

MEET ELANA WONG



Age: 26 **Countries of Origin: Malaysia and Singapore**
Country of Residence: The UK

What would the title of your biography be?

Growing up Elana wanted to be a writer and she actually dreamed of writing and publishing fiction novels. In the future, she would like to pursue writing again, but if she were to write a biography it would be titled 'Smuggling Bao in my Suitcase.' She explained that Bao is a dish and one of her favorites from home and it serves as a connection to her family and her cultural traditions.

How would you use a time machine?

If she had a time machine, Elana would not want to go to the future. She rather chooses to go back in time to when her grandparents and their parents were migrating from China during the Communist Revolution. She would like to learn their language and meet her maternal grandfather who died before she was born. Elana would like to ask them what their experiences were like and get a better understanding of where her family comes from.



Speaking at the IOM and UNICEF Reception on the margins of the International Migration Review Forum in May 2022, launching our joint program, the "Youth on the Move Fellowship" with Verena Knaus (Head of the UNICEF Migration Issue Hub) and Ambassador of Colombia to New York.



How has your migration experience influenced your work?

Elana's desire to work in a migration-related field is directly tied to her own migration background, combined with the notoriety of the European 'refugee crisis' whilst she began her undergraduate degree. Her own experiences of post and neo-colonialism through the UK and European visa systems, and that of her ancestors, who escaped the Communist Revolution in 1949, have inspired her to work in the uplifting and centering of migrant communities in sustainable development. She believes that her position as a privileged migrant bestows a duty towards the migrant community, and her experiences of racism, discrimination, and identity struggles allows her to be able to empathize with MYCP's team of diaspora youth. It is her own past that has informed a lot of her decisions and has truly shaped the history of her family and furthermore her own identity.



Eating sushi at one of my favourite restaurants back in my mother's home town Singapore.

What do you hope to accomplish by 2030?

She hopes that the organization she works for, Migration Youth and Children's Platform, will become a sustainable organization and that she can help take it into a space where it can be embedded into migration governance. Elana hopes her organization and youth as a whole will have more of a seat at the table in this field and a meaningful mechanism to go through to accomplish its goals. After she finishes her degree in international law, Elana hopes to find work in social impact and help represent minority groups and possibly start her own initiative centered around aiding diaspora communities in contributing back to their countries of origin.



If you had a superpower what would it be and why?

If Elana could have a superpower, she would choose to have telekinesis (moving objects with your mind). She would use this power to be able to do multiple things at once whether it is typing and folding laundry or cook while on a call. It would allow her to be better at multitasking.



How do you connect with your diaspora community and support it in both countries of origin and residence?

When she first moved to the UK, she struggled to connect to her diaspora community abroad. It was not until the COVID-19 pandemic that she felt closer to her community. Having to deal with discrimination during the pandemic inadvertently brought her closer to her diaspora community in the United Kingdom. She was able to find an outlet for Asian women whom she shared her experiences with. It is with this group that she has been able to maintain her connection to her home while contributing to her community abroad.



Speaking at the Opening Plenary of the first International Migration Review Forum in New York, May 2022, representing migrant and youth priorities and concerns.

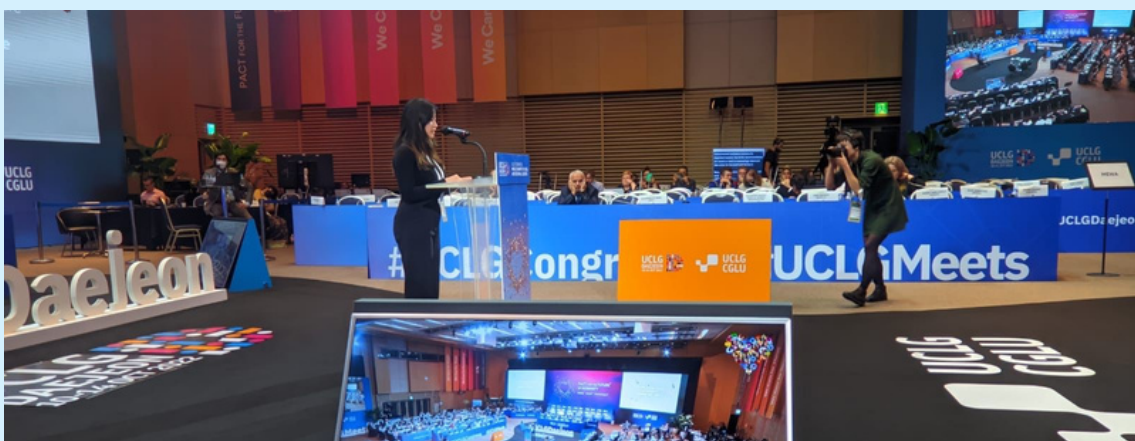
Which Sustainable Development Goal is most relevant for your work?

She explains that her work in migration is connected to many different SDGs, but if she had to pick one it would be SDG 10 (Reduce Inequalities), specifically SDG 10.7 because this one leads to the Global Compact for Migration. In addition to this, SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) encompasses her organization's efforts for international cooperation and partnership.



What would you tell other young people who want to make an impact in their communities of origin and residence?

Elana's first advice to young people would be to try to find "what moves you; ask yourself what makes you angry? What makes you sad? What change would you like to see". It is important to find a cause you care about. "Everyone can make an impact. Everything starts from somewhere and even the smallest impact has ripples that can lead to much larger change" Elana explains. She would tell young people to just start doing something and from there it can grow.



Speaking in October at the Pact for the Future plenary session on Caring Societies at the United Cities and Local Governments 2022 World Congress in Daejeon, South Korea.