazine. Her decades of work bridging the legal traditions of China and the West is testament to the University's proud mission "to bring together China and the West". She readily responded to the University's call for service when she was invited to lecture on "The Rule of Law under 'One Country, Two Systems'" in the General Education China Programme as recently as March this year. She took the opportunity to share with the new generation of CUHK students her youthful dreams and the unconventional decisions she made, encouraging them to have the courage to strive for their dreams as well.

A well-known quote from Lu Xun, the leading figure of modern Chinese literature, sums up Priscilla Leung's career succinctly: "...the earth had no roads to begin with, but when many people pass one way, a road is made."

Citation is written by Professor Lee Hun-tak Thomas, Director of the Office of University General Education
