



余瑞心女士
Ms. Winnie Yu

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隨遇而安 把握機會 排舞豐富人生

2008年余瑞心為孟嘗會籌款，開了一個馬拉松排舞派對，來了九百人，九小時籌了一萬八千元，同場臨時為「四川地震」籌款，二十分鐘內再為紅十字會籌了一萬元，創下了加拿大排舞籌款的紀錄。

這種在美加流行的集體舞蹈，余瑞心移民來加後旋即愛上，全心投入，積極向華人社區推廣，更將之轉化成服務社會的集體力量。二十年來她為不同社區組織義務教授排舞班、義演或舉行慈善派對，一呼百應，贏得「慈善舞后」之譽。

有人謂余瑞心的經歷是一個傳奇，之前在香港為事業打拼，一心想着在加拿大坐滿三年「移民監」後回流，想不到最終卻留下來做義工；在香港從未學過跳舞，卻在多倫多成為華人社區裏最廣為人知的排舞老師。「我的人生可以分為兩個章節，在香港做生意是第一章，在多倫多跳排舞是第二章。」余瑞心這樣形容她的人生。兩個章節看來截然不同，但憑着信念和投入，一樣開花結果，成績斐然。

隨遇而安 把握機會

余瑞心的第一章是很典型的香港經歷，父母從中國移居香港後，家中一無所有，她早早便嚐過貧窮的滋味：「我們試

過到酒樓拿用剩的食材回家煮來吃。」這個三、四歲時的經歷余瑞心還歷歷在目，到父親經營包伙食的生意時，家庭環境改善，每逢傳統節日，他們在鄰里間倒成了捐出食物的人。她記得派食物時，父親這樣跟她說：「你現在做『派』的那個人，不好好讀書就會成為『領』的那個人。」但少年的她心裏想：無論是派或領都是天意，這樣的安排只有接受，領的人自己也不想這樣。

事實上，余瑞心也是這樣去面對自己的際遇。唸至中六時，爸爸認為身為長女的她應該輟學幫補家計，讓家中成績較好的兩個妹妹讀下去。余瑞心雖然不高興，但也認命：「讀不讀無所謂，隨遇而安，不開心也要接受，出來社會工作也是一個機會。」

為了方便照顧家庭，余瑞心去了附近的水晶燈飾店工作，在那裏認識了一同打工的丈夫。七十年代香港經濟起飛，她在這些奢侈品的生意上看到了商機，努力學習，幾年後和丈夫自立門戶做水晶燈生意，結果生意越做越大，至九十年代已自設廠房，員工三十多人，產品出口中國內地和亞洲，但為了當時一子一女的教育，一家人91年選擇移民加拿大。

學習排舞 全心投入

習慣出差洽談生意的余瑞心，坦言移民後的家庭主婦生活非常沉悶：「第一年已經想走。」閒時只有到附近的小學圖書館當義工，為了不想留在家裏，她開始參加太極班，93年再

去學排舞，一學就覺得很有興趣，也發覺自己很有天賦：「老師教完一次，大家下課時已記不了舞步，我在電梯口就再教一次。很多人跟不上拍子，我就將自己的理解向同學解釋。」結果余瑞心學了七個月就被老師派出去表演。

94年同學鼓勵她去頤康中心當義務老師開班教排舞，學費每課七元，全部捐給頤康，半年後籌了四千七百元，以後她就為不同的非牟利機構開班教跳舞，全盛時期一星期教十五班。而為了令學生更易掌握舞步，她更自行編舞，將基本舞步盡量編在一首歌中，讓初級班早早掌握。上課之餘，她每天再花三小時搜集資料。「我常常想：怎樣能令不同程度的學生都滿足地離開舞室？有學生自卑地對我說：『老師我很蠢學不好』，我心想教不懂你其實是老師蠢，老師要負責任。」為了令學生更易明白，余瑞心出盡法寶，包括左右腳穿不同顏色的鞋子去上課，讓學生更易記憶舞步。余瑞心編撰的排舞，廣受社區歡迎，2004年更在芝加哥排舞大賽中獲取季軍，成為安省首位獲獎華裔排舞編舞家。

長期跳舞做運動治癒了余瑞心經年的胃病和鼻敏感，也令她的專注力更好，更有意思是這種輕鬆的運動鬆弛了不少移民的壓力。「在這裏有很多『太空人』太太（丈夫不在身邊的太太）都不開心，也不知怎樣解決本身的問題，一起跳舞可以放鬆自己，什麼負面的事都暫時放下，跳完舞想法可能就不一樣了，有學生就跟我說沒有舞跳她要自殺了。」余瑞心總是跟學生在跳舞時說，大家放下所有心事，一起好好地跳。

慈善舞后 一呼百應

余瑞心教舞沒有想過賺錢，也沒有考慮開自己的舞室，「我不想開舞室賺錢，我要自由，可以隨時不幹，不用縛著自己。」不求利益，教跳舞就成了很單純的事，余瑞心也樂意利用這個機會為社區籌款，二十年間她曾為頤康基金會、耆暉會、孟嘗會、協群社區服務中心，華諮處、福慧教育基金會、加拿大糖尿病協會、安省心臟及中風基金、康福心理健康基金會、YMCA、奧比斯眼科飛機醫院等組織義務教授排舞班、義演或舉行慈善派對，大家花十元八塊參加派對跳上三、四小時，學生出錢，老師和義工出力，機構受益。余瑞心稱只要是正當的非牟利機構她都願意幫忙。余瑞心最滿足的兩次籌款活動分別是2007年為孟嘗會籌款的加拿大馬拉松排舞活動，共有八百人出席，跳足八小時，籌了一萬六千元。翌年再接再厲，人數增加至九百人，九小時籌了一萬八千元，同場臨時為「四川地震」籌款，二十分鐘內再為紅十字會籌了一萬元。由2001年開始，她分別被不同機構提名，六次獲安省政府頒發年度義工獎。

此外，她更推出了排舞DVD示範專輯，為紅十字會、華諮處及孟嘗會義賣籌款，說到這套給學生「溫書」的DVD余瑞心非常自豪，因為約克區的圖書館也買了幾套收藏。她估計二十年來為社區籌得的款項超過三十八萬元。

不怕吃虧 不要計較

余瑞心教學二十年，桃李滿門，在她門下受訓的老師也多不勝數，能夠培養接班人她稱滿足感很大，而最重要是影響了老師的教學態度：「我讓她們明白做人不需要那麼計較，半斤不一定要拿回八兩，有時得到四兩的回報也沒有所謂，學生就是學生，要從她們的立場上考慮。」余瑞心認為做人不要太介懷是否吃虧：「今日吃虧，將來的事你不會知道，今日的得，將來可能是失；今日的失，將來可能是得。你跟別人斤斤計較，將來怎會有人願意幫你？」余瑞心教舞時，大家跳得興起，她不介意多教一個半個小時，就算要多付場租也在所不計，「反正我也喜歡跳，那就大家一起繼續跳吧！」以心比心，日後余瑞心籌款時，一舉手人人響應，甚至回流香港的學生也寄支票回來捐助。

余瑞心當年考慮回流，最後隨遇而安留在加拿大，今天回看她絕不後悔：「我在加拿大很滿足，這裏生活質素好，遇到的人也好。」對於面對改變難免失望的新移民，她的忠告是：「隨遇而安，聽其自然。」上天關了一道窗，總會為你開啟另一道，就像她放棄了事業，卻得著了排舞。

余瑞心相信正能量的能力：「每一件事我都想正面的結果，就好像《紅楓傳奇》這個獎項，我想自己是會得到的。」最終獲獎，她打算以最直接的方法去慶祝——開個大派對和學生跳排舞。



與父母及妹妹合照
With parents and one of
her sisters (front)



與丈夫Sam，兒子Mark及女兒Vicky合照
With husband Sam, son-Mark & daughter-Vicky



2018年與家人攝於生日會
With family 2018



2005年出版排舞DVD為紅十字會籌款
(左：關國強太極師傅，中：陶佳才先生)
Launch Line Dance DVD
for Red Cross Fundraising - 2005



2017年各團隊老師慶祝推廣排舞
20年慈善籌款舞會
20th Anniversary Fundraising - 2017



2006年第二次出版排舞DVD為華諮處籌款
(左：梅偉思先生，右：關國強太極師傅)
Launch Line Dance DVD for
CICS Fundraising - 2006



2008年900人九小時馬拉松排舞為孟嘗會籌款\$18,000
900 dancers for Mon Sheong Fundraising - 2008



2009年為溫城華埠成立100周年慈善排舞
工作坊
Manitoba 100 Years China Town
Celebration - 2009



2010年獲萬錦市市長薛嘉平頒十年義
工服務獎
10 Years Volunteer Service Award
- 2010



2011年為心臟及中風基金籌款
Heart and Stroke Foundation
Fundraising - 2011



2013年為奧比斯籌款
ORBIS Fundraising - 2013



2014年康福籌款晚宴與
譚智雄醫生(左)及陳
威霖醫生(右)
Hong Fook Gala with
Dr. Thomas Tam &
Dr. William Chan - 2014



2014年康福籌款晚宴與
張培德醫生
Hong Fook Gala with Dr.
Peter Chang- 2014



2015年獲頒十五年義工服務獎
15 Years Volunteer Service Award - 2015

Ms. Winnie Yu

In 2008, Winnie Yu raised money for Mon Sheong Foundation by hosting a Line Dance Marathon Party. Nine hundred people attended over nine hours, bringing in \$18,000. During this event, she spontaneously organized a twenty-minute fundraiser for the victims of Sichuan Earthquake, and an additional \$10,000 was donated to the International Red Cross, setting a fundraising record in the line dance community.

Line dancing is a popular pastime in the United States and Canada. Winnie fell in love with it after she immigrated to Canada. She devoted herself to promoting the activity and channelled the collective energy of the Chinese community into supporting charitable causes. For the past twenty years, she has volunteered her time and life teaching line dance, and holding charity performances and events for numerous community organizations. Many call her "Charity Line Dance Queen", and she has truly earned that name.

People might say that Winnie's life story is a legend. She started as a business owner in Hong Kong. Then she immigrated to Canada, thinking she would return to Hong Kong after she obtained her citizenship. She never imagined that in the end she would stay in Toronto to be a volunteer. In Hong Kong she had never learned to dance. But in Toronto, she became the most well-known line dance teacher in the Chinese community. "My life can be divided into two chapters. Running a business in Hong Kong is the first part. Teaching line dancing in Toronto is the second," Winnie said. The two chapters seem to be totally different. But with Winnie's conviction and commitment, the results are equally outstanding.

The first chapter of Winnie's life is a typical Hong Kong story.

Her parents fled with nothing from Mainland China. Winnie experienced poverty firsthand: “We would get leftover food supplies from restaurants, bringing them home to cook and eat.” Even today, she has vivid memories of hardship from childhood. Fortunately, her father started a catering business and the family situation improved. During holidays and festivals, their family would give out food to those less fortunate in their community. When Winnie was handing out food, her father said to her, “Now you are the one who is ‘giving’. But if you don’t study hard and apply yourself in life, you will become the person who ‘receives’.” The young Winnie thought to herself, “Whether one ‘gives’ or ‘receives’ depends on fate, and whatever hand fate deals must be accepted. Those who ‘receive’ don’t wish to be in that situation either.”

In fact, Winnie approached a difficult situation of her own with the same philosophy. When she was in the twelfth grade, her father felt she should not pursue higher education in order to help the family’s finances and let her two sisters with better grades continue their schooling. Even though she was disappointed, she believed in her own future: “Study or not, it doesn’t matter, I have to accept whatever happens and I can make the best of things. Working is also an opportunity.”

To be close to her family, Winnie went to work in a nearby chandelier shop, where she met her future husband, a co-worker. In the 1970s, Hong Kong’s economy took off. Winnie recognized the opportunities in luxury goods and worked diligently to learn the ropes of the business. After a few years, she and her husband started their own chandelier business. As a result of their hard work and professionalism, their business grew bigger and bigger. By the 1990s, they had set up their own factory with more than thirty employees. Their products were exported to Mainland China and throughout Asia. But, ultimately, for the sake of their children’s

education and future, their family chose to leave Hong Kong and move to Canada in 1991.

Accustomed to a busy schedule of business trips and meetings all over Asia, Winnie found life as a housewife in Canada tedious and dull. “After just one year, I wanted to leave,” Winnie said. In her free time, she went to a nearby primary school to work as a volunteer in the library. To stay out of the house, she participated in Tai Chi classes. In 1993, she enrolled in a dance class and immediately knew it was her calling. She was a very talented student from the start: “The instructor taught us a new dance routine. After the class was over, none of the students could remember how it went. I was the only one who knew it. So I would go out into the hallway by the elevator and teach them again.” After seven months as a student, the dance instructor chose Winnie to perform.

In 1994, her classmates encouraged her to start line dance classes at the Yee Hong Centre for Geriatric Care. Each student paid a fee of seven dollars per class, donated to Yee Hong. After six months, she had raised \$4,700. From that point onward, she started teaching line dance classes for various non-profit organizations. Soon she had a full schedule, dancing and teaching fifteen classes per week. In order to make it easier for students to master the dance routines, she designed the choreography herself. Many of the basic dance steps were compiled into a single song, so that the fundamentals could be mastered quickly. In addition to class, she spent another three hours every day researching material that would help her become a better teacher. “I often thought: How could I teach so many students of unequal dancing ability in a single class, so that they’re all satisfied with my teaching? Some students lack self-confidence and say: ‘Teacher, I’m stupid, I can’t learn.’ But I think if the teacher can’t make you understand, then it’s the teacher who is stupid and who

has to bear responsibility.”

The line dances that Winnie choreographed are immensely popular in the line dance community. In 2004, she won third place in the Chicago Line Dance Choreography Competition and became the first award-winning Chinese line dance choreographer in Ontario. In the course of her teaching life, Winnie has done a great deal to help her students. For example, she had the novel idea of using shoes of different colours on the left and right feet, making it easier for students to remember the dance steps. Dancing and exercise have benefited Winnie's health, making her digestion issues and hay fever go away, as well as increasing her ability to focus. What is interesting is that this kind of relaxing exercise relieves the pressure for many newcomers to Canada. “There are a lot of women whose husbands are away, who are unhappy, depressed and don't know how to resolve their problems. But dancing together can relax us. Negative thoughts are put aside. A student told me that if she didn't dance, she would commit suicide.” Winnie always tells her students to clear their minds, put aside bad thoughts, and focus on dancing together.

Winnie never thought about making money from teaching dance. Nor did she think about opening her own dance studio. “I don't want to make money through dancing. I want to be free. I don't want to be tied down.” Without the desire for profit, teaching line dance became a simple matter, and she was very happy to use this opportunity to raise money for the community. In the past twenty years, Winnie has taught dance classes or organized charity performances and events on behalf of the Yee Hong Centre for Geriatric Care, Carefirst, Mon Sheong Foundation, S.E.A.S. Centre, CICS, Fuhui Education Foundation, Canadian Diabetes Association, Ontario Heart and Stroke Foundation, Hong Fook Mental Health Foundation, YMCA, Orbis Flying Eye Hospital

and other nonprofit organizations. Typically, participants spend \$8 to \$10 to dance for 3 or 4 hours in a party. The students enjoy paying for instruction and helping out a charity. The teachers and volunteers contribute their time and expertise, and the organization benefits. Winnie always says that she is willing to help as long as there is a legitimate need.

Winnie's proudest fundraising activities include the dance marathon for Mon Sheong Foundation in 2007. A total of eight hundred people attended the event, dancing for eight hours, raising \$16,000. In the following year, nine hundred people attended, raising \$18,000. An impromptu fundraising activity during this event for the victims of Sichuan Earthquake raised \$10,000 for Red Cross in just twenty minutes. Since 2001, Winnie has been nominated by various institutions and awarded the Annual Volunteer Award six times by the Ontario government.

Additionally, Winnie also launched a set of instructional dance DVDs to raise funds for Red Cross, CICS and Mon Sheong Foundation. Winnie explains that this set of DVDs will help her students review and practice. She is proud of this achievement, especially because the collection of DVDs was purchased by York Region Library. She estimates that over the last twenty years she has raised more than 380,000 dollars for the community.

In twenty years, Winnie has garnered a very large following of loyal students. Among these, she has also trained countless excellent teachers. Training successors to continue her legacy gives her great satisfaction. For Winnie, the most important thing is to influence the teacher's attitude: "I want them to understand that they should not be petty in their thinking. If they put in a pound, they shouldn't expect to always get a pound back. Even if they get half a pound in return, it's not so bad, and it doesn't matter. Students are students, look at it from their perspective." Whether one wins or loses, do

not be overly concerned: “Today one may lose. But what do you know about the future? If you win today, you may lose tomorrow just as easily. If you lose today, you may win tomorrow. If you are petty with others, they will not help you when you need them.” During a dance class, when her students are excited and into it, she is happy to spend more time in the studio with them, even if she has to pay extra for the studio space. “I like to dance anyway, so we can all keep dancing together!” She wins the hearts of others with her own caring attitude. Whenever Winnie raises money, everyone responds with a helping hand. Even students who have moved to Hong Kong often send back donation cheques.

In the past, Winnie had thought about returning to Hong Kong, but she ultimately stayed in Canada. Today, she does not regret it at all. “I am content in Canada. The quality of life here is good, and the people I meet are all very nice.” To newcomers who face difficulties in their daily lives, her advice is: “Adapt to your circumstances. Take whatever that comes in stride.” If a door closes, another will open. Just like Winnie, who gave up her business career, only to find a new and better one in the art of line dancing.

Winnie believes in positive energy: “I always think on the bright side of things. Just like the ‘Chinese Canadian Legend Award’. I always thought I would get it!”. Finally, Winnie has been recognized for her contribution, and she intends to celebrate in the most fitting way -- a big dance party with her students.