

A Senior Asian American Actress

by
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I feel blessed that I am living in Los Angeles, California, the City where I was sworn in as a United States Citizen. It took me about ten years to get my green card from the date of application. It seemed so long ago now. I consider myself a Chinese American, born in China, raised in Hong Kong, and Okinawa, arrived in America as a foreign student. I went to a Chinese elementary school in Hong Kong with one English class added in Junior High. Then my parents moved the family to Okinawa. I went to an American Military Dependent High School in the Military Base. That was where I learned my English. During those years, Okinawa was a foreign country to us, and my American school was all foreign to me, too. There was only a handful of Asian looking student, but they were Americans, all born in the US. I had a tough time communicating for the first couple months. I remembered I had this tiny dictionary all the time to get by until it was almost torn after a while. There was no "English as a second language" those days, because there were not too many foreign students like me, the natives would be going to the local Japanese Schools.

The High School years were very memorable, I tasted American food, learned the ballroom dance, watched football and baseball, tried out the school plays and cheerleading, joined the Chorus, learning to sing the Broadway Musical songs, celebrated American Holidays, watching American TV shows, one way of learning English and the culture. During my senior year, I got together with three other girls, we competed in the talent show. Wow, we won the second prize, the teenage boys' band won the first prize. We were not surprised, they always played at the teenage club every weekend. After graduation, us girls met up with some young soldiers to form a group performing at Officers' Clubs around the Island. Our group was called, "The Majestic and the Royal Ladies". Our Manager was very protective to us, and drove us home right after each show. My Dad was so worried about me, and said, "Enough of this singing, you are going to college". I loved American movies, and was hoping someday I could go there. That was a great chance for me to go to New York for College. Actually, my older brother was already in the States attending college. The day I left walking toward the airplane. I turned my head to see my parents, brothers, and sisters waving at me. At that instant, I want to run back to them so bad, I could not bear to leave them behind. I kept on turning my head several times as my tears rolling down my cheeks.

Shanghai was the City where I was born. I lived in a huge house. My parents had a driver, several maids, and my three siblings each had a nursemaid after we were born. They breastfed us till we turned about one year old. We were all very much attached to them. At a young age, my Mom would take me to Shanghai Opera Houses a lot, and invited the actors over for dinner often. I was bitten by the acting bug then, would get on the big bed and use the sheets as the costume to act out the scenes. My Mom would tell me to "shout up", saying I was making too much noisy. Those were the fun days, there was a basement full of big watermelons. We would play hide and seek, and running around. There were four seasons in my home town with snow falling in the winter. Couple years later, my parents had to abandon their business and house, took some valuables or

whatever they had, and flee to Hong Kong where the weather was tropical. With a family of six, after a while, the money ran out, we then moved to a wooden hut without electricity and indoor plumbing. One night, the house almost burned out. We re-located to some projects, my parents had to learn how to speak Cantonese to communicate. My Dad learned French in Law School, was a lawyer and an entrepreneur in China, and my Mom was a teacher. They both could not work in their field in Hong Kong. For a while, they had to do manual labor by making lamp shades, sew sequins on evening handbags and slippers to survive. But, they always try to put us in private schools. Some days, this teacher would call out the names of students who had not paid the monthly tuition yet. I felt so ashamed and cried many times and told my Mom. But, thinking back, they were doing the best trying to make ends meet to support us. We had to walk a long way down from the huts to catch buses to go to school. We did not complain, just trying to study hard. Financially, things got better. My Dad later taught himself English, and worked as a salesman to meet the big American ships docking in Hong Kong soliciting sailors to order costume made suits. One day he ended up in the hospital, because he was trying to compete with the others running toward the ship and had to operate on his appendix. Since that incident, he got into furniture business, and expanded it to Okinawa. While living in Hong Kong, my parents had four more children. Indeed, we were a big happy family. I ended up doing most of the chores, because I was the second oldest and a girl.

After I received my green card, I petitioned my parents to come to California, they continued with their business in Los Angeles until they retired. Let's fast forward to the present day. After I was married and had two children, and had gone through many different jobs and small businesses to make a living. Waiting for the children to be older, I took acting classes in college as well as private coaching, I spent a lot of time doing plays in small theatre here in L.A. Then, twenty-seven years ago, I became a SAG member working in films, TV, and Commercials. The road is not easy, lots of auditions but few bookings. This is very normal unless someone is super talented. But, I will never give up! I am on IMDB and Face Book!