



A FILM BY
STEPHANIE WANG-BREAL

WO AI NI MOMMY

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2009 - 76 MINUTES - COLOR -
ENGLISH and MANDARIN/CANTONESE WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES - USA

In the last decade, China was the leading country for U.S. international adoptions. Now, there are over 70,000 Chinese children being raised by American families. Eight-year old Fang Sui Yong, aka Faith Sadowksy, is just one of them. After being abandoned at 2, sent to a city orphanage for two years, and then taken in by a loving Chinese foster family, Faith's life is suddenly upended when she is adopted by Donna and Jeff Sadowsky, a Jewish family in Long Island, New York. *Wo Ai Ni Mommy* explores, for the first time, what it feels like to be adopted from the child's perspective. This intimate and honest story is told in real-time by Faith as she tearfully parts ways with her birth culture, language and foster family—the only family she's really ever known. *Wo Ai Ni Mommy* documents her struggle to adapt to her new life in America and offers a rare glimpse into a personal transformation that neither she, her American mother, nor the filmmaker could have ever imagined.

DIRECTED AND PRODUCED BY
STEPHANIE WANG-BREAL

CONSULTING PRODUCERS
JUDITH HELFAND
JEAN TSIEN

EDITED BY
GIGI WONG

DIRECTORS OF PHOTOGRAPHY
DONNY TAM
STEPHANIE WANG-BREAL

ORIGINAL MUSIC
PAUL GOLDMAN

Broadcast Premiere on P.O.V. on Tuesday, August 31st, 2010 at 10pm



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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Wo Ai Ni Mommy is a film that examines the complex gains and losses that are an inherent aspect of Chinese adoption.

China opened its doors to international adoption in 1992. In just fifteen years' time, American families adopted over 70,000 children from China. 95 percent of those adopted were girls. Fang Sui Yong was just one of these girls. But she was one of few who had a voice. Unlike the majority of girls who are adopted as infants, eight-year-old Sui Yong is capable of expressing herself in both subtle and not-so-subtle ways. Through Sui Yong, we are able to get a real glimpse into the thoughts and feelings that are part of the child's adoption experience. *Wo Ai Ni Mommy* reveals the emotional and cultural losses that Chinese children must go through in order to gain a new family.

The filmmaker met Donna and Jeff Sadowsky in July 2007. At the time, they were still awaiting feedback from the Chinese government about their dossier for Fang Sui Yong's adoption. The Sadowsky's discussed their decision to adopt another child from China, as well as some of the unknowns they were concerned about with this second adoption. After meeting face-to-face with the filmmaker over the next five months, Donna and Jeff agreed to allow Wang-Breal to follow them to China to document their entire adoption experience.

The first time Sui Yong enters the picture is quite heartbreaking. She is rigid and visibly unsettled by the scene unfolding in front of her eyes: a room full of expectant Caucasian parents holding Chinese orphans, young and old. We realize how difficult the moment is for this sensitive young girl and how it will forever impact the rest of her life.

After Donna and Faith try out a few nonverbal exchanges, the filmmaker decides to jump in as a translator to facilitate their communication and to help Sui Yong feel somewhat connected to her new mother. We quickly see Sui Yong grow attached to Donna and her new family, language, and culture and witness her amazing ability to survive and adapt to her new life. However, throughout the acculturation process, Sui Yong acts out, letting her family know that she is not entirely comfortable in her new life.

Within 17 months', Faith transforms into an entirely new person. She is a remarkably different girl from the Fang Sui Yong we met when she was first adopted in January 2008.

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FILMMAKER STATEMENT

I am a first-generation Chinese-American. My parents immigrated to Youngstown, Ohio the year I was born. I am one of three girls. My parents had four children because they desperately wanted to have a boy. They always used to remind my sisters and me how lucky we were to be growing up in America and how different our lives would have been had they stayed in China. I did not fully comprehend this idea until I got my degree in Chinese history at Northwestern University.

During my studies, I started to peel back the layers of meaning behind my parents' words and see just how distinct Chinese and Chinese-American cultures are from each other. If my parents had stayed in China, I would have led a completely different existence.

Growing up in a white, blue-collar town made me extremely self-conscious about my race. I was the only Chinese girl in my class of 450, and all I wanted was to be like every other Caucasian girl around me. I thought I was American, and that being Chinese would have meant I was a person who wore a pointed straw hat and spoke English with an accent. I bought into the Asian stereotype perpetrated by the media and my predominantly white surroundings.

I became interested in making a documentary about adoption from China in 1999. My best friend, Heather Loeffler, was teaching Chinese to adopted girls at the China Institute. After hearing her talk about these amazing girls, I began to wonder what it was like for them to grow up Chinese in America. They had been born in China, yet every day they were living and breathing a completely "white" experience. After interviewing over 100 families with children from China as research for the project, I realized I wanted to make a documentary that provided insight into the child's experience, because that was a perspective that was notably absent.

I'm determined to make films that shed light on the real voices and faces behind the Chinese-American experience, which often goes undocumented. I hope to help people of other cultures and races understand that being people of color plays a prominent role in our lives. And that being Chinese does not necessarily mean we understand or represent the entire Chinese experience.

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PERSONNEL

STEPHANIE WANG-BREAL

DIRECTOR/PRODUCER/CINEMATOGRAPHER

Stephanie Wang-Breal has been producing stories for television since 1999. She has worked with various media outlets including CNN, MTV, the Biography Channel and UNICEF. In 2006, Stephanie produced and directed her first short, independent film, "From Infirmary to Firmness," about the beneficial aspects of yoga for individuals living with HIV. This film screened at the San Francisco Short film festival in 2007 and it helped the Iyengar Yoga Institute of New York receive a grant from the Walt Disney foundation for their free HIV positive yoga class. *Wo Ai Ni Mommy* marks Stephanie's debut as a feature documentary filmmaker.

JUDITH HELFAND

CONSULTING PRODUCER

Judith is a filmmaker, activist and educator. She's best known for her ability to take the dark, cynical worlds of chemical exposure, heedless corporate behavior and environmental injustice and make them personal, resonant, highly charged and entertaining. Her films include *The Uprising of 34*, the Sundance-award-winning, twice Emmy-nominated *Blue Vinyl*, its Peabody-award-winning prequel *A Healthy Baby Girl* and, most recently, *Everything's Cool*. Helfand co-founded Working Films and Chicken and Egg Pictures. She has also taught at NYU, co-designed and taught "DOC-BOOT CAMP" for New School University, and recently completed her first bi-annual semester as Artist-in-Residence at the University Of Wisconsin, Madison, where she's teaching "environmental documentary." In November, 2007, Helfand received a United States Artist Fellowship grant, one of fifty awarded to "America's finest living artists." She is currently working on her next project, *COOKED*, about the 1995 Chicago heat wave.

JEAN TSIEN

CONSULTING PRODUCER

For the past 25 years, Jean has been editing and producing award-winning documentaries and narrative films. Her films include the 2001 Academy Award nominee for Best Documentary Feature, *Scottsboro: An American Tragedy*, the Peabody Award-winning film, *Malcolm X: Make It Plain*, for which she received an Emmy

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nomination for Best Editing, as well as the Peabody and Christopher Award-winning film, Travis. Jean's most recent work, Please Vote for Me received the 2007 Silverdocs Sterling Award for Best Feature Documentary. She has also received a Golden Reel for her role as ADR Supervisor on the Academy Award-winning film, Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon. Since 2001, Jean has served on the board for The Center for Asian American Media (CAAM) a non-profit organization dedicated to presenting stories that convey the richness and diversity of Asian American experiences. Jean also consults and advises young filmmakers who are launching their careers in the feature documentary domain.

GIGI WONG

EDITOR

Gigi graduated with a Media Studies degree from the University of Westminster. In 2001, she was commissioned to direct and produce a popular soul searching film, Remade in Hong Kong I and its sequel Remade in Hong Kong II. Following this success, she completed a documentary series, The New X-Generation in 2007. In the last 3 years, she has worked with international celebrated directors, like Weijun Chen and Marije Meerman, and edited the observational films, The Biggest Chinese Restaurant in the World (2008); I Wanna Be Boss aka China Prep (2008); Beyond the Game (2008), etc. These films are not only loved by the audiences worldwide but have also screened in numerous film festivals such as IDFA & TIFF.

PAUL GOLDMAN

MUSIC COMPOSER

After graduating from the Berklee College of Music with a degree in film scoring in 1993, Paul Goldman started his career as a young musician and composer in his New York City apartment. In 1994 Goldman founded Ear Goo, Inc. In the past 15 years, he has built a reputation for original music and sound design for television networks, advertising agencies and independent filmmakers. Goldman's independent film work includes over 50 features, shorts and student films that have garnered awards from the Academy Awards, Sundance Film Festival, Hamptons International Film Festival and numerous national and international film festivals. Other notable awards include Addy, Clio, Peabody, Gracie, Beacon, Promax, BDA, New York Festival and Art Directors Club.

PRINCIPAL CAST

**DONNA, JEFF, JASON, JARED, FAITH and DARAH SADOWSKY
DR. AMANDA BADEN**

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PRESS MATERIALS/ REVIEWS

High resolutions stills and electronic press kit are available for download at www.woainimommy.com

“Vivid personalities and a sharp eye for telling detail make this well-packaged docu an ingratiating winner.”

—DENNIS HARVEY, *VARIETY*

“...reminiscent of Sofia Coppola’s “Lost in Translation,” except that much is found in “Wo ai ni Mommy” — instead of being lost.”

—JANOS GEREKEN, *SAN FRANCISCO EXAMINER*

“Sui Yong’s transformation in such a short period is utterly shocking, and you won’t be able to peel your eyes from the screen.”

—MOMO CHANG, *HYPHEN MAGAZINE*

“This is a deeply moving and intelligent film that probes the very heart of what family means while exploring issues of identity, cultural assimilation and bonding.”

—GENEVA ANDERSON, *ART HOUND*

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SUPPORT

WO AI NI MOMMY is a co-production of **EYE WANG PICTURES** and **AMERICAN DOCUMENTARY/ P.O.V.** and the **Diverse Voices Project** presented in association with **CENTER FOR ASIAN AMERICAN MEDIA (CAAM)**, with funding provided by the **Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB)**. Additional support provided by the **JEROME FOUNDATION**, **CHICKEN & EGG PICTURES**, the **Individual Artist Program of NYSCA** and **WOMEN MAKE MOVIES**.

