

In September of 2015, the Asia Society Texas Center launched its inaugural Women's Leadership Series (WLS) designed to inspire, educate, and empower women by connecting them with established leaders across the globe. Since then, the series has celebrated many accomplished women who have substantially influenced and impacted the business and cultural sectors.

On Tuesday, January 24, 2017, the series held *Changing the World through Social Innovation* with featured guest, Mina Chang. The renowned humanitarian and CEO of *Linking the World* delivered an inspirational and thought-provoking discourse on her work, which uses technology and social interventions to track the trends of potential threats and the victims that might be targeted.

*Linking the World* seeks to prevent and counter violent extremism. It can provide local leaders with better data, insights, science, and partnerships with which to identify the underlying causes of instability in their communities and address them. By seeking out potential humanitarian crises and proactively working to prevent them, their occurrence is hindered, and stronger, more resistant communities are created.



*Mina Chang in Somalia*

Chang has had first-hand experience with the consequences of conflict and social instability on vulnerable communities in countries like Afghanistan, Somalia, and Iraq. Describing an emotional account of her recent trip

to Iraq, Chang shared with her captive audience how close she and her team had come to being in danger when they found themselves hiding from ISIS mortar bombs. Accompanying footage illustrated how real the threat was and how *Linking the World*, along with its global partnerships, can find solutions to prevent further such tragedies.



*Mina Chang in Iraq*

A born leader, Chang has been acknowledged internationally and has spoken for assemblies in numerous venues, including the Center for Peace, the United Nations (UN), the Department of Defense (DOD), and the National Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

As a former recording artist used to being in the public eye, Chang learned she possessed the power and influence to help spread awareness on issues close to her heart. She discovered she could deliver a message using the microphone and her voice, but she didn't at first know what that message would be. In the end, Chang realized she wanted her life to be about service to others and making a difference through acts of generosity. Her message? "The bottom line...people listen to things that they connect to, things that have a meaning to them personally."

Though she grew up homeless, Chang does not see herself as a victim of homelessness. Instead, she is grateful for her childhood in poverty and

for her friends who suffered under the same circumstances. They taught her that education and hard work are priceless, a privilege.

At a very young age, Chang learned to be a fighter and a true believer in never giving up. That mindset has continued to this day and is translated in her work. Life and living were her teachers. They instilled in her the understanding that she was not defined by her circumstances but by how she rose above them.



*Mina Chang in Somalia*

After being diagnosed in 2014 with brain cancer, Chang questioned the meaning and purpose of her life. She eventually came to the realization that her prognosis was actually a blessing in disguise as it allowed her to become vulnerable and rely on the help of others. Chang admitted that her diagnosis forced her to realize she was human and scared. Because she was able to gain a new perspective by relying on others, her belief in her work became even stronger. In keeping with this new perspective, Chang encouraged her audience to "Have faith in the unexpected journey life offers you."

What's next for this remarkable woman? She has recently become engaged to Jake Harriman, CEO and founder of *Nuru International*, a nonprofit that leads the fight to end extreme poverty in remote areas of Kenya and Ethiopia. Together, the ambitious and compassionate couple will use their resources to make the world a better place, one project at a time.