

***“I was six when we came. We came in December 1970 and my first impression was wow, how exciting because there was snow.”***

My name is David. My full name is David Tse Ka Sing.

GA means family and Xing Lum gou sing mean ‘Loud noise of the Tse family (chuckles) quite appropriate for an entertainer.

I was born on the 17 of November 1964, so I’m a Scorpio and a dragon in Hong Kong , in Cheung Zhou

I remember I had an idyllic childhood, used to play outside with my relatives and friends all the time. I was very free and it was very communal growing up in Hong Kong. So in Cheung Zhou and so we would play outside all the time and go swimming everyday at the beach, and so I had a really fantastic childhood. I remember also that my mother use to have, send one of my siblings out to look for me. Because often playing I would always eat in one of somebody else’s house. So I was real, not quite a latch key kid but it was there was that sense of community, you could really, you know, everybody was family to speak.

I have 1 brother and 3 sisters and I am the youngest.

I was six when we came. We came in December 1970 and my first impression was wow, how exciting because there was snow and that was incredible experience. The change from obviously somewhere really hot and where we never seen snowed before and being very excited coming over here.

I went to, primary school. It might have been a nursery school. I don’t remember what age you start school at.

But I remember at least a few terms there. I remember taking part in this school play, playing an elephant, and so even from an early age, I remember the sort of times I was invited to get involved in performance. I remember them taking a school photograph before I left so that I would have some memories of Cheung Zhou. So, yeah, I always remember things like, when I was a kid in Cheung Zhou of going to watch Chinese opera and this very tragic story of either a girl or a boy who loved her parents so much and, you know, they were starving, the child cut off a piece of their thigh of something to boil in some soup to make a broth to feed their starving parents. I remember that had having a strong impact on me. Thinking how amazing that this young person would behave in such a way. so it is stuff like that , and that was from when I was less than six. But I remember those kinds of stories, And also I was invited to take part in some kind of , as a famous carnival that happens in cheung Zhou during, either the new year or Zhong Chou Jit. (Mid-autumn festival). And I was asked to be one of the kids posing but I was too scared because it was too high and they tried to temp me with a lolly but I said no. I remember things like that.

#### Arrival in the UK

We came on an airplane. We were all bundled together and I remember my siblings being very sick all the time. They are (chuckles) had layers of

coats and things because my mother was so worried about the cold. And I remember ah, my brother and sisters being sick through out the journey. It was the first being on a plane. I probably was as well, but I just remember very excited.

I can’t overall remember that; just remember it was a very exciting journey. I mean, prior to that we took just been in Cheung Zhou I assume we would have caught the ferry at some point to Hong Kong or Kowloon , but that was the only places we would have been to travelled to, certainly never aboard.

#### Take away Life in the UK

My father had an opportunity to start a Chinese takeaway, going to business with a friend of his. He asked his mother whether that would be of interest to her. And she said yes. I think also the separation was very difficult for the two of them, certainly while dad was working as a waiter across the country he met Elizabeth Taylor by the way, and Richard Burton in Ireland, of all places. In Northern-Ireland., but, yeah I think the superstition was difficult for them. So he wanted the family, they both wanted the family to be together. And um, and so my mother was a better cook than my father, so it kind of made sense really. So the whole family came over in order to, for mom and dad to start this Chinese take away in partnership with Chinese friend of theirs. Mr Yip. And also in partnership with an English fellow who ran this fish and chip show called Golden Place in Lempste shire, um so , Mr Yip, I think Mr Yip looked after the fish and chip side of things . So it kind of the business. Jeff this English chap, I think Mr Yip and possibly his wife, can't

remember ran the fish and chip side. Mom and dad looked after the Chinese take away side. And then eventually we bought them out, um so we were running the whole thing ourselves. Obviously as soon as the children were old enough, my brother who was 15, as soon as he arrived was working in take away. I mean, all of us as we were growing up we started working in the shop. So it was cheap labour. We were paid that was one good thing that I can say about my parents. They always did pay us for our labour. I am sure it broke every child labour thing. Every health and safety rule they can think of. But they did have some staff as well, other staff to help but I just remember all of us growing up we all helped in the shop.

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The business did very well and expanded. We had two shops eventually. Once we bought out Mr Yip, we were the only Chinese living in lempstire at that time. So that was quite strange, going from a real sense of community where every body was Chinese, East Asian and then suddenly we were isolated.

I suppose. It is easy for children to adapt because we pick up the language quickly and life is just one big party, isn't it. Reading comics and going to the library and all that sort of things. And but I think it must have been quite hard for my parents particularly my mother. My father obviously been here a number of years and spoke English recently well but she had not English. And we very dependent on the children and her husband really to help her get about see the doctors all the usual things you need to do.

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#### Being Chinese in the UK

It was a small market town, I think now, thinking back on it, it was quite pretty place, there was the Tudor building and it was, the country side was quite pretty around there. But my experience for it was it was famous for pub fights. And every Friday or Saturday you get these drunken lads coming in and giving us racial abuse. And that was really hard to take growing up, you know. Specifically when you sort of adolescent and very sensitive at that stage. I think that was very common of most BBC's growing up here. working in the parents takeaway, that they will get racial abuse from late night drunken punks at the weekend Friday Saturday night when the English let their hair down and their vent their frustrations, whatever on top of people. um, I think, as a child working in that environment, as a teenage working in that

environment um, because it was so important to make money, basically, it was a family business so you would have to bundle it all the time I hated that aspect of it. I really did. I often would question why the hell we came to this country, because my memories of my child hood, that I told were so idyllic and so happy. that um, why our family had to put ourselves through that level of suffering I suppose and unpleasantness and unhappiness, which was completely unnecessary, I can understand if you're unkind or unpleasant to other people then in terms of karma you deserve something back, but purely on racial ground cause of how you look that felt completely unjustified, and um, dehumanization, insensitive and I think all of us dealt with it in different ways. I mean, you know, as a result that was the reason why I have gotten into the arts, to express, I suppose my humanity, or the Chinese communities humanity That we are more than just a stereotype.

My middle sister eventually had some mental health issues and problems. I think because of the whole aspect of being an outsider. She couldn't handle the rest. She quit school. As well as the rest of us. She wasn't quite as thick skinned. So you happen to quite sensitive, I think it can be incredible hard. I think obviously, you know, we all understand sort of mental health is sometimes be incredibly healthy, sometimes be one isn't same as physical health. But I think having those kinds of pressure when you are growing up, exacerbates things. I do think that that the whole migration thing, it's brought a lot off benefits to

our family, but it has created a lot of heart ache.

When I was 13, no sorry when I was 11 I was sent off to boarding school and Shropshire and that was the period from 11 -16 from where there racism was the worst that I had experienced. As I say in the local school in lemstear was actually not too bad because I was growing up with these children. So they call me the odd names but having the odd fight. I think there was a guy called Paul Robinson hiding behind the a door and I came in and he was taller than me but I jumped on him, and we had this big scrap. Um, he had been calling me names. but, from going to boarding school, from that age, I remember there was a, especially when those hormones start kicking in 12, 13, um and it being quite a swat you know, I was sent there my parents in order to succeed academically and there was all that kind of pressure, and the teaching I suppose came from my parents and I could see how hard they work, and how hard the family worked. and it obviously cost my family a lot to sent me to boarding school, I mean I got a scholarship and so on but, and I could still see that it, you know, they were sacrificing a lot in order for me to have this privilege, so as a consequence, I suppose part of the deal really, I just worked really hard. To make sure that achieved everything that my parents sent me to school for.

#### Upbringing & belief system

Typically Confucian child. Filial loyalty, respect and all those kind of things. Um, and then, and so that period of my life was the most unhappy, ah during boarding school. I mean I a great best friend who's

half black who also got a lot of racism and, but at least I dealt with it, ah, when I was a school I was a Christian that was one way of surviving the racism. And I am not Christian any more and but at school it was a real life line. And I had a couple of surrogate father type figures. My English teacher was a real inspiration to me and he was also a Christian and was probably why I became one. There was also kind of visiting Francis friar brother Jerome who I would ask a lot of, have long discussions about life and sorrow. Cause I wanted to know what motivated people to be so unpleasant. What breed this kind of violence or hatred, I was never physically bullied but it was great. It was always psychological, it was name calling but that hurt more than the anything else for me. But you know, from a very early age I wanted to, especially when I was growing up there were periods where I was left at home, I was from a very early age experiencing this myself I would then ask why? And typically because it seemed that I haven't done anything to make that level of prejudice and unpleasantness

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