



PHOTO: CAROLE LU

**JIAZHEN QI**

# Chinese Reporter Expelled During Australia Day Celebrations

The Chinese Consulate is closely monitoring every activity of groups they label as counter to the Chinese Communist Party.

In 2005, the Melbourne Chinese Federation held a luncheon in celebration of Australia Day. The Federation consists of over 50 Chinese sub-organizations. Among them is the Hainanese Association.

The luncheon was a lively gathering of over 500 guests. A few minutes before its commencement, Qin Xiao, a reporter from *The Epoch Times* newspaper, walked towards our table saying, "Helen, I'm leaving." Shocked, I questioned, "Why?"

"Secretary Zhang told me to leave immediately."

"For what reason?"

"Oh, it's better not to talk about this now," Qin answered hesitatingly.

At that very moment, a young man with glasses in his early 30s rushed over. It seemed that he was the Federation's Secretary-General, Zhang. He was quite aggressive, "I asked you to leave, why did you come here? Hurry up, get out immediately!"

I was still asking Qin for an explanation. Zhang was impatient and anxiously demanded, "Come on, leave quickly, if you do not leave, Consul Yang will get me into trouble!"

"Who is Consul Yang and what makes him so important?" I thought. Qin Xiao was very calm and left the event.

Secretary-General Zhang followed behind her, much in the fashion that Mainland police would escort prisoners. He stood at the stairs, and watched Qin

make her way out. This was the first and only time I witnessed a Chinese community leader act so rudely in public. Perhaps Zhang really had a background in the Chinese Public Security Bureau!

I quietly told my husband, Ian, what had unfolded. "They drove away the *Epoch Times* reporter."

I also informed the vice president of Hainan Association Qingqi Zhang (*Melbourne Daily* editor at the time, now deceased) of the scene that I had witnessed. After hearing my account, Ian looked displeased. He immediately stood up from his seat and attempted to leave, saying, "How can this happen here, this is Australia! While celebrating Australia Day, they're getting rid of reporters?"

I panicked, pulled Ian back and tried to calm him down, "Please sit down, Ian, we will talk after this finishes." The president of the Federation, Wenshan Chen, was giving a speech in fluent English, thanking Australia for allowing Chinese people to come here to enjoy democracy, freedom and a good life. He was also the president of the Hainan Association. He donated one of his houses to serve as a venue for the Association and had been very friendly to me, thus I was inclined to stay, out of respect.

However, Ian wouldn't listen to me despite my persuasion. Again, he tried to get up and leave, "Helen, I cannot stay here!" Breaking away from my grasp, Ian marched away with

angry strides past the podium where Chen was still giving his speech.

Out of respect, I did not want to make an early exit. My thoughts were to exchange views with him afterwards, but my husband had left so I decided to follow.

While I was walking past the stage, a Chinese consulate official was speaking enthusiastically about how overseas Chinese can look to a strong Mainland for support. He must have seen me leave. I proceeded downstairs and walked out the door.

Ian was still outraged, "These people are taking advantage of Australia's freedom and democracy and doing things that are against freedom and democracy!"

I responded, "Yes. This should not have happened."

Ian continued, "I bet there are so many Australian-Chinese

who listen to the orders of the Chinese Embassy and Chinese Consulate!" These are irrefutable facts.

Later I learnt that on the day of the luncheon the Federation invited six guests from the Chinese Consulate in Melbourne. As soon as the VIPs sat down, they spotted Qin Xiao - the *Epoch Times* reporter.

Consul Yue'e Yang called over Secretary-General Zhang from the Federation saying, "Who should leave? Qin Xiao or the six of us?"

Secretary Zhang sought advice from president Wenshan Chen who decided, "Please ask Qin Xiao to leave of her own accord." Qin Xiao thus left "of her own accord." Consul Yue'e Yang also noted, "Jiazhen Qi is also here today. We are very unhappy with her. She has been very close with Falun Gong recently." "But she bought her own lunch tickets." She added.

I was shocked by how in the presence of over five hundred people, they could still recognise Qin Xiao easily, and even me - Jiazhen Qi, when I merely made one speech at a forum organised by Falun Gong. It must be that the Chinese Consulate is closely monitoring every activity of groups they label as counter to the Chinese Communist Party.

*Jiazhen (Helen) Qi was sentenced to prison for 13 years during the Mao era. She now lives with her husband in Melbourne and is the author of a number of books including The Blue Sun and The Black Wall.*

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