

Telling our Stories, Finding our Roots, Exeter's Multi-Coloured History Interview Transcript

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Name of interviewers: Samantha Cruzada
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Transcribed by: Dawn Eldridge

Do you have a Chinese name?

Yeah my name is Ye Tong.

Is there any significance in it? Does it have a meaning?

Ye means 'leaf' and Tong means 'child' – its because I am an ox, I need beef to eat. And Tong, in China, in the 1st of June is the children's day. My birthday was supposed to be on that day, that's why my name is 'child'.

And how old are you?

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How long have you been in Exeter for?

About 5 years.

Do you have any family in Exeter?

My mum and dad are here.

How come you came in the city?

I don't really remember, I was too young, I was like 10. My mum wanted to go to America, but it didn't work out, so she decided to come here, so my dad followed her, then afterwards I moved here as well.

Do you have any other of your extended family here?

No, only us three
Are they all in China?

Yes, the rest in China.

So where in China are you originally from, which part?

It's Waifan, It's in the East.

What differences and similarities do you find between China and Exeter?

The place or people?

Both

The people are really different. The people in China are generally really quiet and more calm, and for here really open. Yes, I think that's the main difference in people and the place – the air is more clean here. And it's quite open, there's not much tall buildings and it's not really crowded – the opposite in China.

Can you remember your earliest memory in Exeter, like when you first got here?

Yeah, I remember I used to, we lived in this home stay, kind of, and I lived with this English person. When I first saw him he talked to me in English and I didn't really understand anything. So that's all I remember.

Did you find it hard adapting with the language?

Yes, I found it really hard. In schools especially, I didn't understand anything and Year 6 when I came here, I didn't really understand anything, but it gets better.

Did you find that it was hard for you to make friends because you didn't know the language at first?

Yes, that's right it was really hard, but it's harder in secondary school, because in primary school the teacher will tell you to be friends with someone, but in secondary school you kind of have to make your own friends.

So was that difficult or hard?

It was difficult at first, but once you know one friend or get to know more friends, it gets better.

Did you experience like any discrimination because of your race?

A little bit, but it didn't really matter.

Did you not get affected by it?

No

But, do you think it's a problem in your school?

I don't think so – no I don't think it's a problem.

Are your friends like all white or is it like a mixture?

I have two white friends, and the rest is Asian – a mixture, Filipinos.

What do you like and dislike about living here in Exeter?

What I like is that people are usually not very busy or tired, and the life here is really calm and slow. But the thing is it gets really boring, if you live in a place like this, because all you can do is go around town and that's all you can do.

So would you prefer to live in China?

Yeh, I would. Basically because there are more things to do in China, because it's a bigger place.

Do you consider yourself Chinese or British, or a bit of both?

A bit of both, perhaps more Chinese I think.

Can you, if you have like, British friends, do you have things in common that have to do with Britain in general?

Because I don't have that many British friends, so I think my British friends kind of change when they are next to me, but I don't really change for them because I don't know anything about them.

Do you celebrate any festivals?

Yeah, Christmas, Easter.

Anything that's specifically Chinese?

Chinese.. New Year.

Do you invite any of your British friends?

No, I don't think...

How come you don't?

Because my family doesn't really celebrate it as a really, really big festival. Sometimes my family just ignore it. We only celebrate sometimes so... In China we don't celebrate New Year with friends, we only celebrate with friends anyway, so no.. and family.

Do you think being in a different country does it like stop you from properly celebrating?

I can celebrate it properly if I want to, but because I think New Year is more important when you are small, but when you get bigger it's not that much of a deal, because you are growing and it's not that important any more.

What rites of passage are important, for example, in China, like weddings, or funerals or harvest, like agriculture. In Chinese culture is it important to have weddings or funerals..

I think that funerals are more important than a wedding, because it's a big thing and if someone in my family has a funeral, for example, if someone in my family doesn't go, it will be a really rude thing, but if I have a wedding and someone doesn't go that will be fine.

Are you a member of a faith group?

No

Do you think it's got to do with the fact that China doesn't really have a religion?

Yes, I think so, I don't have people, my family is not religious. My school taught us to believe in the country rather than a religion.

Do you have like arguments with people who have a different belief?

No

What are your hobbies, what kind of music do you like?

I like Korean music.

Tell me more about that.

Korean music is really addictive. I think, compared to American music or British music, it has more things to do with it, it's not about the music it's about the people and the fans, because they are more involved. The stars, the idols, they do things for their fans, for example like fans' areas, but I don't find other, like for example American idols do that often. So I think K-Pop's better.

What kind of bands do you like?

I like Exo. it's a group made by SM entertainment, it's the top three big entertainments in South Korea.

How many members are there?

They have 12 members, so quite a lot. If you have never heard of K-Pop before. K-Pop doesn't really have much solo artists, it's basically all groups, so you will somehow find someone you like in that group, I find that really cool.

Have they like got any Chinese members?

Yes, they sometimes add people from other Asian countries so they get more fans all over the world.

Do you watch any TV shows or dramas?

I don't watch any English or like, European TV shows, I just watch Asian ones, because the story lines are like basically the same all the time, and they just change.

What, in British television?

Oh both I think. I don't like the type of drama the British ones. I think the people really. Because for the Chinese drama the actor and actress has to be really good looking. I find these people good looking for me, but I don't find the people in English dramas good looking for me.

Is it because they are Chinese, or they are British?

No, I'm just more used to it.

Just more used to seeing Chinese people?

Yes

Also, to do with the dramas, is it because of the culture?

Yes, because it's like for example, love stories, they are really different. In the Chinese drama, it would be really slow so it might take about 20 episodes for them to become together, but in a British drama, they might just be married in the second episode.

I think it's to do with lifestyles.

Elaborate.

Chinese people treat marriage really important, so you have to be with someone for more than, I would say, three to five years until you can get married. Whereas here, you see someone you like you can just marry them.

Do you use the internet?

Yes, all the time – I don't really watch TV.

Do you like the freedom in this country, because the internet in China has no You Tube. Do you like the freedom here?

Yes, but it's not a real big deal because in China I don't really need to go on things like You Tube because there are Chinese websites I can use. Like here I can't use some of the Chinese websites here - depends where I am and what things I want to look for. But it's usually easier to go on the internet here, because in China we have something that's like a twitter thing as well,

but if you say something to do with politics sometimes it just gets deleted and your account as well.

So you like the fact that there's more freedom of speech here

Yes.

What language are you comfortable with?

Speaking wise I think it's Chinese, but writing it would be in English.

How come writing in English?

Because I don't find any context where I would write in Chinese, I just talk to Chinese people, but I don't really need to write to them. I write in English in school and other places.

And what language do you think in?

Depends who I am with, both.

You know you said earlier that you have different ethnic friends, have they experienced any racism?

I don't think so, no – or they didn't tell me.

What are your views of the police and other public services in this country compared to China?

I don't know I don't see the police often. I think the council is really nice here – I don't know about police, I don't really see them often. But I think it's safer here, that's why I don't see police often. In China, it's like police in the street all the time.

Do you think it's got to do with the population or the government?

I think it's to do with population.

Do you support a particular political party?

No, because in China, people don't really vote for presidents or anything. People older than me, like my dad for example, might care about politics, but for my generation, we don't really care any more.

So you just let it happen?

Yes

But in this country, would you want to vote?

No

So you don't really care if it's a democracy?

No, I think it's more to do with me. I think other people from China might care, but I personally don't.

Can you tell us a folk tale from China?

OK, there's this person called Ho Hi, and in China apparently we used to have 10 suns and it was really, really hot so he decided to kill the other 9 suns, so people can live normally.

You know in China, there's a lot of historical dramas, why do you think that is?

I think because the context makes the stories different. Because, in the olden days, you can't decide who you want to marry, your parents choose for you, so it really makes the story different. So if you live in the modern world, you can just go out with whoever you want.

So people want to see like, how far you can...

Yes

Can you give us a song or your national anthem?

Ok – can I just sing a little bit [sings..]

What does it mean?

I think it was when we had the war, it's basically saying that you should never give up, and encouraging people, the soldiers to fight. It's historical.

You know China has had a lot of success with the Olympic teams and sports-wise and .. business, What are your comments on that? Do you feel proud?

Yeah, I do feel proud, I think China is getting better at sport, especially swimming, because we didn't win any medals in swimming before, but in the 2012 Olympics, this girl, 15 year old girl and boy both won a medal in swimming.

Do you think China is going to do well in swimming as well?

I don't know, I think once we've won medal, they will find something new, because it's hard to keep up. They will find another sport to be good at. Rather than keeping, carrying on being good at that one sport

So you want to be good at loads of sports, to win loads of Gold medals.

What message would you like to give to Exeter's people?

World peace. I don't know.

Would you like to change anything?

No, everything's good. Maybe more leisure opportunities for young people.

Is that because there's not many young Chinese people?

No I just find there's nothing to do.

If there was a scenario would you feel more comfortable with friends now or people the same age as you that are Chinese?

My friends now, but if I get on with the Chinese people for a really long time, maybe it would be them, because it's more about the culture.

It would be good if you were surrounded by people with the same culture as you?

I don't mind, it's not really about the culture, it's about the people themselves.

Because you have more in common?

Yes, it's not like people from, all the people in England all like football or something, everyone's different.

Thank you for letting us interview you .

You're welcome

End of interview