

Anna May Wong Becomes the 1st Asian American to Be Featured on U.S. Currency




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Oct 20, 2022 9:23 PM

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 Nearly thirty years before [Sidney Poitier](#) established himself as one of the pioneers for Black actors in Hollywood, Chinese American actress Anna May Wong blazed a trail for Asian actors all across the globe by appearing in some of the world's first-ever movies with audio. As the silent-movie era came to an end in the early 1930s, Wong immersed herself in the film industry, landing roles in productions like *Daughter of the Dragon* and *Shanghai Express*. Although Wong flourished on the silver screen during a time of segregation in America, she was often typecasted into stereotypical roles and subjected to discriminatory practices in Hollywood, such as the casting of non-Asian actors/actresses in "yellowface" for leading roles that she was never given the opportunity to portray. Thus, she never claimed an Oscar award for any of her performances. Nevertheless, as counterculture and the civil rights movement began to grab hold of the mainstream in the 1960s, performers like Wong started to gain recognition.



Wong was honored with a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame in 1960, one year before she passed away in Santa Monica, California. In the years that succeeded her death, Wong's notoriety faded away somewhat. But the woman who is considered by many to be the first Chinese-American Hollywood celebrity undoubtedly opened the window of opportunity for perhaps the most iconic Chinese American actor of all time, [Bruce Lee](#). Bruce Lee's career as an action film star is so impactful that it still resonates today among some of the most successful Asian American actors/actresses today, such as Steven Yeun, Constance Wu, and Awkwafina.

On Monday, October 17, 2022, Anna May Wong's name resurfaced with the announcement that she was going to become the first Asian American to be featured on American currency. "The Anna Wong Quarter" came to fruition because of legislation that was supported heavily by United State representative Barbra Lee. The release of the coin is a part of a rollout by the U.S. Mint called the American Women Quarters program.

"This quarter is designed to reflect the breadth and depth of accomplishments by Anna May Wong, who overcame challenges and obstacles she faced during her lifetime," said Mint Director Ventris C. Gibson.

The United States Mint will release about half a billion quarters featuring Anna May Wong's likeness on October 24th.