

# [In women’s community working part-time at a feminist](https://assignbuster.com/in-womens-community-working-part-time-at-a-feminist/)

In the memoir “ The Girl Who Wouldn’t Sing”, Kit Yuen Quandescribes her life experiences growing up as a Chinese girl in America.

In her attempt to try and find her place in society, Quan intermingleswith several groups of people. Her interactions with a feminist group, two young Cambodian girls, and finally her own father allow her toexplore her Chinese background and how that affects her interactionswith people. In order to find her own “ voice” in a society that is notreally hers, Kit Yuen Quan explored relationships with people ofdifferent lifestyles. She does so in order to be able to recognize howshe wants to express herself, and through which culture, American orChinese, if not both, she wants to do so.

When she ran away from home, Quan “ sought refuge in the women’scommunity working part-time at a feminist bookstore”(Quan 214). Yet, because of her Chinese background and difficulty in understandinglanguage, Kit found she wasn’t as accepted as she had hoped she wouldbe. The fact that she could not understand many of the issues discussedby the feminists she was surrounded by was very frustrating for Kit. This frustration acted as a vehicle for her to gain a desire to be moreproficient in the “ feminist rhetoric”(Quan 214). Although her desire tobe part of the community was strong, she continuously encounteredproblems because of her age, nationality, and lack of a “ formal Americaneducation”. The frustration that Kit encountered made her feel even moremisunderstood, and she sought her voice through other communities andKit’s first failed attempt to become a part of a community wasbecause of her inability to “ properly” express herself and her ideas.

Inher quest for acceptance, Quan decided to immerse herself in abeneficial situation in which language would not be a problem, and soshe decided to tutor two Cambodian girls. The two girls, Yan and Eng, lived in a terrible neighborhood where there were “ drunk men andprostitutes near corners”, “ the fragrant smell of piss and jasmine ricewafting from windows”, and “ a medley of languages: Vietnamese, Chinese, Cambodian, English, Black English, Laotian”(Quan 216). Kit went into thesituation thinking that she would be able to connect to her culturethrough knowing a common language. Somewhat to her surprise, theconnection to her culture did not come through language, but throughobserving the experiences of childhood that these two girls wereimmersed in. Kit states that “ whether they were living in a refuge campin the Philippines or in Thailand or in some one-room apartment on EddyStreet, they were connected to each other through their language andtheir culture”(Quan 217).

It was not so much Kit’s own interaction withthe girls that allowed her to realize where should would find herself, but her observation of the girls and their interaction with their nativeKit’s experience with Yan and Eng compelled her to learn moreabout her native culture, rather than solely try to fit into theAmerican culture. Kit’s attempt to conform to the American standards andculture was precisely the mistake she had made with the feminists. KitYuen Quan’s time spent with the Cambodian girls allowed her to see howimportant being in touch with her Chinese background is. Not only didthis cause Kit to learn to speak Chinese, but this catharsis also helpedher realize that being in touch with her culture also means reconnectingwith her family.

In making this realization, Kit decides to reconnectwith her father, and she says that “ speaking Chinese with my father isthe closest I have felt to coming home”(Quan 219). Although being homewas originally something that was uncomfortable for Kit, it is the samehome that she returns to in order to receive that comfort that she hasbeen missing in all other aspects of her life since the age of sixteen. Kit Yuen Quan’s life, as described in her memoir, is a series oflife changing events that have caused her to question her methods ofexpression. The title of the memoir, “ The Girl Who Wouldn’t Sing”, isvery telling of Kit’s personal search for a comfortable way to expressherself. Quan’s personal journey has allowed her to connect with herculture and language in a way that probably would not have happened ifshe hadn’t left home.

The fact that Kit had the experiences she did, with the Cambodian girls, the feminists, and her father, has allowed herto see life in a new light. Through her language and culture