

**International House NY**

**Difan Zhao**

*Documentary Film - Elderly Chinese Immigrants in New York  
New York City, USA*

When you stop by Chinatown, either in Flushing or Manhattan, or in any other states in the U.S., you might see a group of elderly people hanging out together in a small park, they either play chess or group-dance, or you might see them walking around markets with a personal shopping cart filled with grocery. Whenever I visited Chinatown, I can't help but wonder, what are their lives like? What do they worry about daily?

As a Chinese Immigrant who studied films, I have always thought about making a film for the Chinese community in the U.S. Not only because I hope to tell their stories to the U.S. since some of them don't speak English, but also, I want to explore and learn about their view of the world, their past, their joy, their concerns, their problems, just as how I wish I should have learned from my grandma. I lost my grandma a year and a half ago. Like many Chinese kids, I spent most of my childhood with Grandma since my parents had a busy work life. However, I never got a chance to really know her; I moved to the U.S. at 14, which I, unfortunately, was not mature enough to appreciate her as much as she deserved to be. Therefore, if I were to make a film to learn and tell the Chinese elderly community's story, I would give my best effort to it.

Recently, the rise of Asian Hate Crimes, especially targeted toward the elderly, have caught new outlets' attention. I acknowledge the supports of people around the world, and the #StopAsianHate protests happening around the U.S. However, there is much more to this group of community. For example, there are elderly people who became homeless because they lost their job due to COVID, and started a massage therapy service by the street, while there were only a handful of customers a day. Some were artists such as Chinese opera singer in China, and are now nail artist and feet cleaners in Chinatown who struggle to make ends meet. Some were sent by their children from China to live by themselves in an apartment, which can be as tiny as only fitting in a table and a set of bulk beds... There are also stories such as organizations or commercial shops providing free food to hundreds of Chinese seniors to celebrate festivals.

There are groups of Chinese residents in Queens, young or old, formed volunteer Public Safety Patrols teams to keep the neighborhood safe. Last year in San Francisco, one Chinese grandma was hurt by an attack, she was brave enough to fight back with a stick she found by the street, and later, she donated most of the fund that was raised to support her medical condition to help other Asian Hate victims... These stories can be written into a book, but all that we know is just a one-line summary.

**In my film, I want to focus on telling stories of three elderly people's lives in Flushing Chinatown, which focuses on their life stories, characteristics, their circles/environment, their will to live, that they are more than just potential "victims", as what elderly Chinese immigrants are usually appeared as on the news. Not only that it will achieve a short-term goal of bringing awareness of their existences and vulnerabilities, but this film will also bring long-term effect to the audiences, which is when the power of films comes in place; elements of the three stories will interact with each other, allowing the audiences to think and discuss what the identity of elderly**

## **Chinese immigrant means in the U.S., and serve as an inspiration to investigate the potential causes and preventions of AsianHate Crimes.**

If I were to receive a grant from the Davis Projects for Peace, I will be the main producer, director, and editor of the documentary film. The film will not be a standard feature film length, due to the tight budget and the time (3 months), but it will be longer than a short film, about 30-60 minutes. I will follow the general route of making a documentary film: research, brainstorm, story outline, finance, casting subjects, prepare contracts, location scout, hire crew, equipment rental, shoot days, script, post-production and music, publicity, and screening. To make sure my project stays on track, I will be planning out a timeline that has deadlines for each step of the process. But the 4 main milestones will be, 1) make trips to Chinatown neighborhood and find subjects that will be the right fit and have their consents 2) 10-20 filming days of the subject's daily life and interviews 3) 1-2 months of post-production, re-edits, and final cut of the film 4) publicity, find streaming outlets or submit to film festivals.

Although this is going to be the first film I pitch and make, I had made short films during my college years, and have plenty of experience working in commercials, low budget short films, and TV shows for a year as an assistant, therefore I have witnessed and understood the process of making a film. Since I am currently only freelancing in a TV show set, only 1-3 days a week, I have the time and energy to devote my full effort to this project. I have some filming equipment; one basic camera body, a few lenses, a small camera body light, a lavalier mic, it will be easier to start, but I will still need to make some purchases to make a quality film. In terms of getting the pre-approvals from subjects involved, as a film student, I understand how important this step is; without them, I cannot publish the film. Since I am still working on finding the right person to be filmed, which is one of the most important steps in a documentary – the right subject, I want to spend more time visiting the area, observe, and use my communication and language skills to find the right fit.

To ensure the project to be a successful one, I will work with and seek advice from professional filmmaker friends and mentors in New York, who graduated from SVA, and current students from other film schools. We will keep up with each other about meeting deadlines, and overcoming obstacles in the process. Additionally, I am also planning to use the following methods to indicate the success of my project:

1. Invite potential viewers, viewers with different backgrounds, and film professionals to free private screenings and survey audiences about their takeaways of the film, and their advice of what they wish to see more of in relation to the film's purpose, etc. Then re-edit the film based on feedbacks.
2. Publicity and platforms. Make sure potential audiences have outlets and convenient access to the film.
3. View counts and audiences' ratings and critiques of the film.

In conclusion, it will be a dream come true, a great stepping stone to my career, and a meaningful and hopefully impactful media for the Chinese community if I have the opportunity to make this film with my fellow filmmaker friends. I hope that my proposal package is clear, and wish that I will have the honor to use the generous grant from Mrs. Kathryn W. Davis's Peace Project to tell a heartfelt story that brings peace to the community I care deeply about.

## Projects for Peace Budget Template

Name: Difan Zhao
Project Name: Documentary Film - Elderly Chinese Immigrants in New York
School: International House NY

<b>TOTAL FUNDS REMAINING:</b>
0

Total Additional Funding:				
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<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURES:</b>
10000

Student Expenses					Project Expenses				
Travel (Including Airfare)	Lodging	Communications	Food (Biweekly)	Miscellaneous	Non-Student Travel and Lodging	Direct Equipment and Supplies	Marketing and Event Support	Staffing Costs	Miscellaneous
30	0	35	200	0	30	300	1000	4000	0
30		35	200		30	360	400	500	
30			200		30	1060		750	
30			200		30				
30			200						
30			200						
30									
30									
30									
<b>Total</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Total</b>
240	0	70	1200	0	120	1720	1400	5250	0

<b>Total Student Expenses:</b>
1510

<b>Total Project Expenses:</b>
8490

This form should be used to prepare your final budget and submitted with your project's final report.



[Some of My Works]

# Difan Zhao (Tiffany)

## Contact

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## Education

### UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

SEATTLE, WA | Sep. 2016 – Jun. 2020

Bachelor of Arts, double Communication, Cinema and Media Studies

- Relevant course: *Foundations of Journalism, Digital Cinema Production, Media Ethics*

### ONLINE EDUCATION

REMOTE | Aug. 2019 – Feb. 2021

- Udemey: *Video Editing, Cinematography*
- LinkedIn Learning: *Product Photography, Video Editing, Working in a Film Crew*

## Technical Skills

- Microsoft Office, type 55WPM
- Salesforce scheduling app
- DSLR camera
- Basic lighting and scene set-up
- Adobe LR/PS/AU/ PR
- Final Cut Pro X/Davinci Resolve

## Languages

- Chinese (native)
- English (fluent)

## Experiences

### PRODUCTION ASSISTANT

2/2021 – Present

Freelance, New York, NY & Seattle, WA

- *HELLOW TOMORROW!*, TV Show, Apple TV, Key PA: Meghan Checca, 11/2021-present
- *AND JUST LIKE THAT*, TV Show, HBO, UPM: Teddy Au, Key PA: George Cuomo, 10/8-11/30/2021
- *2 ANXIOUS BISEXUALS*, Short Film, Director: Megan Zebrowski, 9/24-26/2021
- *ALLSWELL*, Feature Film, ALLSWELL INC., 2<sup>nd</sup> AD: AC Smallwood, 9/18/2021
- *T-MOBILE SOCIAL*, Promo Video, Hey Brutus, Producer: Quinn Rudee, 8/20/2021
- *WAIT, WHAT?*, Corporate Video, National Modern, PM: Jenz Lindquist, 8/19/2021
- *T-MOBILE Earnings & All Employee Webcasts*, Live Stream, Proscenium, Producer: Jason Meyer, 7/28-30/2021
- *MERCEDES-BENZ*, Branding Video, Road Man Films, 1<sup>st</sup> AD: Paul Dahlke, Key PA: Cyd Dahl, 7/24/2021
- *PIKE PLACE MARKET*, Promo Video, WakaWaka Studios, Director: Scott Morris, DP: Jay Windland, 7/15-16/2021
- *MICROSOFT JULY LIVE*, Live Stream, DesignIt, Producer: Jacob Leander, 7/13/2021
- *ADIDAS NEW RELEASE*, Branding Video, Sanctuary, Director: MindCastle, 1<sup>st</sup> AD, Custis Smith, 7/7-11/2021
- *WINDOWS 11 RELEASE*, Live Stream, Trifilm, Director: Paul Blurton, Producer: J. McConnehey, 5/24-6/25/2021
- *RUVED SUPPLEMENTS*, YouTube Ad, Director/Producer: Sean Walsh, 5/18/2021
- *KIMI*, Feature Film, (Craft Assist), Director: Stephen Soderbergh, Key Crafty: Justina Renoud, 5/12-15/2021
- *THORNE OLYMPICS*, Branding Video, Team Win, Production Supervisor: Zita Mazzola, 5/6/2021
- *MICROSOFT HUMAN&AI*, Corporate Video, MotionForge, Producer: Chris Cossu, DP: Aaron Horton, 4/21/2021
- *ALLEN CAO PHOTORGAPHY*, (Wedding Photo Assist. and 2<sup>nd</sup> Shooter), Photographer: Allen Cao, 2/1-8/9/2021
- *MICROSOFT IGNITE*, Corporate Video, Illuxion, Director: Basil Shadid, DP: Drew Hisey, 2/5/2021

### SCRIPT SUPERVISOR

3/2021 – 8/2021

Freelance, Greater Seattle Area, WA

- *UNSAID*, Short Film, Director: H. Grewal, DP: Ryan Purcell, 7/17-18/2021
- *NO SAVED MESSAGES*, Short Film, Director: H. Grewal, DP: I. Arias, 5/1/2021
- *MIRROR MIRROR*, Short Film, Director: Harry Grewal, DP: Israel Arias, 3/14/2021

### PRESCHOOL PHOTOGRAPHER

9/2020 – 12/2020

Lifetouch, Greater Seattle Area, WA

- Drive to various daycare centers that are within 70 miles radius from Seattle
- Bring equipment and set up for studio portraits (backdrops, props, lighting, camera tools)
- Photograph portraits for children aged from infant to school age at daycare centers
- Sort and upload photos using the company's photo-managing software

### VOLUNTEER

UW COMMLEAD COVID-19 Business Consultancy, Seattle, WA

1/2021 – 3/2021

- Video Producer for Healthcare Advocate (NAHAC) mentorship program promo video
- Remote zoom interview and technical director
- Collaborate and brainstorm with the head of marketing and leadership team
- Organize video, stock images, and edit note for video editor

EasyFind Co., Remote

9/2020 – 1/2021

- Unit Editing Supervisor and Editor for a COVID-19 documentary film, *The Thirty Three Stories*
- Video Editor for small business commercial video
- Communicated with supervisor and revised edits based on feedback