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## The East-West Creativity Gap: Myth or Fact?

Lenora Chu, Gish Jen



In a globalized world where millions of people travel between east and west for tourism, study, and business each year, where formerly separate cultural zones now overlap, it has never been more important to understand the values and perspectives that inform cross-cultural relations. Two new works of cultural observation and commentary put the differences in education, identity, and politics in the United States and China in perspective. **Lenora Chu's** *Little Soldiers: An American Boy, a Chinese School, and the Global Race to Achieve*, examines the benefits and drawbacks of China's famously rigorous education system through the lens of her son's experience attending an elite public school in Shanghai. The book then expands to consider what Americans can learn from Chinese pedagogy, and, more broadly, what the purpose of education is. **Gish Jen's** *The Girl at the Baggage Claim: Explaining the East-West Culture Gap*, is a wide-ranging investigation of how differing conceptions of the self in Asia and the western world can explain the incongruous expectations and assumptions that can produce awkward or confusing cross-cultural encounters. Gish Jen explores how emphasis on the individual or on context in western and eastern cultures respectively anchor very different understandings of the same events and behavior, which is ultimately reflected in distinctive educational, business, and governing institutions.

Ms. Chu is an award-winning American journalist who now lives in Shanghai; Ms. Jen is a world-renowned American novelist and cultural critic who has been visiting China since 1979, teaching in Jinan, Hong Kong, Beijing, and Shanghai. On September 18, 2017, both authors will join the National Committee for a conversation about their books, contemporary east-west exchange, and how people on both sides of the cultural divide can better understand and learn from one another.

**Bios:**



A former TV correspondent with Thomson Reuters and a contributing writer with CNNMoney.com, **Lenora Chu** is an award-winning journalist. Her freelance work has appeared in *The New York Times*, the *Christian Science Monitor*, APM's *Marketplace* and PRI's *The World*. She has lived in Shanghai since 2010. Ms. Chu holds degrees from Stanford University and Columbia's Graduate School of Journalism, and she speaks Mandarin.



The author of six previous books, both fiction and non-fiction, **Gish Jen** has published short pieces in *The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, and dozens of other periodicals and anthologies. Her work has appeared in *The Best American Short Stories* four times, including *The Best American Short Stories of the Century*, edited by John Updike.

Ms. Jen is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. She has been awarded the Lannan Literary Award for Fiction, a Guggenheim fellowship, a Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study fellowship, and numerous other awards. An American Academy of Arts and Letters jury granted her a five-year Mildred and Harold Strauss Living award. Ms. Jen delivered the William E. Massey, Sr.

Lectures in the History of American Civilization at Harvard University in 2012. She is a graduate of Harvard University and the Iowa Writers Workshop.

### Mon, 2017-09-18 17:30 to 19:00

**Speaker(s):**

Lenora Chu  
Gish Jen

**Venue:**

Sidley Austin, LLP  
New York, NY

**Category:** [Cultural Exchange \(/program-category/cultural-exchange\)](#)

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