

Liu Hao: An Interview by Maggie Yang

Conducted via Zoom on October 15th, 2023

Liu Hao is a Beijing-based genealogy researcher who played a central role in the internationally acclaimed Netflix documentary *Found*, which tells the stories of three cousins living in the US who set out to find their birth families in China. Having almost faced adoption while being bilingual and fluent in Chinese dialects, Liu Hao is equipped with a unique perspective when helping adoptees search for their birth families and tracing their personal histories. Like I said before, it's a very personal experience. "She holds a master's degree in anthropology and is pursuing a new career path.

Maggie Yang 00:00

Hello, I just wanted to start off by saying thank you so much for your time. I really appreciate you being here today and sharing your experience with us. The work you do is so incredibly important, and I can't wait to learn more about it. If at any point you feel uncomfortable, please feel free to stop me and we can end it whenever you want. Besides that, I'm very excited to have you here today. To start off, can you tell me a bit about yourself? How did you become involved in genealogy research?

Liu Hao 00:28

Okay, sure. Because I was raised and grew up in Guangdong. So like in Guangdong—you probably know people speak not only Mandarin—but we also speak Cantonese.¹ So I learned Cantonese, even though I don't speak it with my family. But all the TV shows moving from Hong Kong are Cantonese. So somehow, that's my way to learn Cantonese. And then I speak with my family. There's another dialect actually. So we are all Hakkas, so I speak another dialects with my family.² So I also speak Hakka. And when I moved to Beijing, I think it was like 2018, I just found this part time job in a WeChat group.³ People say, oh, there's a part-time job about, like, My China Roots.⁴ And then they need someone who can speak

¹ Cantonese is a form of Chinese dialect spoken mainly in Southeast China.

² Hakka is a language group of varieties of Chinese spoken natively by the ethnic Hakka people in Southern China. Hakka is considered to be a branch of the Han. There make up 80 million of the worldwide population today.

³ Wechat, or Weixin in Chinese, a widely used instant messaging social media application used in China.

⁴ My China Roots is a Chinese genealogy organization founded by Huihan Lie that help clients uncover their family history.

that. And then you can work from home. It's kind of chill. I feel it looks like it suits me well. And it's very close to my apartment. So I went there and became a part-time researcher. And then they started because I can speak the two different dialects. Actually, if you can speak dialects that's gonna help you a lot doing this kind of research. Because when you just, imagine like, those overseas Chinese who migrated to the United States a really long time before. And then when that time when they get on board on the ship or something and then, all this like the customs, they are people who speak English. When they told them about their names, they use what sounded like a Chinese name. So, they use these letters to describe Chinese characters. So, the Cantonese or dialects, when they get on board, you can easily identify those romanticised letters for overseas Chinese. Through that letter, you can know which character it is in Chinese. So that's how I, they want me to stay. So I stayed in Beijing for two and a half years working at My China Roots. So that's how I started.

Maggie Yang 03:06

That's really great. I also speak a dialect so I wanted to ask you if you could share specific examples of where you've used your dialect speaking skills and how they impacted your job at My China Roots.

Liu Hao 03:23

I cannot remember right now. I'll just give you a really simple example. For example, my name, my surname is Liu, but if I pronounce it like Cantonese if I don't speak Mandarin. Because by that time, a lot of people from Guangdong just spoke Cantonese, they didn't speak Mandarin. So when you are overseas, for example, or just say that I went overseas, and I don't speak Mandarin. So maybe some people will ask me what's my name and I will say, Liu Hao, which is in Cantonese.⁵ So at customs, it probably sounds like LAW and that's how the officials write it down. So now there is a passenger's name written as LAW. But my name is not pronounced in the official romanticized way. It's not romanticized that way because we don't have that official character to equal the Chinese character. But if you speak Cantonese, when you see LAW, and then you would think: okay, so this could be let LIU in Mandarin. You can link them together and easily identify the person, and then you can easily find those clues.

Maggie Yang 04:50

⁵ 刘好

Thank you so much for sharing. I wanted to learn a bit more about your family background and your upbringing. Can you tell me a bit about your background and upbringing and how that impacted your career choices?

Liu Hao 05:08

I think it's the same as I told you. I can speak the dialects. I didn't think that speaking dialect was very useful before, because I just spoke to my family and then never knew it can be used in my work someday. But somehow people really appreciate that I can speak two dialects so that I can understand how to do their research. So yes, I think that helped a lot.

Maggie Yang 05:44

Yeah, great. I wanted to talk more about specifically what you did at My China Roots. Can you talk to me a bit more about that experience?

Liu Hao 05:55

Sure. At My China Roots, we do all kinds of genealogy research.⁶ It's not only for adopted children or adopted families. We also have this standard overseas Chinese genealogy research. A lot of overseas Chinese, maybe their great grandparents migrated from Fujian or just gone all. Because most of the overseas that came from those two provinces before, and then probably they were in Singapore, Cuba, I don't know, like United States, Canada, and then they wanted to know about like, Okay, where are they, our great grandparents come from? And then they would come to us, and then we would do some, , like, research for them. And also, like, adopted families, also a part of it. But I have to say before that is like, it's not that much for us. Because the success rate is very low. And then we are we have several cases, but it's, it's not a lot. So most of the cases I did is overseas Chinese genealogy research.

Maggie Yang 07:12

You mentioned some of these cases that you've worked on. What are some of most memorable cases you've worked with?

Liu Hao 07:21

The most memorable cases?

⁶ Genealogy research is the study of family origins and history.

Maggie Yang 07:24

Yeah, like the cases that you were working on at My China Roots?

Liu Hao 07:30

I say it's definitely the fun ones. The documentary is the most memorable as I actually put [in] a lot of emotions. [It was] more than work for me.

Maggie Yang 07:45

Specifically, I also wanted to ask, what are some research methods that you used when tracking down birth family?

Liu Hao 07:54

We basically use research and field research together. That means before you actually go to meet those people who actually probably know where those girls come from. We do a lot of like that research, [like] phone calling and then search on the internet. We actually visit there, and then meet those people. However, they would post ads online, and then they saw that they contacted us, they want to know more about us, and then we [would] go there and meet them in person, and talk to them to verify [whether] information [is] real or not, because sometimes, people can be wrong. Sometimes you really want something to happen, and you can make it up or whatever. We also would try to build up the relationships with those people, because this thing's it's very intimate. It's very private. It's not like people are going to talk to you every day, so you have to win them over, like build up the trust between you guys, and then they can open it up [when] they think, oh, it's safe to talk to you about this. And then they can, gradually slowly open up, and then you would know more.

Maggie Yang 09:31

You talked about forming connections I'm interested to learn more. How long did it take for you to formulate these relationships and how long did fieldwork usually take?

Liu Hao 09:44

It depends but in this specific case, the whole process was six months. So when we meet meet those people several times, they speak to us. The most important thing is when you meet someone, or when you're doing this full research. Of course, you want some information from them, but all the time is like, you just trust that person, they will gradually open it up even like if maybe they're difficult [to work with] at first. We met some people who really don't want to talk to us at first, but then in the end, they were the people who are really,

give us the most amazing information. So it could happen. So just open up, wait a bit, and then trust them. Give them some room and respect them as a human being. Because sometimes they don't want to talk to you. They have some really bad days. How long it takes? It really depends. Because I have this talent, people really do trust me. Then they just easily open up to me. So it's not that hard for me.

Maggie Yang 11:19

Where do you think you got this talent from?

Liu Hao 11:23

I have no idea. But I just figured it out. Sometimes I meet a stranger, and then they start talking to me, I feel like, oh, okay, so it's our first time meeting, and then you already told me all that. I'm a good listener. Maybe I learned that from my anthropology project. I went to CUHK and got my anthropology Master's degree here.⁷ I can build up my skills as a listener. When you really respect that person, people are not stupid, they know that, and then they would want to share things with you.

Maggie Yang 12:09

I'm also a cultural anthropology major. What got you into anthropology? How has the anthropological knowledge translated into the work you do?

Liu Hao 12:23

That's so cool. What major are you? Cultural anthropology?

Maggie Yang 12:27

Yeah. At Duke, our anthropology department is separated into evolutionary biology, and cultural anthropology. So I'm pursuing the cultural anthropology track.

Liu Hao 12:40

Okay, that's a miracle. Yeah, I'm always interested in anthropology. Because I got my undergraduate degree in Guangzhou, I was an intern in many NGOs, non-government organizations. I met a lot of people that are from anthropology backgrounds, and that made me always think, okay, maybe I should get one one day, but I never know, what's the right time. I know that I really wanted to go to Hong Kong and get one because I feel like yeah, it's

⁷ The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK)

the right thing for me to do. Because when I got there, all these professors, they're trained in United States or Australia but they also have this perspective on what is going on in Asia and how to use the anthropology method to explain what's going on in Japan or China. So I this inner perspective where you can combine the two different things. Because I grew up in China, it's more familiar to me to connect that perspective. In this class, research methodology, the teacher taught you how to do the field interview, how to go to the field to collect the data, and everything. I remember she said something like, oh, the question you asked, it must be the questions you are interested in. Because sometimes we know that okay, the questions we ask probably, it's not our interests. If it's not your interest, you probably don't have the motivation to do that. But if it's relevant to you, and then you will say, okay, it's important, so why is it important and then from that point, you build it up to all the rest. I don't know how but I remembered that. There's this saying from a philosopher, his name is Socrates, 认识你自己.⁸ I feel like whatever you do is for you to help you to know yourself better. I really like to know more about anthropology because it's a way to know myself. That's why I really like it. Then yeah, so I went to do the field research and then the whole project. I feel like they have a lot of like a research skills that's really helpful. So, for example, how do you build up the connection with your informants in the field? There's also moral standards that you cannot cross, because you have to wait them to tell you the knowledge they have, instead of being the person that just got there in a position of power and saying, okay, tell me everything that I need to know. Instead of doing it that way, you wait for them to inform you. So yeah, it's like patience. I'm just really interested in anthropology and into human beings.

Maggie Yang 17:10

I definitely agree because, for me, what got me into anthropology is also the human side of things and, as you mentioned, wanting to learn more about yourself. I also wanted to ask, throughout your time at My China Roots and working with the *Found* documentary, what was the biggest thing you learned about yourself?⁹

Liu Hao 17:46

What's the biggest thing I learned about myself? When I first joined My China Roots, for me, my family was too chaotic or not full of drama. Sometimes it was that way but it's not what I remember when I was a kid. I always wanted to grow up and then live by myself. So when I started My China Roots, I always thought, why do people want to find their families because

⁸ Know thyself. Extracted from Ancient Greek philosophy.

⁹ *Found* Documentary, directed by Amanda Lipitz. Available at www.netflix.com/title/81476857.

they don't need to, they already left the country. For me, families are like trouble, and why do you want troubles too? Why do you want problems? But then after a few years, even though they're chaotic or it's not something that's always going to make you happy, they're still human beings and that's part of life. They still they still want to figure out who they are and where they come from. That's the most important part for a lot of people. Because that's the way you get to know yourself better and to know why you're here today, who are those people before you and everything?

Maggie Yang 19:33

Yeah, thank you so much for sharing. I wanted to dive a little bit deeper about your background, your family and if they were like supportive throughout this process of your work at My China Roots and working with genealogy research.

Liu Hao 19:51

They don't, they have no idea that I'm doing because I'm not very close to my family. We are close but not that close. A lot of things I don't tell them. I just told them that I'm an interpreter. I'm a translator in China, in Beijing, so they never know exactly what I actually did for My China Roots. It was after the documentary came out and my cousins saw it as clips on TikTok.¹⁰ That's the point that they found out I did this thing in Beijing.

Maggie Yang 20:34

I'm sure your family were really proud when they saw you on Netflix. I wanted to ask you a bit more about My China Roots. What are some, logistical or practical challenges that you faced?

Liu Hao 20:50

What do you mean practical or logistical challenges,

Maggie Yang 20:54

I wanted to learn about the biggest challenges you faced when you're trying to track down birth families and orphanage nannies.

Liu Hao 21:03

¹⁰ TikTok is a short-form video hosting service owned by ByteDance.

The biggest challenge is trust because you don't want to hurt those persons. It's a very personal experience. So when you first identify potential birth families, most of them, they don't want to share with you because it's also traumatic for them. They feel kind of shameful when standing in front of you, telling you things that really hurt him a lot. Because they don't, especially to a stranger, be very vulnerable in front of you. That's the most challenging part and also when you're wait for them to open up, and to let them feel like safe to talk to you, I think that's the most challenging part. Another part is the emotional parts. This job is not a usual job, I would say, because in usual jobs, you just talk about business and after hours, you just shut down your computer, and then you don't need to get involved with it. But tracking down birth families and adoptees, you have to put yourself a lot of emotions inside. You will also feel those hurt feelings when you don't find birth families. You just feel that there's a point and you just feel both sides. One side is the potential birth family. They feel hurt and shame when they talk to you. Then the other side is the adoptees. They also have this emotional [thing] going on .You can help them to find their birth family. That's also quite challenging.

Maggie Yang 23:08

I remember we also talked a bit about how intimate the whole process is and I wanted to ask, how do you deal with these emotions that you're talking? I know they're very challenging to deal with. How did you prioritize yourself and your mental health ?

Liu Hao 23:25

I remember that at that time, my trainer is Huihan, the founder of My China Roots.¹¹ We just have a talk, check-in, every week where he would talk to me like, okay, so this is just a job and you don't need to put a lot of yourself inside of it. Because it's very emotional. He helped me to set up the boundary. So what should I do and what should I say? Sometimes it's like, okay, this is a client I need to meet their requirements, I want to make them happy, but sometimes you just cannot do that. He helped me set up the boundary. Another way for me to process is doing meditation and I cry a lot, but it's okay. I think it's just a way to process your emotions what's going on inside of us. So I don't like t bury it down. I don't think it's very healthy. So yeah, I just let the emotions just flow flow flow. You cannot always go down because you always like go down, go down, go down, and then you reach the bottom and then you just bounce back. So I just wait for that process to happen.

¹¹ Huihan Lie is the founder of My China Roots.

Maggie Yang 24:43

It's really nice that you have developed these steps you take to prioritize yourself because I know it can be a very emotionally taxing job. I wanted to pivot our conversation to the *Found* documentary specifically. Could you give me an overview as to what was it like being part of the found documentary?

Liu Hao 25:07

It was quite surprising because we never knew that it was on Netflix. Everyone just thought that you're going to be in a documentary, maybe put on YouTube. But somehow, it ended up on Netflix. I feel like it's somehow it's destiny. It's just what I need edto do, because I'm not sure if you saw in the documentary, but when I got this project, it could've been other genealogy researchers who are going to take this project. But because I'm actually from the same city as Lily, Sadie and Chloe.¹² We are the same hometown. So that's why I took on that project. I kind of know that, okay, that's where my grandparents from. So that's why they they asked me to take that project. Yeah, it's kind of cool. It's a very, very unique experience for me.

Maggie Yang 26:19

It was such a great film as well, I cried. At the end, it was a really touching experience watching you guys navigate this journey together. What was your reaction when you found out it was going to be on Netflix? What about your friends' and family's reaction?

Liu Hao 26:39

I was kind of scared. Because my family never knew about this. So I was a bit scared, because everyone's going to see me. Also, because I also have a long time to process this documentary after the whole journey together, it's a long time. I'm also happy because it means we gonna get more audience who can see this documentary. But for me, it's like, a scare. I kind of feel like I don't want anyone to see that. I don't want anyone to know me. It was a long process for me. I've only watched it once after it was put on Netflix and then I couldn't watch it until I think like, maybe last year. I'm not sure. Maybe this year or last year. Yeah, it's also a long process, journey for me. I remember the last time I watched it, certainly, something has changed. I can feel that because I feel like, okay, it's kind of like, really long time ago. I sometimes don't remember what I say that in this film. Right? I forgot it. [I would ask] why would I say that? Some views have already change completely.

¹² The cousins in the *Found* documentary searching for their birth families in China.

Maggie Yang 28:16

What do you think is the biggest reason for these changes?

Liu Hao 28:22

[It was a] opportunity also for me to reflect my life. Because I always wanted to be a boy, always, because I feel like it's my fault [letting] down my family and everything. I think in the past two, three years, I've been appreciating my female identity and [learning] like how to be a woman, I like to be a woman. You can be fun one day, you can be very elegant. The other day, you can be a cool girl, you don't want to talk to anyone. I kind of accept that identity. And also, it's a healing process. I do a lot of reflection with my own self and also with my own family and try it and then I started seeing, okay, things are different. It's not that way that I always thought it is true, because when you were a kid, you'd say, okay, so if my dad didn't come home, that means he didn't love me. But but when you get older, you have more experience, and you see more things and you say oh, probably it's his way to show that he loved me because he didn't know how to do that so he didn't go home. We're sometimes very blind. I think we're always very blind and we couldn't recognize the love that people show around us. Because we think, okay, if I want love, this is the exact way that you're going to show me that you love me. Because if you bring me flowers everyday, that means you love me. But you just never know that okay, probably that person didn't bring you flowers everyday is the way that he shows that he loves you. So yeah, it's all kinds of things. So that makes me feel like, oh, something changing.

Maggie Yang 30:19

Thank you so much for sharing that. I relate to you a lot in terms of being comfortable in your femininity. If you feel comfortable, could you please share a bit more about what sparked you to become more comfortable with your femininity? How did you transition from growing up wanting to be a boy to where you are today?

Liu Hao 30:45

I don't know, actually. Because I feel like it's a process that I do with myself. I sometimes talk to friends, but a lot of times I do meditation, and then just build up here. I tried to care more about my looks. In the past, I always care about my looks, but right now I try to be like, play this game, be a female. How can you be a female? One day you are very sweet the other day you are the queen. You have different kinds of things you can play [around with] to embrace a female identity. And also, yeah, but but I think fun is a starting point, definitely. It's made me look into more about myself.

Maggie Yang 31:51

What you talked about in terms reflection is so important. It's something I also prioritize. Let's talk a bit more about the audience of the *Found* documentary. What do you want viewers to take away from watching it?

Liu Hao 32:13

I want our audience know that they are loved no matter what. People just try so hard to prove that they deserve to be loved. Like, we always do that. Like [say], "I'm the most beautiful girl in the world. So I can be loved by my family by, my boyfriend, by my friends." I worked so hard so that I deserve to be loved. But no matter what, you deserve to be love. I want to convey this message that sometimes we just got to recognize that people use their own way to love us and then we think that we're not being loved by by those people—like those families, they gave up their kids in the *Found* documentary. Well, people say, okay, they just dumped their kids on the street, they don't care about [them]. But when I got there, I interviewed them. They say, okay, I put them out at like in five o'clock in the morning at five o'clock in the morning because it's gonna be crowded in the street. So people are going to find their kids so they won't like die at midnight, [like] if they put them out like 12 o'clock, one o'clock. People sometimes couldn't know that. I just want to convey this message that you don't need to worry [about] anything [and] you are just being loved, no matter what.

Maggie Yang 33:47

Well, that's really powerful. I think your message has definitely been amplified by the documentary so thank you for that. In terms of yourself, how were you connecting with the subjects of the documentary especially like the three cousins?

Liu Hao 34:07

So, it was it was our first time to meet in person like in the documentary. We meet in I think we meet in Guangzhou. Yes, we start from Guangzhou. Yeah, but we just talked several times [on] Zoom before that. I think they are really fun. And then they became like three special girls not only because they're were from the same place, but because we went through this journey together. Also, it was very intimate. I sort of like became their the sisters, one of them. They would always come to my room at night in the hotel and then we start talking about nails, something silly, or what happened today and what makes us pissed off today and what we don't like, all sorts of things. I always feel like they would have a special spots in my heart always.

Maggie Yang 35:16

That sounds really special. I feel like you guys connected and I wanted to ask, do you still keep in contact with them?

Liu Hao 35:27

Sometimes. We seldom talk to each other right now. Sadie went to college [in] Arizona, so kind of busy university students and also Chloe just started her university and Lily's trying to get her master's degree. So we call. [We're] all kinds of busy, but sometimes we still talk.

Maggie Yang 35:51

Yeah. If you feel comfortable, could you please share some of the most memorable or emotional moments you encountered during your research?

Liu Hao 36:04

Sure, I think the most memorable or emotional moments for me is as when I found out that Amanda's mother's is Amanda's mother. So there's another girl at the end of the documentary, and then that lady [was found to be] related to Amanda. That lady really didn't want to talk to us at first and then she [kept] saying no all the time to us. It's kind of difficult to let her open up or talk about her experience a little bit. But it turns out that sometimes people give you the most difficult times, but actually are the most sweet person. Yeah, she's really sweet. Because she is shocked. Sometimes [you] think, okay, those parents gave up their children, they're a really cruel person. But actually, they're also a human being, they are traumatized by this experience. Even they don't want to, because she said a lot of things about why she did that. Why certain things forced her to do that. A lot of that stuff. It just made me feel like yeah, why she became like, such difficult woman to talk to at first because she, no one protected her, she had to protect herself. So she just closed herself up. But in the end, she opened up a bit and talked to us and shared [about] her really hard time with you. I just felt like wow. This is like really, really amazing. You feel those parts but you also feel like wow, she's really a strong woman. Because no one do that for her, so she has to do that for herself. Yeah. Yeah,

Maggie Yang 38:25

That is such a great experience. You were talking about the misconceptions that people hold about adoptions. Can you speak a bit more about that? Like what are some of the biggest

misconceptions about adoptions? In terms of adoptees and the people? Like the birth families?

Liu Hao 38:46

One part is probably those birth families. They think they [did] something wrong. They know that. They do their best to think for the kids, but they somehow still think they do something wrong. They have this guilt inside of them, and then they would think, okay, those adopted kids would never forgive them. So, yeah, that's one other part. I think people would have this misunderstanding. But I have to say it's a long process even for [adoptees]. Definitely a long process to actually to say that okay, I forgive you, I appreciate what you did. It's not easy thing. But it's always for birth families, they would think [the kids] would never do that, those kids will never never forgive them. That's also one of the reasons and they are really afraid to come up to come back to say, okay, I did this for them, because it's guilt. It's really not something that you want people around you to know about.

Maggie Yang 40:24

How did your experiences as someone who almost faced adoption impact of how you approached helping these cousins in the journey? I read in an article online that you had faced a similar experience.

Liu Hao 40:39

Yes, exactly. Almost. It's almost but so it's also like, the things I reflect a lot [on] in the past few years, because I always feel like I'm not wanted because I'm a girl. And I'm not good enough even though, I work so hard as a girl. I [felt that] I made my mom to get a divorce because I'm a girl. So all kinds of things that I blame on myself. This really helped me a lot when I started this project, because I remember, I told the field crew that I related [to the cousins]. I'm not saying that I can completely understand what the [cousins] have been through. But I have this feeling that, yeah I know that kind of feeling. Because you're always like, is it because of me that make my family unhappy. You just blame on yourself, because every kids love their family, love their mothers, and love their fathers, no matter what. Even when you have fights or whatever, or you don't feel happy, we just naturally love them back. So my experiences, it's shown me how to approach adoptees. I'm really thankful that Chloe Sadie, Lily, they opened up to me and invited me to their lives. Because I've ever been in that position so I don't know exactly how they feel but they showed me the things that maybe they're struggling with. But I [wasn't the people trying] to find [their] birth families. Sometimes you say you want to find [your birth families], but something will hold you back. Maybe I don't

[want to] because I'm kind of scared to find out the truth. What if they're not who I think they are? What if they don't like me? Then yeah, I think they just opened up. And then I can see that, okay, what's going on with them and everything.

Maggie Yang 43:24

Your perspective is truly unique because you are coming from someone who almost faced adoption. The way that you were able to relate and connect with the cousins really shine through in the documentary. I also wanted to ask about your role now since your involvement in the *Found* documentary, how have you continued to work in genealogy research and have your aspirations evolved in any way?

Liu Hao 43:56

I stopped doing that right now. Because I moved to Hong Kong and then finished my anthropology degree and after that, I stayed here. I'm doing this researcher job [at] a consultancy company. It's a similar thing because we work on expats as consultancy data company. So we collect this cost of living data. So I need to travel a lot of cities to actually see where those expats people live and how they live there. Is it easy to go to supermarket to do shopping? So, yeah, it's the same. For me, it's the same thing because I still need to do the interviews there. And also, I feel like it's the same thing because like, in the past, I've helped people overseas Chinese [who] moved from China to abroad. But right now [I'm helping] expats. They move from another country to another city. So it's also people [who move] around. I'm just still doing the same thing. I would ask them, what is good housing for you sort of things. So it's sort of questions that I'm interested in, like a what is a home for you? What makes you feel like it's home? What makes you feel safe and want to live here? Because [for] everyone, it's the same like. In *My China Roots*, I was [working with people who] migrated that and right now moving around, so how do you feel home when you're in a new environment? Yeah, [those] sort of things.

Maggie Yang 45:50

It's really great to hear that the work you did in *My China Roots* have translated over to what you're doing now. It sounds like you're really dedicated to helping others. So I wanted to ask, how did this passion for helping others come about? What inspired it?

Liu Hao 46:08

Helping others? I don't know if I'm actually helping others.

Maggie Yang 46:15

Okay, yeah. Could you talk a bit more about that?

Liu Hao 46:19

It feels like it's the same. I'm interested in knowing more about myself. Like, who am I? why I'm doing this? And helping others is always a good way. They are like your mirror and just reflect who you are. So yeah, I like the involvement with or interaction with people. Definitely love that part I think maybe helping others is a way to help yourself. I don't know. But I somehow feel like I'm not helping others right now. Because right now I believe in that everyone has their own ways to find out the answer they want. There's a saying in China, 授人以鱼不如授人以渔.¹³ So I just need to trust them. You have to trust people around you. They have the ability to live their own life live happily. Like if I always say, okay, I'm gonna help you [in] your life. It's like you put yourself higher than or better than themselves. And then you never feel like, okay, they can do something better. But if we are the same, like you're suffering, I know you're on your right journey. I know, that's really what you need to go through. And I let that be because that's their own journey and they have to experience that way.

Maggie Yang 48:05

Yeah, so it's less about like helping others but supporting others.

Liu Hao 48:10

Yes. Supporting.

Maggie Yang 48:13

Yeah. I'll change my wording. Can we circle a bit back to working at My China Roots? What was your favorite part about working at My China Roots?

Liu Hao 48:29

So my favorite part is that we have really amazing office. I'm not sure if you [see] the whole [office] in the documentary but we used to have this office at 地坛公园 in Beijing.¹⁴ So it's really a tourist spot because, in Beijing, you have 天坛, 地坛, 日坛, 月坛.¹⁵ We have a co-working space and open space. So every day I just went to the park and all these old ladies,

¹³ Better to teach someone to fish than to give them a fish.

¹⁴ Ditan Park in Beijing. China.

¹⁵ Temple of Heaven, Temple of Earth, Temple of Sun, Temple of Moon.

like the 老大爷 and 老大妈, were doing the exercise morning exercise routine.¹⁶ You actually have to pay for the tickets to get in Ditan Park, but we don't have to because we work there and [by saying] certain names, they will let us in. And then the office is really pretty. It's surrounded by bamboo so it's really quiet. And then the environment is really serene, I have to say. Yeah, that's my favorite part.

Maggie Yang 49:46

That is really valid because a good working environment is correlated to having a good job. Are there any specific goals or projects you hope to pursue in the future?

Liu Hao 50:01

I actually want to do more meditation. So right now, I don't have specific goals, but I think I would maybe, next year, go to United States and do some meditation projects, and also continue doing some projects in Malaysia because I always went to Malaysia, one of the meditation center to do that. And also maybe next year go to Hawaii. I don't know why I need to go there but it sounds very healing to me. And I think okay, maybe I should go there next year.

Maggie Yang 50:35

Yeah, that's great. For the people watching, are there any initiatives or organizations you would like to highlight for people wanting to get involved with adoptee rights or contribute to the work that My China Roots does?

Liu Hao 50:57

I think I will highlight My China Roots founder, Huihan, because he's a really amazing leader. He funded My China Roots because he was an overseas Chinese and he was [really interested] about his own roots. He's a really empathetic person. So he knows what the clients really need and what that the emotional journey they they have gone through. He's very good boss [to] me. He would set up the boundary and tell me, okay, this is all you need to do, we don't need to satisfy all the clients needs and you have to take care of yourself first. I can see that he actually cares about people. So it's not only for business, for the money, but also because of those people that he really cares about. And that's how he works. So yeah, I really appreciate his help during the journey. When I felt like I'm really overwhelmed, he's always the one I feel like I can trust and talk to him anytime.

¹⁶ Old man and women.

Maggie Yang 52:27

What advice would you give to people who want to get started with genealogy research or help people find their birth family?

Liu Hao 52:37

What advice I would give? Just start doing it. You are just good enough. You're just smart. And then you just do what you can find online. And then you start learning step by step. It's not that hard. Yeah.

Maggie Yang 52:51

All right, great! Is there anything else you want to add before we wrap up?

Liu Hao 52:58

No, I'm good. Thank you.

Maggie Yang 53:00

All right. Thank you so much for sharing with me. This has been a really enlightening conversation. Let me take a second to like fangirl here and say I'm very, very grateful for this opportunity to speak from someone who I've watched from the big screens. So yeah, thank you so much for this conversation.