



## **“WO AI NI (I LOVE YOU) MOMMY”**

By Stephanie Wang-Breal

Tuesday, Aug. 31, 2010 on PBS (Check local listings)

### **Filmmaker’s Statement**

I am a first-generation Chinese-American. My parents immigrated to Youngstown, Ohio the year I was born. I am one of three girls. My parents had four children because they desperately wanted to have a boy. They always used to remind my sisters and me how lucky we were to be growing up in America and how different our lives would have been had they stayed in China. I did not fully comprehend this idea until I got my degree in Chinese history at Northwestern University.

During my studies, I started to peel back the layers of meaning behind my parents’ words and see just how distinct Chinese and Chinese-American cultures are from each other. If my parents had stayed in China, I would have led a completely different existence.

Growing up in a white, blue-collar town made me extremely self-conscious about my race. I was the only Chinese girl in my class of 450, and all I wanted was to be like every other Caucasian girl around me. I thought I was American, and that being Chinese would have meant I was a person who wore a pointed straw hat and spoke English with an accent. I bought into the Asian stereotype perpetrated by the media and my predominantly white surroundings.

I became interested in making a documentary about adoption from China in 1999. My best friend, Heather Loeffler, was teaching Chinese to adopted girls at the China Institute. After hearing her talk about these amazing girls, I began to wonder what it was like for them to grow up Chinese in America. They had been born in China, yet every day they were living and breathing a completely “white” experience. After interviewing over 100 families with children from China as research for the project, I realized I wanted to make a documentary that provided insight into the child’s experience, because that was a perspective that was notably absent.

I’m determined to make films that shed light on the real voices and faces behind the Chinese-American experience, which often goes undocumented. I hope to help people of other cultures and races understand that being people of color plays a prominent role in our lives. And that being Chinese does not necessarily mean we understand or represent the entire Chinese experience.

— **Stephanie Wang-Breal,**  
**Director/Producer/Cinematographer**