

Suicide or Political Persecution? The Mysterious Deaths of Ernest Hemingway and Iris Chang

By [Prof. Darrell Y. Hamamoto](#)

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Five decades after his suicide by shotgun, it appears that what had been assumed to be simple paranoia on the part of literary giant Ernest Hemingway was in fact grounded in the reality of his systematic persecution by certain elements within the US government.

Veteran writer A. E. Hotchner, a close friend and author of the classic biography Papa Hemingway (1966), recounted the days spent with a demoralized, confused, and frustrated individual who was struggling to complete basic creative tasks central to his work. Hemingway had contacted Hotchner in May 1960 to ask for his help in editing an overly-long article that had been commissioned by Life magazine. In an article published July 01, 2011 (New York Times), Hotchner now realizes that government harassment and surveillance by wiretaps, tax audits, and pharmacologically induced mind control claimed by his increasingly harried and depressed friend were indeed valid.[i]

The revelation that Hemingway had been targeted for surveillance by the government intelligence unit headed by J. Edgar Hoover, is consistent with a well-documented history of American citizens held under suspicion by the FBI or the scores of other less well-known spy agencies within the government, military, and civilian sectors.[ii]

There is a bounty of literature that raises disturbing questions about the murder of individuals ranging from community organizers such as Fred Hampton to prominent artists such as John Lennon.[iii] The examples of assassination as politics by other means abound: JFK, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Robert F. Kennedy. According to opinion polls the overwhelming majority of Americans today do not believe the official findings of the Warren Commission that had been formed to investigate the public killing of President John F. Kennedy in November 1963.[iv]

It is in this historical context that the seemingly paranoid claims made by Iris Chang in the months prior to her death in 2004 must be taken seriously. Chang had become a literary sensation at age twenty-nine with the publication of the incendiary study *The Rape of Nanking* (1997).[v] Like Hemingway, Chang also died by her own hand. On November 09, 2004 she was found dead in her car was parked on an isolated road near Los Gatos, California. It was determined that Chang had taken her own life with a pistol she had purchased the day before the incident. She was thirty-six years old.

Former journalism school classmate and personal friend Paula Kamen advanced the notion that the Chang suicide was the result of “mental illness.” She first had believed the “dark topics” that Chang was writing about had drove her over the edge, but then concluded that the ambitious author suffered from “bipolar disorder.”[vi] In *Finding Iris Chang* (2008),

Kamen interprets her friend's demise through the lens of the medico-pharmacological orthodoxy that has come to predominate throughout a society that is viewed as being composed of sick and debilitated individuals that suffer from an ever-lengthening list of ailments grouped under the heading of "mental illness." [vii]

The "mental illness" characterization was rejected out of hand by Ying-Ying Chang in *The Woman Who Could Not Forget* (2011). As her mother, it was she who had been the principal person caring for Iris Chang during her final months of dark despair. Instead, she points to the side effects caused by experimental "anti-psychotic" drugs prescribed by a succession of psychiatrists as responsible for the downward spiral of a spirited woman who, although sensitive, never before betrayed signs of so-called mental illness. [viii]

Kamen herself suffered from chronic pain and the overriding theme of her book on Chang is that the revolution in anti-depressant pharmacology has been a boon to the sad and afflicted masses. Against Kamen, however, there is a sizeable and growing body of literature that traces the less-than-altruistic origins of psychopharmacology in the mind control human experiments conducted by the CIA beginning in the 1950s. Based upon documents that saw limited release due to pressure from the US Congress and its Church Committee investigation, *The Search For The "Manchurian Candidate"* (1979) by John Marks is a good place to start for those ignorant of government initiatives in mind management and political pacification. [ix] More recent publications issued from perfectly respectable quarters (as opposed to those tagged as "conspiracy" buffs) contend that the system of mind control research, development, and application remains in place albeit in a far more sophisticated guise. [x]

The pervasiveness of pharmacological mind control is evident to anyone (i.e. anyone not on psychotropic medication) who works in a classroom environment with the current generation of students who have been labeled as "depressed" or plagued by "attention deficit disorder" and are then promiscuously prescribed selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs). [xi] Young people who would otherwise be in prime physical and intellectual condition have been transformed into zombie-like creatures whose flat affect and deadened eyes betray their forced chemical romance with the military-pharmacological complex. [xii]

According to Hotchner, Hemingway complained that the feds had his telephones tapped; automobile and rooms bugged. His mail was being intercepted and sifted through. He was being tailed as well. Then Hemingway was admitted to St. Mary's Hospital in Rochester, Minnesota in November 1960 for psychiatric treatment. He underwent electro-shock therapy and endured eleven separate sessions. Hemingway became even more depressed and attempted suicide on more than one occasion. In response to Hotchner asking him why he wanted to kill himself, Hemingway said that everything he valued in life—friends, sex, health, and creative work—had been taken from him. He ended his life on July 02, 1961. Documents acquired through the Freedom of Information Act indicate that Hemingway had been under FBI surveillance since the 1940s.

Prior to her suicide, Chang had told those close to her that "powerful" forces linked to the government were closing in on her. She left written statements that unambiguously outlined the contours of the plot laid against her while attempting to complete an historical account of the "Bataan Death March" as it is known popularly. Most attributed her mounting "paranoia" to stress, overwork, and exposure to stories told to her by survivors. Chang was also a new mother, so some felt that this only compounded matters. Although

Chang hid the fact, Kamen discovered that her son had been adopted. This ruled out the “post-partum depression” theory.

In one of the notes addressed to her parents, Chang wrote:

“There are aspects of my experience in Louisville [in a mental hospital in August 2004] that I will never understand. Deep down I suspect that you may have more answers about this than I do. I can never shake my belief that I was being recruited, and later persecuted, by forces more powerful than I could have imagined. Whether it was the CIA or some other organization, I will never know. As long as I’m alive, these forces will never stop hounding me....

“Days before I left for Louisville, I had a deep foreboding about my safety. I sensed suddenly threats to my own life: an eerie feeling that I was being followed in the streets, the white van parked outside my house, damaged mail arriving at my P.O. Box. I believe my detention at Norton Hospital was the government’s attempt to discredit me. “I had considered running away, but I will never be able to escape from myself and my thoughts. I am doing this because I am too weak to withstand the years of pain and agony ahead.”[xiii]

Read in proper context, these words make perfect sense. They are far from being the ravings of a “paranoiac.” Ying-Ying Chang, who suspects that Japanese rightists might have been responsible for the harassment of her daughter, accepts the claims of Iris Chang that she had been approached personally and threatened. Nor does she dismiss the possibility that images of “horrible atrocities and ugly images of children torn apart by wars” had been streamed purposely to the television set of the Louisville hotel where Chang had been staying while on a research trip.

In acting as unofficial spokesperson for the post-1965 Taiwanese American cohort composed of scientists and engineers who were pushing for a stronger political voice commensurate with their significantly large representation within the academic/military/corporate complex, Chang had the temerity to accuse the US government and President George W. Bush of attempting to stonewall the movement by Taiwanese Americans pressing its demands for reparations to those who suffered at the hands of the Imperial government during World War II. Since Japan is an important US ally in East Asia it was thought that Washington was loath to support an initiative that would harm the postwar relationship and consensus formed between the top two economic powerhouses in the world.

Predictably, assertions that ultranationalist Japanese elements in some way were implicated in the death of Chang appeared online and in print almost immediately after the news of her suicide appeared. She became a martyr for the truth in the Peoples Republic of China but especially among overseas Chinese in the US. In the former case, reminders of the “Asian Holocaust” perpetrated by Imperial Japan has been a useful tool in the hands of the communist oligarchs to deflect attention from the tens of millions of fellow Chinese that were sacrificed to consolidate power during the reign of Mao.[xiv] Today, orchestrated anti-Japan agitation via the internet helps maintain one-party dictatorial control in a nation roiling with internal conflict and rebellion in its far flung regions.

For Taiwanese Americans—a large number (including both parents of Chang who earned Ph.D.s at Harvard) of whom have been recruited since the 1950s specifically to staff highly specialized positions within (ironically) the death-dealing US military-industrial complex—the

“Asian Holocaust” has been an effective rallying point in attaining the level of political clout that matches their professional status and economic standing.[xv] Moreover, a shared historical memory of the widespread destruction and atrocities committed by the Imperial Japanese military during World War II eases political tensions between the PRC and Taiwan via a shared sense of victimhood directed against Japan. At the same time, the US arms industry continues to reap enormous profits through the sale of aircraft, communications systems, and all manner of advanced weaponry to Taiwan despite protests by PRC officials. Complicating the campaign to promote memory of the “Asian Holocaust,” a number of highly placed Chinese Americans have been implicated in brokering the transfer of strategically sensitive American satellite and missile technology to the People’s Liberation Army.[xvi]

In the battle over historical memory and the role that Iris Chang played in massaging it, however, there is one possible scenario that has been overlooked: That she might have been silenced for having ventured too close to truths that if exposed would have put the US—not Japan—in a most unflattering light. More significantly, the investigative trail she was following with her most recent book project involving The Philippines could have led to wider exposure of the not widely known historical circumstances that undergird the very basis of the postwar economic and political order led by the US.

An incredible book that went largely un-reviewed by the corporate press was published by the independent Verso imprint in 2003 titled *Gold Warriors: America’s Secret Recovery of Yamashita’s Gold* written by Sterling and Peggy Seagrave.[xvii] Well-researched and thoroughly documented (including a CD containing facsimiles of original papers), the book reveals the process whereby hundreds of tons precious metals, gems, and countless art treasures that had been looted by the Japanese Imperial Army throughout Asia fell into the hands of Ferdinand Marcos and his cronies in the waning days of World War II en route to Japan where they would be kept as spoils of war. The vast quantity of gold bullion produced from the booty that came into the possession of the United States was instrumental in the postwar economic recovery of Japan. America’s special friend Marcos had succeeded in locating much of “Yamashita’s gold” thanks to the torture of key informants who pointed to vast stores of purloined wealth had been cleverly hidden.

Iris Chang began her career as a hard charging and ambitious crusader for truth. Beginning with her first book *Thread of the Silkworm* (1996), she only touched upon the duplicity of government and the utter cynicism in which its interests are pursued.[xviii] The subject of the work, research scientist Tsien Hsue-Shen who helped found the Jet Propulsion Laboratory at Caltech, was sacrificed to anti-Red hysteria that took hold when the Communist Party came to power with the Chinese Revolution. With the Rape of Nanking, Chang discovered that historical truth is never self-evident nor is it necessarily welcomed. This is the point at which she might possibly have come to the realization that real politik was grounded in cynicism, opportunism, and exploitation. The political-economic oligarchs that use government for their own purposes will tolerate and even encourage truth seeking up to a point. After all, these elite families dole out millions of dollars each year in sophisticated tax-avoidance and wealth-maintenance schemes to all manner of idealists, reformers, and truth tellers through private foundations bearing their names. Should anyone come too close to exposing the source of their totalistic power, however, like the Venetian families of old they will not hesitate to have such persons eliminated. Poisons have been their proven specialty.

So long as the work of Iris Chang satisfied the agendas of the different interest groups,

governmental entities, and political factions that benefitted from the good will and public sympathy garnered by The Rape of Nanking, she functioned as a useful asset. But with her final book project, thorough and meticulous researcher that she was, Chang independently of the Seagraves might have uncovered truths that would undermine the very foundation of the US monetary system, which had been taken off the gold standard by President Richard Nixon in 1971. Not coincidentally, early in his political career Nixon reportedly received large cash payments from Ferdinand Marcos, who as dictator of The Philippines enjoyed political and generous financial support from the US.[xix] Ed Rollins, former campaign director for Ronald Reagan, wrote of ten million US dollars allegedly handed over by high-level political operators from the Philippines.[xx] Indeed, structural corruption has defined the relationship between the US and The Philippines from the start. Quite possibly Chang had found during the course of her research and political involvement on behalf of those who experienced profound losses during wartime that her own American government was complicit if not at the center of the multiple holocausts of the twentieth century.

In August 2004, while conducting interviews with survivors of Bataan in Louisville, Kentucky, Chang exhibited signs of mental instability. With the assistance of a certain “Colonel Kelly” whose presence she stated had frightened her severely, Chang was committed to the Norton Psychiatric Hospital. There she was diagnosed as having experienced a “brief reactive psychosis.” For at least three days Chang was subjected to “antipsychotic” drugs until her parents arrived to take their daughter back to California. Once returned home, she was placed on a regimen of “anti-depressants” that did little to improve her condition. Brett Douglas, the IT professional to whom she was married appeared to offer scant emotional support to his wife other than insisting that she hew to the treatment prescribed her by medical professionals. His seeming callousness toward her was remarked upon by Kamen in Finding Iris Chang when upon visiting with Douglas at his home for an interview, she was introduced to a Chinese woman also named “Iris.” He had met her online only months after the suicide death of his wife.

In an age when Big Pharma has succeeded in enslaving an alarmingly large percentage of American women to SSRIs—commonly known as “anti-depressants”—the death of Iris Chang should serve as a cautionary warning. The historical origins of the psychiatric dictatorship lie in the Cold War mind control experiments known collectively as MK-ULTRA.[xxi] Instead, the totalitarian triumph of the medico-pharmacological model combined with the so-called “mental health” establishment is embraced and welcomed by well intentioned but dangerously compromised medical professionals and psychotherapists held in the thrall of the insurance industry and drug makers.

Although the “suicides” of Ernest Hemingway and Iris Chang are separated in time by close to five decades, they are connected in a closed loop formed by the dark history of authoritarian regimes that actively suppress the truths that would subvert their rule. The oligarchs will go so far to order that the life force be snuffed out of those who dare bring light to the world. Instead of murdering directly two well admired literary figures of worldwide stature and thereby run the risk of official inquiries, Hemingway and Chang were harassed, gang stalked, and psychiatrically maimed to the point where they found it too painful to live.

The twin orthodoxy of psychiatry and pharmacy provided the respectable cover to preclude a closer look into the deaths of Hemingway and Chang. As it was in the case of Hemingway, however, the death of Iris Chang is not a closed book. Further investigation into the circumstances of her mental breakdown, coerced psychiatric treatment, and the

identification of persons such as the mysterious “Colonel Kelly” who had her committed in Louisville, will shatter the easy and conveniently premature conclusion that the death of Chang was due to so-called “mental illness” alone.

In time, it will be seen that in her death the final gift to humankind bequeathed by Iris Chang will be the exposure of the system announced in 1969 by José M. R. Delgado of Yale University in *Physical Control of the Mind*.^[xxii] Chang was far from being “mad” or “paranoid.” Rather, Chang to the very end was engaged in a quite sane but desperate struggle for the recovery of the humanity that had been stripped from her. Instead of allowing herself to be forced into a permanent state of narcotized semi-awareness and zombie-like passivity, Chang mustered the courage to end her life by a method so disturbing and sensational that questions concerning the circumstances leading to this final act of resistance will be asked far into the future. This is made clear in the intimate account given by Ying-Ying Chang, who was closely involved with her daughter in seeking therapeutic approaches that in the end failed to restore the *élan vital* that had been sapped by fear and loathing.

In this, Chang left the door open for future researchers and writers to enter the dark house of pain to poke about just as she had done. Once inside, she had gained deeper knowledge of the slithering political realities that go largely unremarked by corporate journalism and unexamined in foundation-funded academic research.^[xxiii]

Chang had stumbled across a venomous nest of vipers and was bitten hard, repeatedly. Though slowly poisoned, her core strength caused her to remain lucid amidst the institutionalized madness. Such fortitude allowed her to leave behind a wealth of written clues, personal leads, and questions that cry out for follow-up. Instead, the political importance of her legacy fades as Chang continues to be memorialized in books, statuary, and film by those no doubt motivated by the utmost sincerity. Let the example of Hemingway and his documented state-facilitated suicide serve as a reminder that repressive governments over the course of human history are the leading cause of death. If Iris Chang claimed that government forces were “hounding” her, then it would be wise to heed this last testament and treat it with the grave seriousness it warrants.

Darrell Y. Hamamoto teaches at the Dept. of Asian American Studies, University of California, Davis

Notes

[i] A. E. Hotchner, “Hemingway, Hounded by the Feds.” *New York Times* 01 Jul. 2011. <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/02/opinion/02hotchner.html?pagewanted=all>.

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[iv] Lydia Saad, “Americans: Kennedy Assassination a Conspiracy.” *Gallup* 21 Nov. 2003. <http://www.gallup.com/poll/9751/americans-kennedy-assassination-conspiracy.aspx>.

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[vi] Stephanie Losee, “The Demons You Know.” *Salon.com* 13 Dec. 2007. http://www.salon.com/mwt/feature/2007/12/13/paula_kamen.

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Extraordinary Mind (New York: Da Capo Press, 2007).

[viii] Ying-Ying Chang, *The Woman Who Could Not Forget: Iris Chang Before and Beyond the Rape of Nanking—A Memoir* (New York: Pegasus Books, 2011).

[ix] John Marks, *The Search For the “Manchurian Candidate: The CIA and Mind Control* (New York: Times Books , 1979).

[x] Dominic Streatfeild, *Brainwash: The Secret History of Mind Control* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2007).

[xi] Peter R. Breggin, M.D., *Medication Madness: A Psychiatrist Exposes the Dangers of Mood-Altering Medications* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2008).

[xii] David Healy, *Let Them Eat Prozac: The Unhealthy Relationship Between the Pharmaceutical Industry and Depression* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2004).

[xiii] Kamen, 58.

[xiv] Frank Dikötter, *Mao’s Great Famine: The History of China’s Most Devastating Catastrophe, 1958-1962* (New York: Walker & Company, 2010).

[xv] Bernard P. Wong, *The Chinese in Silicon Valley: Globalization, Social Networks, and Ethnic Identity* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2006).

[xvi] Rodham Watch, “Is the Other Hsu About To Drop? Hillary’s Donor Linked to China Missile Trader.” *WorldNetDaily* 02 Sep. 2007. [Http://www.worldnetdaily.com/index.php?pageId=43335](http://www.worldnetdaily.com/index.php?pageId=43335).

[xvii] Sterling Seagrave & Peggy Seagrave, *Gold Warriors: America’s Secret Recovery of Yamashita’s Gold* (London & New York: Verso, 2003).

[xviii] Iris Chang, *Thread of the Silkworm* (New York: Basic Books, 1995).

[xix] Anthony Summers, *The Arrogance of Power: The Secret World of Richard Nixon* (2001), 164.

[xx] Ed Rollins with Tom Defrank, *Bare Knuckles and Back Rooms: My Life in American Politics* (New York: Broadway Books, 1996), 214.

[xxi] Colin A. Ross, M.D., *The C.I.A. Doctors: Human Rights Violations By American Psychiatrists* (Richardson, Texas: Manitou Communications, Inc., 2006).

[xxii] José Manuel Rodríguez Delgado, *Physical Control of the Mind: Toward a Psychocivilized Society* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969).

[xxiii] Horace Freeland Judson, *The Great Betrayal: Fraud in Science* (Orlando, Florida: Harcourt, Inc., 2004).

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