

# FACT SHEET

## **ABOUT HER WORLD YOUNG WOMAN ACHIEVER AWARD**

First presented in 1999, this award recognises and rewards young women who aim higher and reach further to achieve more. They come from all spheres of life. They push back existing boundaries, inspiring those around them and paving the way for future generations. This award celebrates the success of these young women who prove just how much can be achieved by individuals.

### **Criteria:**

Women who are 35 years old or below, has been recognised for her work, and has demonstrated the potential for attaining a higher level of success in her chosen field, as well as being an inspiration to other women

### **Winner:**



**MELISSA KWEE (MS)  
BUSINESS CONSULTANT**

#### **Biodata**

**Age** : 35 in 2007  
**Marital status** : Single

### **Achievements in 2007**

- In 2007, after years of tirelessly speaking out on issues, initiating programmes and starting organizations to help – in particular – teenaged girls in finding inspirational role models, her efforts were recognized in the form of a Singapore Youth Award.
- Initiated groundbreaking projects against commercial sexual exploitation of women and for financial education for migrant women workers. She was one of 35 women under the age of 35 selected by World Business, a management journal, and its panel of judges in a worldwide search for women of outstanding achievement, for what she accomplished when she headed UNIFEM.

### **Education / Awards / Scholarships**

She was educated at Harvard College where she graduated with magna cum laude in Social Anthropology. She was also a Fulbright Scholar to Nepal and a visiting scholar at University of California, Berkeley in Rhetoric and Film Studies.

- **2007:** She was presented with the Singapore Youth Award for Community and Youth Services in June for her “dedication to the youth community”.
- **2007:** She was one of 35 women under the age of 35 selected by World Business, a management journal, and its panel of judges in a worldwide search for women of

outstanding achievement, for what she accomplished when she headed UNIFEM: “Kwee initiated groundbreaking projects against commercial sexual exploitation of women and for financial education for migrant women workers.”

### **Professional Experience**

- **Present:** Melissa currently serves as Chairwoman of the Halogen Foundation, and as a Director of The Substation and the Singapore Repertory Theatre.
- **2002-2006:** She was the President of the Singapore National Committee of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)
- **March 2006:** Melissa conducted a talk, “Creating Alliances for the Common Good: Stories from experiences in Counter Trafficking” in Nationality University of Singapore (NUS).

### **Community Contribution**

- One of Melissa’s earliest initiatives was Project Access, a leadership education programme for girls that sought to “broaden the realm of the possible”, which she founded in 1996. For five years, Melissa worked with local schools, community organisations and government institutions and created a network of Leadership Resource Partnerships across Singapore to serve as mentors and role models for youths.
- **2006:** She formed a volunteer group called Beautiful People that enables professionals to help troubled teenage girls who are referred to youth and family service centres, by running programmes, workshops and camps. The professionals do it in their own time and with their own money. She said: “I noticed there was a rising trend in girl gangs and teenage pregnancies, and not many programmes focused on girls. The idea is to reach out to them, not as social workers, but as people who can be their role models.” The group also hopes to find part-time jobs for some of the girls, and provide them with the social skills they need to hold down a job.
- **From 2002 to 2006:** As President of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), Melissa initiated groundbreaking projects such as the Stop Demand for Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Women and Children Campaign and Financial Education for Migrant Women Workers.
- **1996 - 2001:** On her return from Harvard, she set up a non-profit group for the development of women and youth called Project Access, a leadership education programme for girls.
- Community contributions in her teenage years included raising funds for flood victims, trying to save the rainforests in Malaysia, worked with a conversation group in Nepal (where she learn how to speak Nepali and taught English at a local high school) and reading to depressed teenagers at Woodbridge hospital.
- Melissa regularly speaks at youth events and has addressed many public gatherings such as the BP-CISCO Corporate Social Responsibility Forum in 2002, the Harvard Project for Asian and International Relations in 2001 and the State of the World Forum in 1997.

### **Extras/Quotes**

- She comes from a privileged background but eschews the socialite role. Instead she calls herself an “educator, activist and advocate”.
- She is the oldest daughter (she has three younger sisters and brother) of Kwee Liong Tek and his Japanese American wife, a property tycoon who is the chairman of Pontiac Land - her family owns post properties such as Millenia Walk, Ritz Carlton and Conrad International.
- She is the granddaughter of George Aratani – the Kenwood electronics and Mikasa Chinaware empire founder - who became her role model. He started the Aratani Foundation

in Los Angeles, California, which was created in 1994 to help support non-profit organizations that serve the Asian Pacific American community.

- Her family instilled in her the value of playing your part, doing your bit and contributing what you have.
- She lives for what she calls the "Aha!" moment – the point at which people suddenly renew their hope and faith in life.

“What if every person gave 1% more time and effort each day to care for someone around them? 1% of kindness to a stranger, 1% more care towards a family member, 1% of your income for a day. I am quite sure we would have a positive revolution and witness a transformed world”

### **Why Her**

- For her significant achievements in championing women’s issues and dedication in community projects related to young women.
- For tirelessly speaking out on issues, initiating programmes and starting organizations to help – in particular – youth community

### **Past Winners**

1999	Kit Chan
2000	Jing Junhong
2001	Stephanie Sun
2002	Elim Chew
2003	Dr Wong Ting Hway
2004	Li Jia Wei
2005	Theresa Goh
2006	Esther Tan Cheng Yin