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# CHINESE AMERICAN

美籍  
華人

SEPTEMBER 26, 2014

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## EXCLUSION / INCLUSION

# Zhi Hen Li

New York, NY



I was born and raised in the lower east side of Manhattan, where Chinatown is located. Ever since I was young I have been fascinated by the Chinese New Years Parade that happens in the neighborhood, especially the Lion Dance. I desperately wanted to learn Lion Dance performance, but most Lion Dance groups only accepted Chinese members, not ABC (American Born Chinese) like myself. However, When I was in high school in 2002 I joined the Chinatown Community Young Lions, a group that accepted anyone with interest in Chinese heritage. After months of practice, I was finally allowed to play the lion head, and soon I became obsessed. I drew out possible mixtures of head, mouth, ear and eye movements. Thought about endlessly how I could stitch them together to make the Lion come alive. After all my hard work, I was able to perform in my first Chinese New Years parade in 2003. Today, after 12 years I am still part of the club, and although I'm not as active as I use to be, I try to participate as much as I can. My role has changed as well, and now I am teaching the new members of our club my style of Lion Dance. It's time for the next generation to take on and continue this tradition.

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