

III. “Inspiring the WAVES” Primary Source Improv Activity

Historical Context: In March of 1942, Dr. Margaret “Mom” Chung applied to enlist in the U.S. Navy. She was rejected due to her Chinese ancestry and, most likely, her perceived sexual orientation. She applied and was rejected at least two more times, but maintained a strong desire to serve. Soon after the first rejection from the U.S. Navy, Dr. Chung leveraged the influence of her “adopted sons and daughters” in the federal government, the military, and positions of power to expand opportunities for women during WWII and establish a volunteer branch of the Women's Naval Reserve, the WAVES. Even though Dr. Chung inspired the creation of the WAVES, which was formally established on July 30th, 1942, she was barred from service.

Objective: Explore society’s perceptions of women, and their roles and responsibilities in military service, during WWII, as well as the possible motivations for Dr. Chung to engage in “active patriotism” despite barriers to her pursuits due to her race, gender, and perceived sexual orientation.

Primary Sources and Guiding Questions:

1. **Read the full National Republican newspaper article:**
 - “Woman Doctor Tells How She Won 1000 Sons in U.S. Service.” *The Miami News*. February 23, 1943, p. 6. [Newspapers.com](#).
 - What facts did you learn about Dr. Chung from the National Republican article?
2. **Watch the following videos:**
 - “WAVES: Women in the Navy World War II Newsreel.” *YouTube*, uploaded by PublicResourceOrg. May 27, 2016.
 - “U.S. NAVY WAVES - Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service, WOMEN IN WWII 20284.” *YouTube*. Uploaded by PeriscopeFilm, September 20, 2016.
 - What facts did you learn about the WAVES' work responsibilities from the videos?
 - What did you learn about society’s perceptions of women and their roles and responsibilities in military service from the videos?
 - What did you learn about society’s perceptions of women in general during this time?
3. **Read all sections of Public Law 689 that established the WAVES:**
 - *An Act to Establish the Women’s Reserve as a Part of the United States Naval Reserve and for Other Purposes*. July 30, 1942. *United States Statutes at Large*, vol. 56, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1942, pp. 730–731. United States Congress.
 - What did you learn from Public Law 689 about the limitations placed on women who joined the WAVES?
4. **Dr. Margaret Chung Quote:**
 - *“We, who are the beneficiaries of the American system, should defend it with our heads as well as our hearts. We must not be content with a passive patriotism. We must be active Americans... The seat of government may be in Washington, but the heart of*

government is in your township. And when that heart beats, Washington listens.” — Dr. Margaret Chung, Christian Science Monitor, 1942

- Which aspects of the “American system” benefited Dr. Chung?
- How do you understand “passive patriotism” versus being an “active American”?
- What does Dr. Chung mean by “the heart of government is in your township”?

Improv Scenario A: Dr. Chung introduces her idea for a women’s volunteer naval reserve: *Setting: Dr. Chung’s living room in April 1942.*

- **Dr. Margaret “Mom” Chung** shares how much she wants to enlist in the U.S. Navy and that she had applied and had been rejected the previous month. She asks for help to strategize and leverage her network to create a new volunteer branch of military service for women.
- **Rear Admiral Irving McQuiston** (Son #465) offers his ideas on a lobbying strategy in Congress and the arguments he will include about the benefits for the country and the war effort.
- **Congressman Melvin Maas** (Son #447), as Chair of the House Naval Affairs Committee, explains potential arguments Congress members may have in their opposition to the WAVES.
- **Congressman Raymond Willis** (Kiwi #124) discusses the potential work women could perform as part of the WAVES.
- **Alice Roosevelt Longworth** (Kiwi #49) offers to make introductions to political operatives in Washington, D.C., and explains how those relationships may benefit the lobbying effort.

Improv Scenario B: A reporter from Mass Transit Magazine interviews the Director of Public Relations with the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) about the residents voting to select “Mom Chung” as the name of one of its Tunnel Boring Machines (TBMs), part of its Central Subway infrastructure project launched in 2013. *Setting: An SFMTA conference room in January of 2013.*

For this scenario, read the following article: Rose, Paul. [*“CA: Introducing Big Alma and Mom Chung, the Central Subway’s Tunnel Boring Machines.”*](#) Mass Transit Magazine, March 8, 2013.

- **Paul Rose, Contributing Reporter to Mass Transit Magazine**, interviews the director of public relations for SFMTA about why Dr. Margaret “Mom” Chung was a good candidate to include in the poll to select names for the two TBMs.
- **SFMTA Director of Public Relations** discusses the commonalities between Dr. Chung’s life, work, network, and legacy to the goals of the Central Subway project.

Reflection Question: What did the improv activity reveal about how Dr. Chung gained influence despite facing multiple forms of discrimination?