

California Community Courier

Amal Book Club

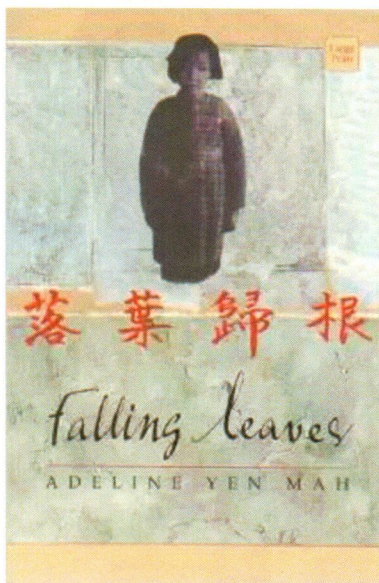
2015

Special Edition

A Brave Girl

Reported by: Lior Navon, Nitzan Naftalovich, Nicol, Shani, Alaa, Hamed, Yosef Abo Qweder

Adeline always thought that maybe one day her father and Niang would love her and be proud of her. From the time she was a young girl, she always believed that they would appreciate her and treat her with love.



When Adeline was born her mother died. Her family always blamed Adeline for her mother's death, that is why her family treated her that way and didn't love and care about her.

Even though Adeline wasn't treated well in her childhood, she always cared about her parents and did whatever they told her to do. Adeline knew that she had to listen to them, even though they didn't treat her well. She

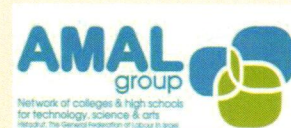
About This Issue

This special issue of the California Community Courier is dedicated to the story of our friend and neighbor, Adeline Yen Mah, a Chinese-American author and physician.

The essays and artwork in this bulletin reflect the reactions and opinions of joint teams of students from the Amal Ramot Beer Sheva and Hura Ahed Multidisciplinary High Schools who participated in the Book Club Program in the 2014-2015 school year. The workshops were facilitated by Yonatan Regav, a correspondent at i24 News.

As part of the program, the students read and discussed an abridged version of Adeline Yen Mah's biographical novel, **Falling Leaves**.

The Book Club program is supported by the U.S. Embassy.



thought that maybe if she did exactly as they told her to, then they would notice her and care about her.

We think that this was always her deepest wish. Even though she knew that would never happen, she still believed in that and took care of them. In addition, it isn't

obvious that a girl that wasn't treated well by her parents all her life would take care of them when they get old, and we appreciate her for that.

We think Adeline is a brave girl and a very special human being.



Niang, the Step-mother

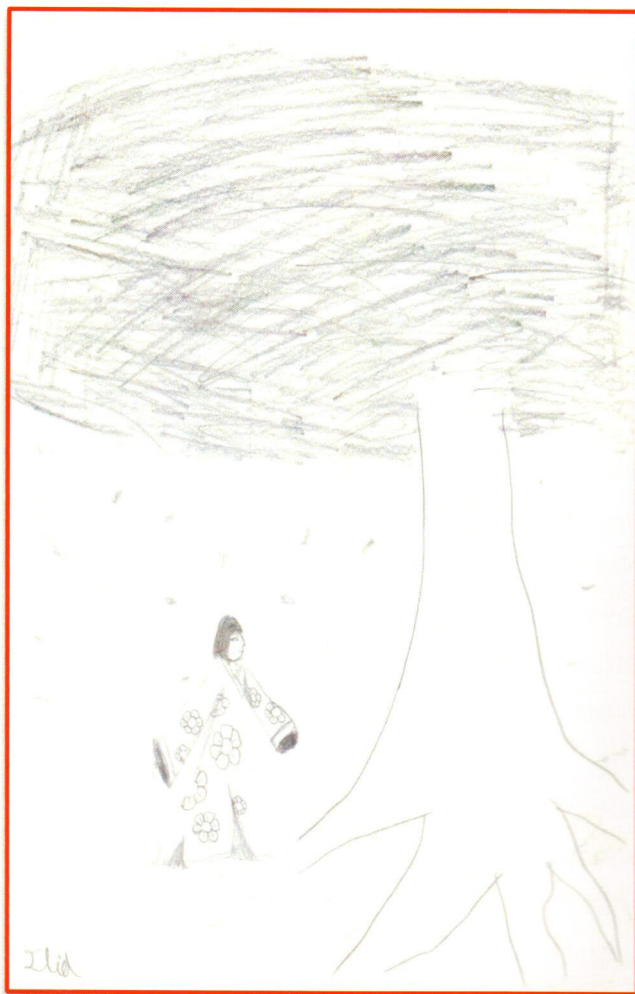
Selfish or simply strict?

Reported by: Jawahir Alreati , Rawaa Abo Qweder, Alaa Abu Srehan, Dalia Abo Qweder, Liron Yona, Tahir Alton, Noam Nahmani

The question whether Niang loved no one but herself is a bit complicated. We are told that Niang had two kids and one of them died after he had eaten unwashed strawberries. Niang loved only one child and he was the one who died. However, we also know that even when the boy she loved was lying in the hospital, Niang took care only of herself and went to a dance party instead of staying with him in the hospital.

From the beginning of the story we know that Niang is different. She was not purely Chinese. She had some European roots. This made her very beautiful, and perhaps this was the reason she felt superior to other people around her. She spent most of her life trying to prove that she was better than the people around her. Perhaps it would

humiliate her to let herself love people who are not on her level, who were more Chinese than she was.



We understand from this that Niang always loved no one but herself and the circumstances we mentioned above brought her to treat her stepchildren in a mean way.



Education

How has it changed over the years?

Reported by: Raz, Lior, Shaked, Omr Abu Elqeaan, Assil Elkrenawy, Wasim Elatrash, Rana Elsayed

We think that over the last 50 years the idea of "proper education" has changed and the education we receive today is very different from the one Adeline's generation received.

In the past, education was less sophisticated and students could learn and know less. Today, the technology is very advanced and because of that we can learn more and get more information about what we want to know and learn.

In our generation we can learn more subjects and we can choose what to learn, unlike our parents who had fewer options available.

In the past many children could not go to school because it was really expensive. Nowadays, it is free. In addition, people pay more attention to education.

The book "Falling Leaves" presents the old and strict education. In the book, Adeline and her brothers lived in a very strict family. The education she received was very strict. Students had to obey the school rules and those who broke the rules were punished.

Adeline could not argue with her parents or teachers. No one asked her what she thought about the schools she was sent to. No one was interested in her opinion about

different issues. Teachers in schools where she studied liked Adeline because she was a good student. But, even they did not care how she felt or what was going on at home.

Today, the situation is very different. Our teachers and counselors care about what happens in our families. If someone at school sees that a child is not happy (like Adeline was in the book), they ask questions and try to help the child to deal with his/her problems.

In addition, today students have fewer rules and they feel free. They can also share their problems with the school staff and know that they will get some help – that is what we like about modern education.



Extended Family

Reported by: Tal Tesler, Yuval Belkin, Noam Bar-or, Sawsan Nsarra, Ameer Abu Sbeet, Ahmad Asdi

Ye-ye and Aunt Baba felt sorry for Adeline because Niang hated her and she was treated differently than the rest of the family. Still neither of them stood up for her feelings. There are two ways to look at this situation.

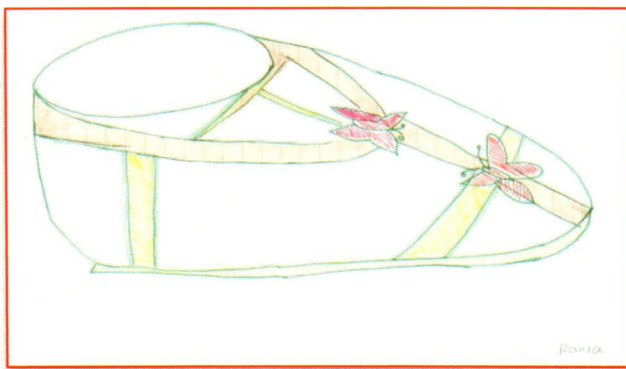
First of all, maybe they did love her, but they were afraid to protect her from Niang and Father, so they would still have someone to

rely on when they have money issues in the future. However, it could be that they didn't really love her, but they understood her feelings because Niang didn't treat her nicely from the beginning.

On the other hand, Ye-ye and Aunt Baba did really love Adeline but they didn't want to stand up for her because they would have had no one else to rely on if Father and Niang had not accepted their opinion.

We think that was a selfish act and they thought of themselves more than Adeline and her future. After Baba's business was destroyed and Ye-ye's company moved, they didn't have money and they had to rely on Father and Niang. That's why they never stood up for Adeline.

In conclusion, we think that Baba and Ye-ye did the wrong thing; they should have supported Adeline and stood up for her.



Role of the Father in Education

Did he give Adeline a proper education?

Reported by: Yael Elmakayes, Or Hazut, Gal Wilner, Tair Abdu, Yosef Abu Qweder, , Loay Abu Qweder, Abbas Abu Jamea

The answer to the question whether the education given by the father in the story was a proper education and whether it was necessary to educate his children this way to help them become independent and successful is not as simple as it may seem.

The education given by the father is a proper one yet he humiliated his daughter Adeline and ruined her childhood. He made Adeline feel insecure, which could affect her adult life. Her father abused her physically and mentally, for example, when he fed her duckling to the dog.

On the other hand, Adeline's father sent her to a good school where she was taught how to respect her parents, obey orders and even how to sit properly. He just wanted her to succeed in life. If her father hadn't sent her to a good school she probably would've failed university.

We can conclude that Adeline was taught well yet she suffered emotionally.

We think that it is better to be loved by your parents and feel that your parents support you in any situation than to become a successful person in life but know that your parents hate you. That is why in spite of the

fact that "formally" Father's education was "right" we cannot consider it proper.



Standing Up to Niang

Why did they accept everything she said?

Reported by: Rania Shahada, Ofri Bracha, Ferdos Alatrash, Amnaa Alsayed, Liel Zalkiver, Narmeen Elsayeed, Shir Mamo

From the book "Falling Leaves" we know that none of the children ever stood up to Niang, even when they were successful grown-ups. As successful and independent adults, the question whether they should have opposed her or continued to accept everything she said because it was their father's wish does not have a simple answer.

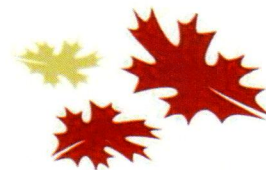
On the one hand, they should have stood up to Niang because she didn't treat them nicely; she abused them, tortured them, beat them and humiliated them all the time. She didn't behave like a mother or a human being should behave. She made them miserable.

When young children stand for themselves, their self-confidence builds and they grow up to be more responsible. Niang did everything to make sure Father's own children would not succeed in life.

On the other hand, we cannot judge a traditional Chinese society using the values

of the Western world. In this society, the children had to accept everything she said because Niang was their father's wife and standing up to her would hurt their father too even after his death. Also, in China respect for your parents is very important. It is unacceptable for someone to show respect for their parents and be rude to them.

In conclusion, we cannot judge Chinese people's behavior using Western values. Only looking from the perspective of Asian culture can explain the behavior of the children, even though they became successful grown-ups.



Adeline's Adult Relationships

Reported by: Morad Alkrenawy, Salem Alhmede, Mohamed Abo Rokba, Michal Riven, Lee Wilner, Tohar Petel, and Yuval Tzvi

In the autobiographical book "Falling Leaves," the author and main character Adeline Yen Mah rushed into marriage and relationships before she was ready. We assume she acted this way because her parents didn't treat her properly. They didn't show her the love she deserved. They didn't

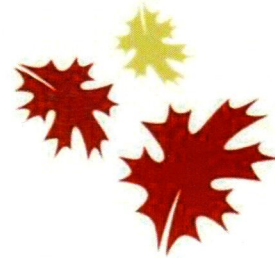
treat her like a part of the family, and took her for granted.

After leaving home, she looked for the appreciation and acceptance she didn't receive as a child in her relationships. She got married very early on to a man she didn't truly love, and she got hurt in the process. He turned out to be a violent and inconsiderate man who didn't have any respect for her.

We believe that another reason for her rushing into marriage is her first love, her professor. She was deeply in love with him but he was older and her teacher, she relationship was forbidden. In addition she

was Asian and he was white. That kind of relationship was not common at the time and was frowned upon.

In the end, after all of her heartaches and heartbreaks, she married a good man, had his children, and lived with him happily for the rest of her life.



Educating the Next Generation

How will Adeline educate her children?

Reported by: Osama, Sherrif, Shaker, Samer, Ilia, Ohad, Nave, Muhamad

In our opinion Adeline will educate her children to be very involved in school and to work hard to be able to succeed in life while respecting and giving love and care.

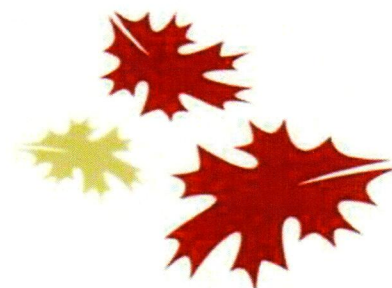
We know that she lived in a culture that is known to be hard working and focused on work and life, but she will show a lot of love to her children because as a child she always felt unwanted and hated by her parents. For that reason we think she will do the best she can to make her children feel loved and she will also let them have fun with their friends and live a good life.

During her childhood Adeline suffered greatly from her parents' negligence and the

small amount of attention she got. As a result, she will probably pay a lot of attention to her children and make sure they make friends and gain self-confidence.

Despite all that, we think Adeline will keep a small amount of the Chinese culture. It is hard for us to tell for sure whether Adeline knows how to give love to her children. We can't tell whether she will adhere to her Chinese culture, which might cause her to pass on the vibes that her family gave her onto her children.

In summary, we cannot know whether Adeline is going to copy her parents' way of education or learn from their mistakes and make a better life for her children. In any event, we hope that she will.



About Adeline Yen Mah

Born in Tianjin, China, Adeline Yen Mah began writing at a young age. She has written several bestselling books about growing up in China. She has also founded the Falling Leaves Foundation, which is dedicated to promoting understanding between East and West and the study of China's history, language and culture.

For more information on Adeline Yen Mah, visit her website: <http://www.adelineyenmah.com/>.

