

Interview with Frank Yih

Date: Sep 21st, 10 a.m.

Interviewer: Rui Xi

【Introduction】

Hello, Mr. Yih. Thank you very much for accepting our interview. It means a lot to us. At the beginning of this year, the members of our iGEM team built an academic community called BioCraft, meanwhile we also want to do charity work to solve some social problems. That's why we are here today to listen to you sharing your successful experience in charity.

【Q&A】

Q1 First of all, we know that you were once a leading figure in semiconductor industry, but since the late nineties, you have been spending your time focusing on the charity work. So what's your initial motivation for such a big transformation, or what made you decide to transfer from an entrepreneur to a philanthropist?

ANS: I think to all your questions, I have simple answers. The reasons people are entrepreneurs are that they want make money. Ok, the money drives entrepreneurs. And philanthropy is to help people. So I decided to stop making money and to use whatever I have to help people. That's a transformation.

Q2 I read an article about you two years ago and there is a sentence you said in the last paragraph that deeply impressed me. Here I quote, "Beyond 65 you stop making and start giving. But you don't want to give indiscriminately. You want to give to people who will make the money go further".Here, what do you mean by making the money go further?

ANS: One word is sustainability. Whatever you give out, it needs to be able to sustain. So instead of giving out fish, you teach the people how to fish. Using the skill to catch fish, they can feed themselves every day. If you give them fish, they will get hungry when they want fish, more fish. So that's the sustainability. You wanna give the people who will help themselves rather than just asking for help.

Q3 By doing charity work, you must have been to a lot of impoverished areas where people suffer from different unfortunate things. What do you think are most needed by those people?

ANS: I think people's needs are the same whether they are rich or they are poor. They need food, they need clothing, they need roof on their head and they need transportation to go to places. It's just that city people are more fortunate. They have everything – they have subways, you know, they have high-rate beautiful homes, they have a lot of restaurants and

they have a lot of clothing that are fabulous. So whatever they want, it's available. But if you look further west going to the mountainous areas, these basic things are not available except maybe some food if they grow rice. Homes are very simple. Lots of them have to walk hours to go to school cause transportations are not available. So we are trying to work our best to make those infrastructures available to the poor people so their living standards in the city and in the village are not too far apart.

Q4 Besides these shortages in materials, what about their spiritual world?

ANS: Well, the people in the west seem to be very happy with little, so they are not really asking, from what I understand, as much as the city people. City people are more ambitious. They wanna go abroad, they wanna make money, they want big cars, big houses. So it's very easy to meet the people in the mountains their basic requirements, as I mentioned, food, places to live and basic vehicles.

Q5 Our next question must be a frequently asked one. What chief concerns does the HuaQiao Foundation mainly pay attention to in recent years? And what is your future plan?

ANS: Huaqiao has been working in two major fields, in the past, today and in the future, medical field and education. Medicine just basically helps people to get out of poverty because when they catch big serious disease, they will drain all their savings. Education is a way to raise their standard of living, to get out of the big mountains, to join the people in the city, even go abroad to have a better future, to see the world. So these are the areas that Huaqiao will continue to strive.

Q6 Have you met with any troubles in your charity career during the whole path of exploration? At that point, have you ever considered giving up and just enjoying the retirement?

ANS: It's not retirement. I feel philanthropy is a very enjoyable thing. So certainly I'm not tired of it. I'm motivated. In fact, just till this week, we have paid up most loans funding bank so starting in October, we will maybe double, if not triple, what we do. So we are far from retiring. We are just getting started. We are still very young! Hehehehe..

Q7 The close cooperation with college students has always been one of the biggest characteristics of HuaQiao. So why do you choose college students as the main force in many of your projects, rather than other groups of people?

ANS: Again, there is one word that will answer your question. Students are the pillars of the nation, the future of the country, as simple as that. They have their brains, they have resources, certainly they have many years ahead of them. Any country depends on their young people, how they educated them and taught them where their uses are.

Q8 There is something that puzzles most of the college students. The more we learn, the more we are shocked by children in famine, victims tortured by illness and the worldwide energy shortage. As I have mentioned before, we built a students' community, BioCraft. We want to make a difference to this situation by means of what we learn. We know what we can do for now may just cover a tiny piece of the big picture, but little by little, we believe, we can make it happen. Does that sound naïve to you?

ANS: No, no, certainly it's not. I think what you are doing is a special combining of ideas from MIT, Harvard, you know, Columbia, you know, all the famous universities in the states. Like you said, here and there, we are in the cutting edge. Often I read about bioscience in the newspapers. I am sure you will do wonderful things. There are advanced medicine technology, there are advanced medical field. I'm pretty confident.

Q9 Do you think scientific breakthroughs, especially in the field of modern biology, can be linked to philanthropy?

ANS: The best answer is looking at Bill Gates. Haha, right?

Q10 But he is in the field of computer science.

ANS: Yeah, well, it doesn't matter what area you are in. If you are successful, you know, you often have to think about the basic and social problems of the haves and have-nots. In China, the government is pushing their head with harmony in life, in society. So how can you have harmony if one lives a very stylish lifestyle and one lives in great poor areas having nothing to eat? So you have to solve that problem first.

Q11 If there are a bunch of undergraduates, like us, ambitious to do something charitable in an organized way, what is your suggestion?

ANS: My answer is joining Huaqiao. Hahahahaha..

Q12 Can you explain your projects for us?

ANS: Yes. One of our projects we did is in summer that we sent 128 teams, university teams like yourselves, from Fudan, SJTU, Peking, Tsinghua, ZJU and all the famous universities. I will give you the statistics before you go. There were about 40 people in a group. They went to the west. They have been to big mountains in Sichuan, Qinghai and Gansu is the last province. They go to the villages, they visit the families, they visit the schools, they help the children and they find their problems. They bring the facts to Huaqiao. We will help them and they are the ones we will go back to the village to help. This is one project. Also we have camps, English camp, Chinese camp in southern Yunnan. Michael is in charge of education. We sent out staff to USA, to Denver, to study how to help the hard-in-hearing. After they

hear the noise, you have to teach them how to speak. She is back from Los Angel, and she is now in Luoyang. And she will join this team to help to install hearing-aid and to teach them how to speak. So Huaqiao has ten major medical programs, I would very much like to help your group, like BioCraft, to be our No. 11. If you have ideas, I will expand our education areas. We also do preservations of cultures.

Q13 Finally, what's your message for BioCraft and all the other young researchers willing to give back to the society?

ANS: Again, it's one word, excel, which means to be excellent at what you do. To be excellent, you have to do everything well. Because the world is very competitive, if you don't do well, you well be left behind. If you do well, the whole society and the whole nation will support you. So make sure what you do is excellent, excel with the others. That's what I would encourage young people to do.

- Thank you very much for your cooperation!
- You are welcome!

