

**Doctor of Social Sciences,
*honoris causa***

Ms CHAN Yuen-han, GBS, SBS, JP



Mr Pro-Chancellor,

In Hong Kong during the 1950s and 1960s, the economy was sluggish, and many girls, even in their teens, were forced to drop out of school due to their families' financial difficulties. They had to work to support their families, and most of them were forever cut off from education. They could settle only for ordinary jobs or become housewives, devoting their lives to their families. However, there were also wonderful exceptions. One such girl, who had to shoulder the responsibility of supporting her family at a young age, relentlessly pursued knowledge in her spare time. She transformed herself from an exploited worker to a labour union leader who championed workers' rights. From addressing labour disputes to promoting sustainable development, from a district councillor to a Legislative Council member, she has dedicated her entire life to serving the people and contributing to society. Even at the age of 79, she continues to work tirelessly for the benefit of society. Her name is Ms Chan Yuen-han, and she is affectionately known as "Han Jie".

Born into a working-class family and having lost her father at a young age, Han Jie had to start working to support her family after completing her first year of secondary school. Despite the challenges, she persisted with part-time studies and eventually graduated from secondary school. She furthered her education by pursuing a part-time Advanced Diploma in Business Administration jointly offered by The Hong Kong Polytechnic University and The Hong Kong Management Association. She also studied philosophy at Guangdong Science and Research University.

In 1992, Han Jie was admitted to the master's degree programme in labour studies at the University of Warwick in the UK. She was finally able to fulfil her long-held desire to study abroad and broaden her international perspective. Six months later, however, Hong Kong's political landscape underwent a significant change, and the Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions (FTU) urgently needed her to return to Hong Kong to take a leadership role. Additionally, her beloved mother was seriously ill, and Han Jie was deeply concerned. After careful consideration, she gave

up the campus life she has always dreamed of and returned to Hong Kong. When asked if she regretted this decision, she said no. This is Han Jie: the interests of society and family always come before her own.

While juggling work and studies, Han Jie frequently borrowed books from the FTU library to widen her knowledge, thus beginning a lifelong connection with the FTU. She joined the FTU as a full-time staff member at the age of 16 and later served as its Vice-Chairman, Honorary Chairman, and Advisor. For decades, she has been fighting tirelessly for the rights of the working class. She has led numerous protests on behalf of workers who were laid off or underpaid. The most memorable battle took place in the early 1970s when she and a group of terminated employees surrounded the Labour Department headquarters in Admiralty. Though not a complete victory, she managed to secure more favourable terms for the workers.

Han Jie does not see fighting for workers' rights as just a job; she views it as a mission. Without her persistence, the issue of “minimum wage” might still be on the negotiating table. However, she still has regrets, as “standard working hours” remain elusive, “collective bargaining” has not yet received a positive response from the government, and “retirement protection” for the working class is still far from satisfactory. Han Jie therefore remains committed, continuing to drive the FTU's work in her role as an advisor.

In fact, Han Jie's concerns extend far beyond labour issues. She has devoted herself to addressing challenges faced by working women and marginalised groups, as well as cultural preservation, environmental protection, sustainable development, technological innovation, and other matters related to people's livelihood, justice and social welfare. To better equip herself to drive change, she joined the direct elections in 1988 and became a district councillor for Eastern District. In 1995, she won a seat in the Legislative Council, where she served for nearly 20 years. Her balanced and objective approach to policymaking, coupled with her dedication to serving the public, has earned her the respect of people from all walks of life. In the 2012 Legislative Council election, she was elected with 246,196 votes; and in 2008, she was appointed as a member of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.

Thanks to Han Jie's advocacy, society now pays more attention to childcare services, enabling mothers to participate in the workforce, increase family incomes and alleviate poverty. The idea of revitalising the Kai Tak River originated from Han Jie. This urban green river corridor was realised thanks to her persistent lobbying of government departments. She also suggested that Hong Kong follow the examples of Tokyo and Seoul by developing a pluralistic subculture economy, creating

job opportunities while preserving Hong Kong's cultural heritage. Recognising that innovation and technology are keys to future success, Han Jie has actively participated in various activities to cultivate young people's interest in science.

Having witnessed Hong Kong's ups and downs over the past few decades, Han Jie is full of confidence in Hong Kong's future. She encourages everyone, especially the younger generation, to set aside politics, equip themselves well, and capitalise on opportunities. She believes that after the storm, there will always be sunshine. Her personal motto is: As long as the goal is clear and the will is strong, all difficulties can be overcome.

Working diligently over the past few decades, Han Jie has made significant contributions to formulating public policies, promoting social welfare measures, and advancing the rights of disadvantaged groups. As a result, she has received numerous honours. She was appointed a Justice of the Peace in 2001 and was awarded the Silver Bauhinia Star in 2007 and the Gold Bauhinia Star in 2020 by the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. In 2010, Han Jie was awarded an Honorary Fellowship by Lingnan University.

During her tenure as Chairman of the Women's Commission from 2018 to 2023, Han Jie actively built strategic partnerships to provide empowering opportunities for women. This included supporting the Li Ka Shing School of Professional and Continuing Education at Hong Kong Metropolitan University in launching the "Capacity Building Mileage Programme", which empowers women to acquire new knowledge, develop their potential and lead more fulfilling lives. Han Jie has attended the graduation ceremonies of this programme multiple times in her capacity as Chairman of the Women's Commission, inspiring students and staff with her encouraging words.

Mr Pro-Chancellor, in recognition of her decades of advocating for underprivileged groups, empowering women and contributing ideas to green our environment, making our home more compassionate, fair and liveable, may I invite our President to present Ms Chan Yuen-han for the conferment of the degree of Doctor of Social Sciences, *honoris causa*.

Citation to be delivered by Professor LUI Yu-hon

榮譽社會科學博士

陳婉嫻女士，GBS, SBS, JP

副校監先生：

在五、六十年代的香港，經濟低迷，很多女生在十多歲便因為家境困難被迫輟學，出外謀生幫補家計，她們大多數從此與書本絕緣，只能安份守己地做個普通工人，或者變身家庭主婦，相夫教子，平淡一生。但也有精彩的例外，有個也是年少當家的女生在工餘時間孜孜不倦地追求知識，裝備自己，從被剝削的工人階級到守護工人權益的工會領導人、從著力解決勞資糾紛到推動可持續發展，從區議員到立法會議員，窮一生精力為民請命，為社會謀福祉，至今 79 歲仍未停步，她是陳婉嫻，人稱嫻姐。

嫻姐出身草根階層，因為父親早逝，剛讀完中一便要出來工作維持家庭開支，但堅持以半工讀身份讀至中學畢業，其後更修讀由香港理工大學及香港管理學會合辦的兼讀制工商管理高級文憑課程，並曾到廣東省科研大學修習哲學。

1992 年，嫻姐獲英國華威大學的勞工碩士課程取錄，可以一遂海外留學，開拓國際視野的夙願，可惜半年之後，香港政壇風雲變詭，工聯會急需她回港領導；再加上慈母病重，嫻姐牽腸掛肚，幾經思量，終於放棄她夢寐以求的校園生活，返回香港。若問她這是否人生的一樁憾事，她說沒有後悔這樣的抉擇。這就是嫻姐，社會和家庭的利益總在自己之上。

嫻姐半工半讀的時候，經常到香港工會聯合會（工聯會）的圖書館借書閱讀，以增長知識，從此與工聯會結下不解之緣。她 16 歲加入工聯會當全職員工，之後擔任該會的副理事長、榮譽會長和顧問，幾十年來，一直為爭取勞工階層的合理權益奮鬥，多次率領被解僱或被欠薪的工人進行請願，最難忘的一役是在七十年代初期與一班被解僱員工到當時位於金鐘的勞工處總部請願，那次雖然未竟全功，但也為工人爭取了比較合理的對待。

嫻姐並不當爭取工人權益是一份工作，她說這是一項使命。如果沒有嫻姐的堅持，「最低工資」可能仍在討論當中，但嫻姐仍有遺憾，「標準工時」仍遙遙無期，「集體談判」也得不到政府積極回應，工人階層的「退休保障」亦差強人意，所以嫻姐仍然心放不下，繼續以「顧問」的身份推動工聯會的工作。

嫻姐關注的其實不止勞工問題，在職婦女和弱勢社群面對的挑戰、文化保育、環保、持續發展、科技創新等等所有涉及民生、公義及社會福祉的事項她都殫精竭慮。為了讓自己更加有能力去推動改變，1988年，她循直選途徑成為東區區議員，1995年，更贏得立法會議員選舉，前後服務立法會近20年。她持平中肯、以大局為重的論政胸懷，以及致力服務大眾的精神讓她深受社會各階層的尊敬，在2012年的立法會選舉中，以246,196票當選。嫻姐於2008年獲委任為全國政協委員。

在嫻姐的倡議下，社會對託兒服務有了更多的關注，讓母親可以參與工作，增加家庭收入，紓解貧困。啟德河活化計劃的構思其實也源自嫻姐，全賴她鏗而不捨地游說政府部門，才能成就這道市區綠色河道走廊。她又建議香港以東京和首爾為榜樣，發展多元次文化經濟，在創造就業機會的同時，保護香港文物。嫻姐深明創新科技是未來成功的關鍵，因此亦積極參與各項活動，培養年青人對科學的興趣。

見證着香港過去幾十年盛衰起落的嫻姐對香港的前景充滿信心，她鼓勵大家，特別是年輕一代，放下政治，努力裝備自己，好好掌握機遇，風雨過後，總有晴天。她個人的座右銘是：只要目標明確，意志堅定，一切困難都可以克服。

嫻姐辛勤耕耘幾十年，對制訂公共政策、推廣社會福利措施和促進弱勢社群權益方面貢獻良多，因而獲得多項榮譽。她於2001年獲委任為太平紳士，並分別於2007年及2020年獲香港特別行政區頒授銀紫荊星章及金紫荊星章。2010年，嫻姐獲嶺南大學頒授榮譽院士。

嫻姐在2018年至2023年出任婦女事務委員會主席間，積極建立策略性夥伴關係，為婦女提供賦能的機會，其中包括支持香港都會大學李嘉誠專業進修學院營運「自在人生自學計劃」，該計劃旨在幫助婦女學習新知識、發揮個人潛能，開創精彩的人生。嫻姐多次以婦女事務委員會主席身份出席「自在人生自學計劃」的畢業典禮，殷殷訓勉，本校師生深感鼓舞。

副校監先生，為表揚陳婉嫻女士幾十年來為弱勢社群發聲，為婦女界別賦能，為綠化環境出謀獻策，讓我們的家園變得更富同情心、更公平公正、更宜居宜業。本人恭請校長引介陳婉嫻女士接受本校的榮譽社會科學博士學位。

贊辭由呂汝漢教授宣讀