

Ms Jessie Yu Sau-chu, BBS, MH, JP

Honorary Fellow

Citation

When Ms Jessie Yu Sau-chu—now Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Single Parents Association (HKSPA)—founded the organisation 29 years ago, her dream was to serve single parents, a community often being overlooked in the city. The HKSPA, originally called the Concern Group on Single Parents, has a motto: “Strengthen ourselves, help ourselves, then help others.” This vision has not only defined the HKSPA’s mission and activities but is also a reflection of Ms Yu’s civic career and personal development.

As quoted from *Shuo Yuan* published in Han Dynasty, “Devotion to learning in the prime of youth is like the sun at its peak.” A victim of domestic violence, Ms Yu went through the darkest period of her life in her thirties. When she filed for divorce, she also plucked up the courage to complete her secondary-school education. Self-discipline and perseverance in learning and improvement became her beacon of hope during those difficult days. While she studied full-time for a two-year diploma in social work, she was a single mother raising two daughters alone.

What is especially impressive is that, even when she found it hard to make ends meet, Ms Yu still cared deeply about other single parents. She set up a service hotline to help them in the midst of facing her own daily challenges. Ms Yu also used her ordeals as a spur to analysing other people’s behaviour, deciding to pursue her Bachelor’s degree in psychology, which she was awarded in 1998. She then completed a Master’s degree in social work in 2005. Studying psychology gave her profound insights into the human condition as she recognised how both congenital and acquired factors influence character development, and that there is a close link between behaviour and emotion. Ms Yu thereby successfully transformed her past into a springboard of self-improvement.

Psychology also helped Ms Yu realise that a generous heart is crucial to helping others. Practising what she preaches, she established the Psychological Health Project for Single Parents in 2001, and for 19 years she has turned what she has learned and seen into meticulous care for single parents, encouraging them to know themselves better and helping them to solve their problems. Mencius once said, “Every time Yu the Great thought of those who drowned in floods, he felt as if it were he who drowned them.” Through helping others, Ms Yu displays her empathy and compassion. As a social worker, she embodies the spirit of “when others drown, I drown and when others hurt, I hurt.” When she became responsible for the HKSPA’s team of registered social workers and volunteers, she put herself in the shoes of those they serve, believing that helping others is indeed helping oneself.

Ms Yu encourages her colleagues to practise “the use of self” in the Big Dipper programme, by which they draw on their own experiences to show empathy and respect to those who seek help from the HKSPA. Ms Yu’s principle is to help those in need to solve problems on their own, so they

can rebuild their dignity. Over the years, there have been many beneficiaries of the care, counselling, and even career guidance offered by the HKSPA, which aims to restore their confidence. Held in high esteem and with an extensive record of awards, Ms Yu has not only gained public respect for the HKSPA's many contributions to the community, but she has also been entrusted with important tasks by both the government and the private sector. She has served as a member of the Equal Opportunities Commission, the Social Welfare Advisory Committee, the Commission on Poverty and the Sha Tin District Council. Ms Yu was awarded the Medal of Honour in 2003, appointed as a Justice of the Peace in 2007, and was awarded the Bronze Bauhinia Star by the Hong Kong SAR Government in 2011.

Ms Yu's primary focus has always been on single parents. She is continually thinking of new ways to serve them better and hopes soon to offer more counselling sessions to help relieve the pain and stress of families "trapped in marriage." Just as the Big Dipper constellation lights up the pitch-black sky, Ms Yu tries to point out the route to happiness to those who are struggling.

Mr Chairman, in recognition of Ms Yu's achievements and her distinguished contribution to society, it is my privilege to present Ms Jessie Yu Sau-chu for conferment of an honorary fellowship.

Citation written and delivered by Professor Sitou Sau-ieng

余秀珠女士

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贊辭

余秀珠女士為現任香港單親協會總幹事。29年前，余女士創立了關注單親人士會，並於1996年正式改名為香港單親協會，以「自強、自助、再助人」的理念服務一眾被社會忽略的單親家庭父母，這不但說明協會服務和行動的宗旨，同時亦可反映余女士建立社會事業和呈現個人生命精神的歷程。

漢代《說苑》有言：「壯而好學，如日中之光」——余秀珠女士在30多歲時，飽受家暴及婚變折騰，這可說是她人生中最難熬的時期。後來，她決定離婚，並鼓起勇氣，斷枝再接，完成中學課程。余秀珠女士讀書自律自強的毅力，不屈不撓，首先照亮了自己。之後，在修讀為期兩年的社會工作文憑期間，她既是全職學生，也是獨力撫養兩名女兒的單親母親，那時，她要帶同女兒一起上課，由於當時前夫沒有定期給予贍養費，她找了三份兼職以維持生計。

而令人佩服的是，在這段生活捉襟見肘的日子，余秀珠女士仍然關懷同病相憐的單親人士，成立熱線服務，在自強中照亮別人。余女士在逆境中鍛鍊意志，過去的艱難經歷不單讓她更能洞悉別人的行為，而且也成為她修讀心理學的動力。余女士於1998年完成心理學大學課程，獲頒學位，又於2005年完成社會工作碩士課程。修讀心理學課程使她深入了解人性，明白到人格發展受先天和後天的影響，行為、情緒和心理三者的關係是非常密切的。余女士將經歷轉化為自我完成的跳板，跨越心理暗谷，自強自助，終能開拓出光明的前路。

心理學亦令余女士了解到，要幫助人，首先要有悲天憫人的慈心。余女士知行合一，於2001年設立「單親心理健康」服務項目，19年來，一直實踐其所學、所知、所見，懇切地關懷單親人士，幫助他們了解自己、走出困境。孟子說「禹思天下有溺者，由己溺之也」，余女士確能透過助人以發揮其仁愛和悲憫的精神。余女士投身社會工作者行列，懷著的正是人溺我溺、人苦我苦的情操，而統領單親協會的正職社工和義工團隊，其所秉持的，就是將心比己、設身處地、感同身受態度和助人就是助己的信念。

余秀珠女士勉勵同工學以致用，在「北斗星」崗位上「活用自我」（use of self），運用自身經驗，表現同理心，令求助者在單親協會得到尊重。余女士堅持助人的原則是要提昇求助者自行解決問題的能力，使他們能重拾尊嚴。歷年來，受益於單親協會的情緒關懷、心理輔導、職業介紹，從而建立自信、奮力自強不息者，可說指不勝屈。

香港單親協會為社會所作的貢獻有目共睹，余秀珠女士備受社會大眾敬重，積極為政府及民間機構服務，曾任平等機會委員會會員、社會福利諮詢委員會會員、扶貧委員會會員及沙田區區議員等。2003年獲香港特區政府頒發榮譽勳章、2007年獲頒太平紳士之銜以及於2011年獲政府頒發銅紫荊星章。

余秀珠女士屢受表彰、聲望彌高，而她一直念茲在茲的，就是身在「單親」前後期備受磨難的人士。她期望服務更上層樓，加強前期輔導，幫助「婚困」家庭抒緩精神上的折磨，猶如北斗星光，照亮漆黑夜空，為受困者指引人間快樂之路。

主席先生，為表彰余女士的成就，以及她對社會所作出的卓越貢獻，本人謹恭請閣下頒授榮譽院士銜予余秀珠女士。

贊辭由司徒秀英教授撰寫及宣讀