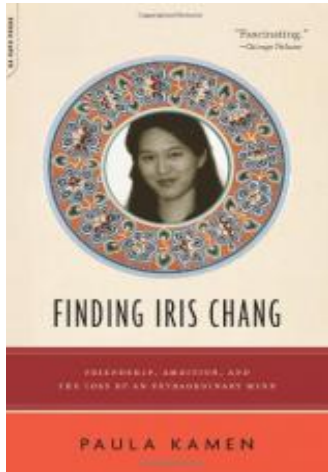


Finding Iris Chang: Friendship, Ambition, and the Loss of an Extraordinary Mind

by Paula Kamen



About the Book

Called "a moving bio" by *Entertainment Weekly*, A Book Sense Pick, and chosen as "a favorite book of 2007" by *The Chicago Tribune*.

Iris Chang's mysterious suicide in 2004, at age 36, didn't seem to make any sense. She had so much to live for; some even wondered if the controversial author of the best-selling *Rape of Nanking* had been murdered. Seeking to reconcile the suicide with the image of Chang's "perfect" life, longtime friend Paula Kamen searched her memory, and Chang's letters and personal archives. Her goal was to fill in the gaps of her friend's personal transformation --- from "ex-shy person" to world-class speaker and international human rights crusader --- and later decline into mental illness. The result is at once a suspenseful literary investigation of an important writer's journey and a tribute to a woman who inspired so many around the world.

Discussion Guide

1. Before reading this book, had you ever heard of Iris Chang? Or her book **The Rape of Nanking**?
2. What did Iris symbolize to her friends? To her readers?
3. Did you blame the author (Paula) and Iris' friends for missing the signs of her suicide? What about her family?
4. How was Iris typical or not typical of the stereotypical Asian woman?
5. Do you think her suicide was preventable? At the end, or only much earlier?

6. Do you know anyone with bipolar disorder? If so, do they have any similarities with Iris' case? How did her Asian heritage possibly influence her symptoms?
7. Do you think that Iris tried to actively appear "perfect"? In what ways was she not honest? What ways was she unusually honest?
8. How did Iris' quest for motherhood contribute to and/or reveal her decline?
9. What do you think motivated Iris to become so successful?
10. Did anything about the ending surprise you?
11. How does this book compare to others you've read in portraying the realities of female friendship? Or friendships between authors?

Author Bio

Paula Kamen was a long-time friend of Iris Chang's. She is the author of four books, including **All in My Head: An Epic Quest to Cure an Unrelenting, Totally Unreasonable and Only Slightly Enlightening Headache**. Her commentaries have appeared in the New York Times, Salon.com, the Chicago Tribune, the Washington Post, and other publications. She lives in Chicago.

[Click here](#) to read an article about Paula that appeared in *Chicago Reader*

Note: Author available for phone-in appearances to book groups.

Critical Praise

"This could find a sizable audience among those Chinese-Americans who lionized Chang."

Finding Iris Chang: Friendship, Ambition, and the Loss of an Extraordinary Mind

by Paula Kamen

Publication Date: December 9, 2008

Paperback: 304 pages

Publisher: Da Capo Press

ISBN-10: 0306817535

ISBN-13: 9780306817533