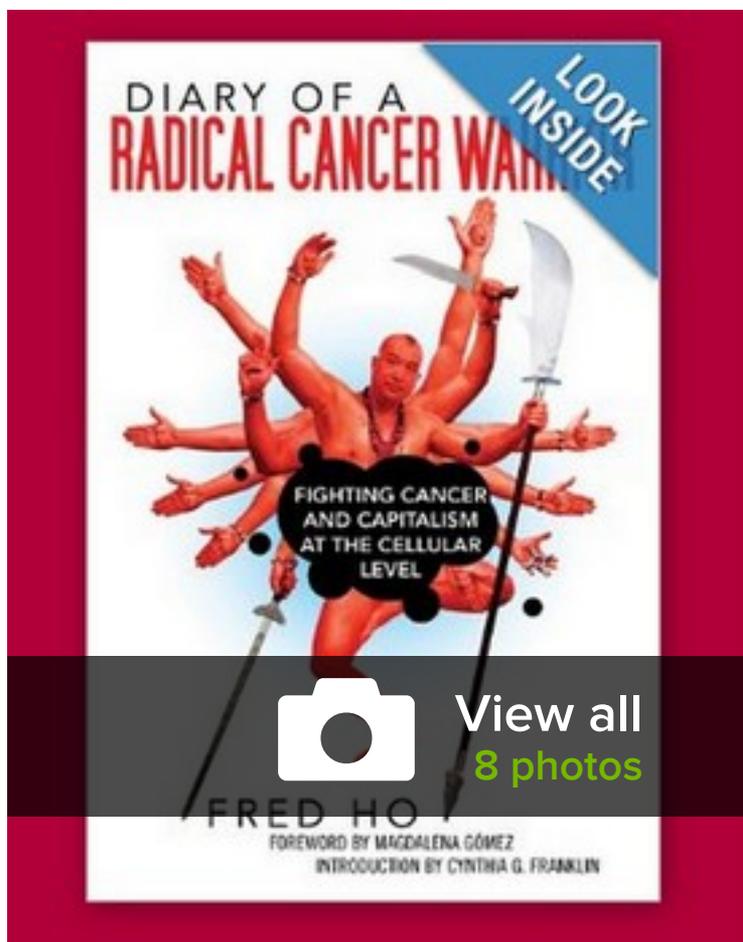


Let's support "Fred Ho's Last Year: A Feature Documentary"

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I interviewed [Fred Ho](#) in April last year about his fight against cancer. I also talked to his friends and read his book *Diary of a Radical Cancer Warrior: Fighting Cancer and Capitalism at the Cellular Level*, published in 2011. However, I was not able to write an article about him simply because Fred has accomplished so much in life and it is challenging to sum it up in a few hundred words.





Fred Ho's Last Year: A Feature Documentary

Born in 1957 in California, Fred does not fit the stereotype of an ABC (American Born Chinese). Graduating in 1979 from Harvard University with a bachelor degree in sociology, Fred is actually a musical genius as a composer, saxophonist, orchestra lead, and music educator. He did approximately nineteen music residences with the nation's finest education and art institutes in addition to ones in Italy and Costa Rica. He was commissioned two dozen times by major art establishments to compose [Jazz](#) ensembles, operas, and other music pieces, which won him rave reviews from the media, academia, and the music industry. He fused Jazz with Chinese opera and created a new avant-garde Jazz movement. He was bestowed with honors by the National Endowment for the Arts, Chamber Music of America, American Composer Forum, Rockefeller Foundation, American Music Center, Boston Jazz Composer Alliance, New York Foundation for the Arts, Duke Ellington Distinguished Artist Lifetime Achievement Award, ASCAP Composers Award, and Harvard Arts Medal among many others.

What makes Fred unique is not just his music talent. People who know him describe him as a highly intelligent man with incredible creativity and his passion for social justice. He has been an activist for various causes since his teenage years. He founded Amherst Asian American Education Committee in 1974 and many other civil liberty organizations afterwards to benefit movements against anti-Asian violence, women's shelter, Asian cultural organizations, community groups, political campaigns, workers strike committees, prisoner, and others. He is against big corporations, which in his view dominate the nation's health care, the economy, and the policies, e.g. the environment protection. He espouses sustainability and his wardrobe is made from discarded material. He is a revolutionary who has a huge impact on Jazz; he has also brought revolutionary thinking and acts into the public forum. Aside from *Diary of a Radical Cancer Warrior*, he authored/co-authored [Afro Asia: Revolutionary](#)

Political and Cultural Connections between African Americans and Asian Americans, **Raw Extreme Manifesto: Change Your Body, Change Your Mind, Change the World While Spending Almost Nothing!**, **Legacy to Liberation: Politics and Culture of Revolutionary Asian Pacific America**, *The Heroes Womyn Warriors Calendar*, **Wicked Theory**, **Naked Practice: A Fred Ho Reader**, *Sounding off! Music as Subversion/Resistance/Revolution*, and **The A to Z: Characteristics and Qualities of Being a Revolutionary**. He is a prolific writer and penned dozens of articles on music and social concerns.

With his exceptional accomplishments in music and social activism, scholars have written articles about him and his achievements.

Fred utilizes arts as a mean to tell stories about social injustice and to raise awareness of various issues. He is also a brilliant playwright and savvy producer of a few successful shows. He is a risk taker and not afraid to venture into something new. He invested his own money and produced shows like **Monkey King Journey beyond the West**, **Voice of Dragon**, **Warrior Sisters**, **Deadly She-Wolf Assassin at Armageddon!**, and **the Sweet Science Suite: A Scientific Soul Music Honoring Muhammad Ali**. A common ingredient in these shows is **martial arts**. Fred brilliantly meshed Jazz, Chinese music, and Chinese martial arts together and made the shows extremely exciting and entertaining. His shows carry strong messages for the social agenda he believes in. Audiences might not always agree with his views but they all enjoy the shows.

Master Jose Figueroa, a former American **Tai Chi** champion, collaborated with Fred Ho on a couple of shows. He said, "Fred put lot of faith in me and I had to learn everything about the theater on the job". Fred created interesting characters for his shows. But there was no dialogue for actors in *Voice of the Dragon*. Fred wanted Jose to choreograph with martial art movements for each of the characters to show the personality as well as telling the story. Fred always pushed for quality and never compromised. His work ethics and integrity won respect from co-workers including Ann Greene, who did the story and lyrics for musical *Warrior Sisters*.

In Aug 2006, Fred was diagnosed with stage 3b colon cancer. Bravely, he stated, "The old Fred Ho died. The next day, the new Fred Ho was born." He underwent immediate surgery to remove the tumor and began chemotherapy. His friends arranged grocery deliveries, transport, companionship, and housekeeping duties—they called themselves "Warriors for Fred." Fred decided to write his battle with cancer as a diary to share with friends. He detailed his meticulous research on colon cancer, his various treatments, his successes, and his failures during the treatment process. He also included his thoughts on various social and political issues in the diary. You can read parts of them on his Big Red Media site <http://www.bigredmediainc.com/brmflash/>. He changed his diet and started **Qigong** meditation. Initially, his health improved. A second tumor was found 13 months later though. On March 22, 2012, he was told that the cancer reached stage 4b, a terminal status.

The amazing thing is that Fred never stopped working during his seven long years of battling cancer.

He has been as productive as before if not more and has continued to write, compose, teach, and put shows together. Much of his work was completed during this time and *the Sweet Science Suite* is one example.

On Dec. 1, I received an email letter from Ann Greene. It says that “Fred does not want to leave this life he loves, but here is nothing more to do – no treatments or medicines – and so he is giving up the fight, he has his affairs in order and is preparing to die.” Even though he is alive but he is extremely weak. For people who know Fred or know of Fred, the news just sadden them. But for Fred’s friends and fans, there is something to look forward to. Indi filmmaker Steve DeCastro has made a movie *Fred Ho’s Last Year: A Feature Documentary* to show us how Fred wrote, spoke, and conducted while fighting cancer. The movie is in post-production. However, for a broad distribution to reach a larger audience, Steve needs help. You can donate to this cause via the link here <http://www.indiegogo.com/projects/jazz-cancer-and-life-fred-ho-s-last-year>. You will get a copy of the movie and Fred’s music for your contribution. Time is running out and the fund raising deadline is Dec. 31, 2013.

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Tai Chi Examiner