

NATIONAL PRESS CLUB LUNCHEON WITH ANASTASIA LIN

SUBJECT: DENIED A VISA TO COMPETE IN THE MISS WORLD FINALS IN CHINA THIS SATURDAY, MISS CANADA – OUTSPOKEN HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST ANASTASIA LIN – WILL SPEAK AT A NATIONAL PRESS CLUB LUNCHEON A DAY EARLIER, FRIDAY, DEC. 18.

MODERATOR: JOHN HUGHES, PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB

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**JOHN HUGHES:** [Sounds gavels] Welcome to the National Press Club. My name is John Hughes. I am an editor for Bloomberg First Word. That's Bloomberg News's breaking news desk here in Washington. And I am the President of the National Press Club. I want to welcome you to today's event.

Our speaker today is Anastasia Lin, a human rights activist from Canada, who was denied a visa to compete in the Miss World finals in China tomorrow.

But first, I want to introduce our distinguished head table. This table includes National President Club members, as well as guests of our speaker today. And I ask our head table members to please stand when their name is announced.

From the audience's right, Janice Trey, Executive Director of InternetFreedom.org.

Melody Song, mother of today's speaker.

Leon Lee, a 2014 Peabody Award-winning director, and director of Anastasia Lin's upcoming film, *The Bleeding Edge*.

Jerry Zremiski, Bureau Chief of the *Buffalo News*. He's a past-president of the National Press Club, and he's chairman of the Club's Speakers Committee.

Skipping[00:01:24] over our speaker for a moment, Doris Margolis, President of Editorial Associates, a former National Press Club governor, and the National Press Club member who arranged today's luncheon. Thank you, Doris.

And David Matas, a human rights lawyer.

[applause]

I also want to welcome our C-SPAN and Public Radio audiences. You can follow the action today on Twitter. Please use the hashtag, #NPCLive. That's #NPCLive.

Well, our speaker today probably, in her heart of hearts, would prefer not to be here. She would rather be in Sanya, China, so she could compete tomorrow for the Miss World crown. But the Chinese government denied Anastasia Lin a visa. The government put it this way: "China welcomes all lawful activities organized in China by international organizations or agencies, including the Miss World Pageant. But China does not allow any persona non grata to come to China."

Lin is person non grata in the land of her birth, because she has a certain habit. This is the habit of speaking out. In her own words, Lin is determined to be "a voice for the voiceless."

She has made her voice heard in testimony before the US Congress, where she spoke out against organ harvesting in China. She has spoken out for freedom in articles in the *Washington Post*, *The Globe and Mail*, and other major newspapers.

And today, she joins us to deliver a message that we presume will be heard around the world, even if she isn't wearing the Miss World crown.

Miss Lin is much more than a political activist, however. As a fashion model, she has appeared on runways from New York to Toronto, including the New York Fashion Week show at the Waldorf Astoria. A talented actress and pianist, she began performing at the age of seven. She has appeared in films that have won the Mexico International Film Festival's Golden Palm Award and California's Indie Fest Award of Merit.

As often as possible, she pairs her acting with activism, choosing roles in films and TV productions that carry messages of freedom, morality, and openness. And as I showed when I introduced the head table, joining her here today is her mother, who flew here from Vancouver to hear what's no doubt going to be an especially newsworthy National Press Club luncheon speech.

And I will add that this news just broke. This lunch was put together very quickly. And I'm so glad that we did that and that she's here at the National Press Club for this extremely timely talk.

Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in giving a warm National Press Club welcome to Miss World Canada, Anastasia Lin.

[applause]

**ANASTASIA LIN:** Thank you, everyone, for coming here on such a short notice. And thank you as well to the National Press Club for organizing this event. And everyone can say hi to my lovely mom, who flew here from Vancouver. And I cannot tell you how much it means to have her here supporting me.

So before I start, I want to tell you a little story about how crazy my week has been. So on Tuesday, my friends threw a party for me. It was the press in Toronto. And I chose this beautiful white gown from my evening gown sponsor. It was rhinestone all over; it was beautiful. And when I went to the boutique to pick up this dress, I was pulled aside by an employee who told me quietly that, "I am sorry, Anastasia, we can no longer sponsor you." The owner of the store had received a letter, an email from the Chinese consulate in Toronto, warning them to stay away from me, or else.

I want you to all think about this for a moment, to really think about it. This is the government of the most populist nation in the world. They're facing immense policy challenges at home, from a slowing economy to a record pollution level that have all but shut down the capital city. Yet, they still find time to intimidate a dressmaker for a beauty queen halfway around the world.

Today, I'm supposed to be in Sanya, China, representing Canada in the Miss World final. But I am here. Last month, when I tried to board my connecting flight to Sanya from Hong Kong, I find out that I have been declared persona non grata by the Chinese government.

Persona non grata. I had to look it up on Wikipedia. [laughter] It apparently means an unacceptable or unwelcomed person. Yes, I got the definition right. And it is the highest diplomatic punishment. Many of you are probably wondering how this happened, including my own mother, probably are wondering why this happened. So let me start from the beginning.

I was born in China in Hunan province. I was a model student, raised by one of those Asian tiger moms you've all heard about. I started to learn calligraphy and piano at aged two, and was a student leader in my school, middle school.

But not a lot of people know this about me. One of the things I did was to enforce ideological conformity among my fellow classmates. So I made students watch hatred propaganda films against the so-called government's enemy. It was only after I moved to Canada, only then did I realize the extent of my indoctrination. My mother encouraged me to challenge the ideas that were instilled on me in China and to use my own mind.

I will always be very grateful to her for this. I learned about the Tiananmen massacre, which was never heard of in China. And I learned about the persecution of religious minority. I learned about the truth during the Cultural Revolution. And after extensive research, I even started to practice a peaceful meditation that is being vilified in the official press in China.

When I began acting, I looked for roles that shed light on what is happening in China today – from the corruption that led to shoddy school buildings that crushed thousands of students during the Sichuan earthquake, to official censorship, to the organ harvesting of prisoners of conscience in China. The stories of the victims shocked me. And learning about them fundamentally changed my outlook on the world.

In my most recent film, *The Bleeding Edge*, directed by Mr. Leon Lee, I played a woman who is imprisoned for her belief in Falun Gong. Like many other Falun Gong practitioners in China, she was shocked with electronic batons, had bamboos shoved under her fingernails, and is sexually assaulted.

To prepare for these roles, I spent time with the men and women who suffered this experiences. Of course, they described the extreme physical pain during the torture, but what stuck with me was their description of the profound isolation they experienced.

In the labor camp, they're all alone. They want to scream. They want to call for help. But the only people that can hear them are the prison guards. And yet, despite the fear and doubts, they stay true to their conscience. They knew that there was something out there that was greater than fear.

After I heard about their story, I was like, I can't do this. This character requires someone with incredible courage to portray. I'm just a North American kid. This is not some experience that I run into in my everyday life in Toronto. So before I went on set the first day, our dear director piled up all the heaviest scenes in the first day of filming – the sexual assault, the bamboo stake under fingernails, and also forced feeding, and electronic baton beating.

I was so scared. I thought I couldn't do it. So I called a friend and I said, "This is beyond me. I don't want to go on set." And he told me, It is okay to be afraid in the middle of all this. Fear is a natural part of being human. Two thousand years ago, there was a good man. Before he was crucified on the cross, he was also afraid. But he did not let fear conquer him. Courage does not mean the absence of fear, but knowing that something else out there is way more important than fear.

And that is the reason I had the courage go on set that day, exposed my fear, but I also discovered something in me that was extremely true and genuine, an overriding feeling that I want to stay true to my conscience and portray these people's stories.

I entered the Miss World competition because of their motto, "beauty with purpose." I wanted to have a bigger platform to speak for those who don't have a voice to

speak for themselves. And also to promote the North American value of diversity and freedom that I really treasured.

I know that everyone always says this, but I was genuinely surprised when I was crowned Miss World Canada. You won't believe how many beautiful women were in the room. I wouldn't have dreamt to be the winner.

Immediately after my win, there was glowing news in China that a Chinese Canadian girl from Hunan province was just crowned Miss World Canada. And my father, who still lived in China, he was so proud of me. He received hundreds of congratulatory messages, some from people he barely knew. The crown was evidence that his little girl was on her way to achieving her dreams.

But soon, everything stopped. The news reports about me disappeared in China. And if they stayed online, they changed my name and they used another girl's picture instead of mine. And I received a message from my father telling me to stop my advocacy or otherwise there's consequences on my family. Although he couldn't give details over the phone, but it was clear a Chinese security agent had approached him and put pressure on him to tell me to silence. They put fear into a father, making him afraid to be proud of his own daughter.

My father's generation grew up through the Cultural Revolution. They saw Tiananmen, the massacre, and the following political campaigns. They have seen how hard the Chinese government make it for people to stay true to their own conscience, to maintain integrity, and how it deliberately tries to strip Chinese people of their integrity. They aren't hesitant to use the most precious part of human nature; that is, kindness and care for one's family as a weapon against us.

We even have a saying now – being invited to tea. That is when the security officers invite you to issue a vague threat of reprisal if your family overseas does not be quiet. That is when they show you who has the baton, and they won't be hesitant to use it. It is a common experience of Chinese people around the world. And this is the dark old school communist way that they try to hide from the West.

I have to be honest here. I am afraid. And I am concerned for my father's livelihood. And my mother, she's also afraid. But as I reflected on what to do, it becomes clear that I cannot give into fear. If I allowed myself to be intimidated, I'm complicit to the continued human rights abuses that are happening in China. The Communist Party will still abuse the Chinese people without any consequences and accountability.

So instead of being silent, I went to the media and I wrote about my experience on the *Washington Post*. And later I testified in Congress about the communist torture and killing of religious minorities and families overseas being intimidated and other injustices.

And when the other Miss World contestants got their invitation letter to participate in the Miss World final, my invitation never came. There was no official explanation. There was no answer from the minister of foreign affairs in China or Miss World. I think the Chinese government was just going to pretend that I didn't exist. And hoped that I would just simply go away.

As the starting date of the competition approached, I wanted a definitive answer. And as it turned out, Canadians, among 21 other nations in the world, don't need a visa prior to landing in Sanya, China. We can get a landing visa upon arrival. So I decided to try my luck.

But when I landed in Hong Kong, I discovered that I was being declared *persona non grata*, and I had been barred from boarding a flight after a telephone interview with a Sanya custom official. He asked for my Chinese name. He asked for my date of birth, my place of birth in China. What age I came to China. And then he told me, "Sorry, there's no explanation, you just can't come."

What kind of precedent does this set for future international events that are going to happen in China? China is set to host the 2022 Winter Olympic Games. Does that mean that our young athletes around the world have to start to self-censor from today on, to 2022 in order to get into China to participate in the Olympic Games? What happens to the athletes who are of Uyghur and Tibetan heritage? Does that mean that athletes who believe in Christianity or who practice as Falun Gong have to abandon their beliefs just to get into China? Does that mean that we all have to change who we are just to get into China? And if that happens, how will the world respond?

If my case is of any indication, it is a quiet response. The Miss World Organization says that it wants to support "beauty with purpose," but when I was barred from China because I support human rights, it didn't not take a stand.

Unfortunately, the Canadian government is not speaking out about this. The official response they had for the media, I read, "This is the sole prerogative of a foreign country to decide who enters the country."

But this is not the issue. It is not just about whether a beauty queen gets to enter China for a competition. It is also not just about millions of Chinese immigrants would feel safe and free in their adopted countries. It is about whether we can freely express our beliefs without having to worry that our family members are going to be threatened back home, or our careers as actress, journalist, beauty pageant contestants, athletes, academics, or even dressmakers would be endangered.

It's about whether countries around the world who deal with China are willing to defend the very principles that animate their own societies in the face of a regime that disdains those values and fight against human dignity every day.

The Chinese government continues to do these things because the international community continues to allow them to. The Chinese Community Party knows that these tactics work because we have accepted them for too long.

It is difficult to take a principled stance when we are faced with temptation and intimidation. I know the difficulties faced by international organizations and governments when dealing with China. But silence is not the solution.

In the case of Hollywood, I hope that big movie studios wouldn't have to self-censor and comply with the wishes of Chinese censors just to get into the Chinese market, and American universities will stick with their own values of academic freedom, rather than setting up joint ventures in China by the Chinese Community Party committees. International medical groups should no longer turn a blind eye on the mounting evidence that tens of thousands of prisoners of conscience are being harvested of their organ and sold for profit.

We should all stop pretending that we're helping China to reform. The Chinese people are suffering, and they're suffering alone. But we have the ability to give a voice to them. We can and we should speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves. And we should prove that it is possible to stand against tyranny.

Today, together, I hope that we can start something. Together, we can prove to the Chinese Communist Party that our free world's most treasured beliefs are not for sale. And more importantly, I hope that we can prove to the Chinese people that we stand with them, not the Community Party that stifles their freedom.

And also, I would have something to say to the dear members of the press. Thank you very much for attention and your interest in my story. Your voices have supported me throughout my journey since half a year ago when my father was first intimidated. You have showed me that people care, that you care.

I know the difficulty faced by journalists when they try to report honestly and critically about Chinese human rights abuses. But in the future, when the Chinese government threatens to withhold visas of your journalists, if you do stay true to your journalistic integrity, please, don't give in. Don't compromise your coverage. You owe it not only to yourselves and your audience and readers, but to the millions of Chinese people whose stories are waiting to be told.

Thank you very much.

[applause]

**JOHN HUGHES:** Thank you, Anastasia. You mentioned the comment from the Canadian government, what their response was. Were you surprised that was their response?

**ANASTASIA LIN:** At the beginning, I was a little bit surprised. We all talk about how do we help China to improve human rights. When one of our own is being barred from an international competition, because she stood true to your own values, I was quite surprised. I don't want to be too critical. I know it's a new government who's still in the process of forming its China policy. But I do wish that— sometimes the easiest thing to do is just, when threats and intimidation like this come, this is the moment that we show to the world who we really are, show to China who we really are.

I am still waiting for a response from the Canadian government. I want to leave that open.

**JOHN HUGHES:** I'm sure they're listening. What will you do tomorrow when the pageant's happening? And will you watch the pageant?

**ANASTASIA LIN:** Should I watch the pageant? Well, I don't think so. Because first of all, it's broadcast by CCTV; that's official channel. And also, I think for every event, especially international competition like this, its goal is to gather representatives around the world, to showcase the true value of each country, the true representation of each country. And if we can't showcase what our country is really about on the international stage, because of the hosting country, I don't see much point for me to watch that event tomorrow.

**JOHN HUGHES:** You were quoted in the *New York Times* recently as saying that officials in the Miss World pageant have offered to allow you to compete in next year's finals. Do you plan to accept this offer?

**ANASTASIA LIN:** I'm still thinking about it. Still thinking about it. I will let you know once I decide.

**JOHN HUGHES:** And are there any other pageants you're thinking of competing in, in the future, whether it's Miss Universe, or any of the others?

**ANASTASIA LIN:** On a personal note, I'm already 25. This is 70 in pageant age. [laughter] I don't think I'm going to try again. There is definitely greater platforms that we can seek; for example, my own career as an actress. I really enjoy telling stories about people who are really suppressed. And they have a great story to tell; they have been a source of inspiration for me over the years.

So yes, I will definitely advance my career as an actress. But for beauty pageants [laughter], I think I'm finished for now.

**JOHN HUGHES:** It would be easy for you to focus solely on the acting career and all the other opportunities you have. Yet, you do choose this path of speaking out and being a human rights activist. What has motivated you to choose this more difficult path than just only focus on your career?



**ANASTASIA LIN:** I never thought about this as human rights activism. This is my honest opinion. At the beginning of this journey, I had the privilege to work on films and television productions that do tell stories of these people. I spend a lot of time with them and try to understand them. Why, when you're locked in a labor camp, your family's being threatened, your job's been taken away, your bank account frozen, your kids forced out of school, you yourself are taking all these inhumane torture, still, they have the courage to stay true to themselves.

And it's through these experiences I learned their story must be told. And that's when I started to speak up. But I think I was only just trying to do what's right and stay true to myself. I never look at it like an activism. And I think people should do the same, too, even if they are not in the public eye. It's our responsibility.

**JOHN HUGHES:** You are the leading actress in *Bleeding Edge*, which you referred to. Do you think that's the main reason the Chinese aren't accepting you, because of that film, mainly? Or why do you think?

**ANASTASIA LIN:** Yes, the film *Bleeding Edge* does touch on a very sensitive issue in China; that is organ harvesting of prisoners of conscience and of Falun Gong practitioners. It's something that they don't want the West to hear.

But I think the main reason why I was barred from China— a lot of journalists ask me, "Why do you think they're afraid to have you in China? Why are they afraid of you?" They are not afraid of me. They are afraid of the Chinese people. They're afraid of what I represent could bring up in the Chinese people.

My father's generation watched their families and friends being picked out and persecuted in public, humiliated because they wanted to stay true to their values. So they learned to put their head down. It's unfortunate, but deep down in their heart, I believe, and I know that they're striving for freedom.

So if they see a person who represents hope and future and freedom on their own television screen – that is, CCTV – in the Miss World final, it might encourage them to just take a little step, to be themselves, to speak for themselves. And that is what the communists are afraid of. Hope is the only thing that can conquer fear. That is what I believe happened.

**JOHN HUGHES:** In an opinion column published in the *Washington Post* last June, you wrote this in the final paragraph: "Please don't forget my father and the millions of families like ours." Can you say when you last had contact with your father, and how concerned are you that the comments that you're making about China could affect him or hurt him in any way?

**ANASTASIA LIN:** The last time I spoke to my father was in Hong Kong when I was faced with the dilemma, if I should just go back to Canada or should I continue to try. My father sounded really scared. I mean, the smear campaign that is going on in the

Chinese media about me reminded him of Cultural Revolution. I am afraid. My mother is afraid. My father is afraid.

I have reached out to a lot of people for a statement, for support – past Miss World Canadas, organizations. But 95% of the time I get a response– or not a response. If I do get one, it says something like, "We support you, but I'm so sorry, I don't want to risk my chance to get a visa to China." Or, "I don't want to damage my business."

These people I ask for help, they are also afraid. This ring of fear needs to stop. This is what they're trying to do to us. Having this fear just control everybody and stifle everybody's freedom of speech, freedom of expression, freedom of conscience that we just try to be ourselves. And I don't see that's possible now.

I hope that– I feel quite alone in this battle. And I am worried. Perhaps in the future when I try to act in a film, they won't cast me because of all this or a big movie studio will censor their scripts. That's why today this opportunity is so precious for me.

I hope more people will have the courage to speak up. Because what do we want to leave for our future generations?

Thank you.

**JOHN HUGHES:** This questioner says: Please tell the audience how China managed to get the Miss World 2015 pageant to move the pageant to China.

**ANASTASIA LIN:** When I was crowned Miss World Canada, at that time, the final was still going to be held in Australia. And two weeks after I got crowned, they announced that the final was going to be in China. I heard that, read from the press reports after. Some journalists really did investigative reports on this. It seems that a Chinese company has sponsored, being the title sponsor of the whole event.

I can understand why is it so easy to move the competition to China since they don't charge a facility fee, and they don't charge a broadcasting fee. And I guess that's the reason why the international community has been silent for all this time.

I don't want to be too critical. It is quite unfortunate.

**JOHN HUGHES:** In many countries, individuals have risen up against an authoritarian state and forced change. The last time the Chinese people tried that, this questioner says, in Tiananmen Square, the regime cracked down hard. Why has there been no noticeable people power movement in China since then?

**ANASTASIA LIN:** Well, in China, we have this saying: to kill a chicken to warn the monkeys. That means, you have someone being picked out as an example for the rest. And that what exactly the Tiananmen Square did to the rest of the Chinese population.

International attention and your voices are sometimes the only tool to stop human rights abuses in China. And that's why we should use it, to encourage the Chinese people to stand up for themselves.

**JOHN HUGHES:** What do you think it will take? What could trigger this sort of rising up, this sort of change that you reference?

**ANASTASIA LIN:** Voices. Sometimes it is the most principled people that suffer the most. I'm not referring to myself; I'm referring to the human rights lawyers, the people who are fighting, defying their own conscience, the religious minorities who are being persecuted, locked up, in jail. These people are the spines of that nation. They dare to stand against tyranny. And I am so glad that they still exist in China.

We can help to change China, yes. But the Chinese people need to stand up for themselves. And one way for us to help them is to encourage them, is to let them hear the truth, is to give them avenue to speak up. Then we'll see changes.

And for the international community, when something like this happens, please speak up. And together they can't stifle everyone. And they will know eventually that this kind of tactic won't work, and they will stop using it.

**JOHN HUGHES:** The United States maintains strong relations with China, largely due to the economic dependency the two have for each other, this questioner says. How is this perceived in China? Is there a perception that the United States endorses the Chinese government's actions against its own citizens, which would not be tolerated here in the United States. What sort of effect do you think that could have on US/Chinese relations?

**ANASTASIA LIN:** I am not a foreign relation expert. But I know what is the experience for a Chinese overseas who's living in a free country. As a Canadian Chinese, I was trying to speak my mind in Canada. One of our prime ministers said: "I am a Canadian, free to speak without fear, free to worship in my own way. Free to stand for what I think right, free to oppose what I believe wrong. And free to choose those who shall govern my country. And this heritage of freedom I pledge to uphold for myself and all mankind." And I believe that is exactly what I was trying to do.

But now my father's being intimidated in China. I am being barred from an international contest. And my government has not spoken out. As a Chinese Canadian I don't feel safe within my own border. I think it's important for the government to give the comfort for Chinese overseas to be themselves, to express what they want to express. That is of crucial importance.

**JOHN HUGHES:** How has the Chinese online community responded to your situation or commented on it?

**ANASTASIA LIN:** I have received a lot of messages from Chinese people inside China. They use software to break the Internet block. And we call that "climb over the Great China Firewall." And they have left me messages in my Facebook mailbox. Those are really heart-touching messages. It makes me see why we're doing all this.

They are so glad to have someone else that still cares about them, that they know that they're not alone. If they hang in there a little longer, perhaps something will change.

And then there's also the 50 Cents Party; I don't know if anybody has heard about them, 50 Cents Party. Yes, the 50 Cents Army of Chinese communist propaganda department. Those are hired Internet commentators that would get paid 50 cents per each comment that they write. And usually they try to shift the overseas foreign opinions just under each article, the comments sections.

They write nasty stuff. But I think that gives me more inspiration to do what I do. Because I see that is crucially important, that we don't have our voice being buried by all these comments.

**JOHN HUGHES:** I asked you a question about your dad, and I mentioned that your mom traveled here to be with you today. So let me ask you a question about your mom. How supportive is she of the efforts you're making? How much does she worry about what you're doing and the effects that it could have.

**ANASTASIA LIN:** At the beginning, my mother was quite afraid. And when the news about my father being threatened in China broke out, my father was really scared, and he called my mom. And my mom got really scared. And they were really just trying to tell me, "Don't speak up anymore. This is not good for you. And also, you're speaking against your native country."

And then, when she came to my graduation, I took her out for a run where there's no tapped cell phones. There was no monitoring by any kind of electronic device. And I had a frank discussion with her and told her what I really want to achieve with this platform. And ever since, she has been really supportive. Although she's still afraid. But she's been very supportive.

And her support meant a lot to me, especially when I was denied a visa. My family, they were really happy that I was going back to China. Some of them I haven't seen in decades. They were going to organize a cheerleading team when I would be in Sanya. And then, about two weeks before the contest, my father wrote to me that "it's better if you don't come back; there'll be endless trouble if you do get in. And just stay in Canada. Focus on your artistic career."

I can't imagine what kind of pressure he was under. But thanks to my mom, I got through that period.

**JOHN HUGHES:** This questioner says, It sounds like you're proposing a boycott on attending international events in China. What specific reforms are you recommending that would remedy your concerns for beauty queens, athletes or dressmakers and allow them to attend these events?

**ANASTASIA LIN:** Well, no one ever boycotted the 2008 Olympic Games, although there were tons of human rights abuses that were going on prior to the game in the name of security. Some dissidents even died hours before the Olympic Games happened.

I think international organizations like the Olympic Committee and Miss World do have the power to change the outcome of this. Chinese people, we like to save our faces. The Chinese government, too. We don't want an organization who was going to host an event in China suddenly pull out because of human rights abuses.

So if these organizations speak up and say, "If you don't allow our contestants in, we will just go. It's all or none," then I'm sure the Chinese government will change their mind. But so far, it seems like not a lot of people have taken the stance.

**JOHN HUGHES:** Do you have any opinion on how Hollywood studios should respond to SARFT censorship and film import quotas?

**ANASTASIA LIN:** I don't know what SARFT censorship—

\_\_: The Chinese censorship bureau.

**ANASTASIA LIN:** There is a quota on films?

\_\_: There's a quota of 30 films per year, maximum, including all Hollywood studios and every other international film-making [43:52] and of those, about a quarter have to be 3D, by the way. So it's actually [44:01]

**ANASTASIA LIN:** Well, that is quite unfortunate. But if you know what they do to Chinese filmmakers, this is nothing in comparison. The Chinese filmmakers basically have to alter their script from the beginning, and everything has to be in line with the Chinese communist propaganda. And Leon probably can tell you more about it later. We are starting to shape our culture around the Chinese Communist Party's propaganda. That is not a good sign. But I also know there's courageous people out there.

When I checked the persona non grata status online, I also discovered, among the Hollywood stars, Richard Gere, Brad Pitt, Harrison Ford, Christian Bale, these are all persona non grata in China. [laughter] Very rarely do I find myself on the same list of these most handsome men on earth. I think I'll wear it like a badge of honor.

**JOHN HUGHES:** This questioner says, I don't recall our media reporting the pressure China puts on US movie moguls to cleanse their movies of anti-Chinese propaganda. Has there not been enough reporting on this? Tell us more about this.

**ANASTASIA LIN:** So I approached an agency a couple weeks ago and they were very interested in taking me in. But then after a few days I got a response: We're sorry, this is a little too political. And then some other friends who know them told me that, yeah, they have a big deal that they're doing with China right now.

This is the kind of story I think we need to tell. We need to be very alarmed that this is happening to us. Some of our audience don't even know what they're not seeing and why they're not seeing it in the newspaper and big screen.

Yeah. So members of the press, please don't compromise your values.

**JOHN HUGHES:** This questioner says, you have realized your dream to be an actress. How do you prepare yourself to understand the characters you play and express those characters; for example, in the film *Bleeding Edge*?

**ANASTASIA LIN:** The interviews with the victims— and I do exercises, acting exercises with these victims. And that's when I discovered their natural response to a certain situation.

For example, there was this acting exercise I did. It's in a big, empty studio in *Bleeding Edge*. There's one scene that a lot of these religious minorities have faced, that the Chinese prison guards try to get them to transform. That means that they only have to sign a denouncement of their own belief and they can walk away from the labor camp. But a lot of them didn't do that. So I was wondering why. Why would you give up all that just for a piece of paper?

So I stood them in a big room. They were kneeling down on the ground. That's what happened, they described to me. And I had some other assistants standing on the side as prison guards. And I repeated the lines that was said to them in the labor camp. Their reactions surprised me, because I had both the real victims and actors in the same room. The actors, their response was that they stand up and they start to defend their belief, and they start to say "this is wrong, you shouldn't do this to us."

And the real victims, it was like entering the deepest, darkest space in their mind. I see that they were almost numbed by those experiences. And afterward I asked them, "Why didn't you react?" And they said that, "It's not real. In those situations you don't do that."

And I asked them, "How did your families respond to this?" And what they told me is that the most difficult part of this whole process is what their family has to go through. They usually crush when I ask them about their families. And just after listening to these people's fears, I don't think anybody can just stay indifferent.

This has been my experience, and I'm really looking forward to hearing and getting in touch with more of these victims. And I think that in the future, if you can have the opportunity, please also take a moment to listen to them. Perhaps you will discover something that is really inspiring and would also change the outlook of the world for yourself as well.

Thank you.

**JOHN HUGHES:** This questioner states that, feminists consider beauty pageants to be relics from a more sexist age. As a thoroughly modern and politically active woman, why did you decide to get involved in the Miss World competition?

**ANASTASIA LIN:** Wow. I researched the tradition of beauty pageants. It actually dates back to 1952. Miss World is actually the longest surviving beauty pageant on the world. At the beginning, when I entered the pageant, I had a lot of insecurities. Because usually people look at beauty queens like a typical stereotyped superficial lady who cares more about her appearance than her character.

But when I entered the beauty pageant, I have found that these contestants are all very passionate, very strong women, who had something to say, something to bring to the world. The first year, in 2013, when I entered the beauty pageant, I was totally afraid. And I looked at everybody like competition. That was not a good mentality for the pageant.

But then the second year, this year, I saw the unique beauty in everyone, and what they were trying to showcase. Everybody are just putting their best on the table and have something that they care about and want everyone to know.

I think in the future, the criteria for beauty pageants perhaps could be changed. Instead of looking at how beautiful this woman is, how big her hair is, how long her fingernails are, probably we can change the criteria to what her goal is, what her character is like. What does she care about? And that could be quite constructive for a young woman.

**JOHN HUGHES:** Your recent Canadian elections were followed quite closely here in the United States. Give us your impression of the recent Canadian election. As a Canadian, what do you think of your new president[sic]? [laughter]

**ANASTASIA LIN:** Well, Mr. Trudeau, yes. He is a 44-year-old young man. I can understand for a young person to suddenly have such a huge responsibility on his shoulders for myself when I just won the crown. Of course, it's no comparison to managing a country, but I realize what kind of role model we are setting for the rest of the population and what kind of example we can set.

So I know it's not easy, but he also has the choice. He can make the right choice to stand up for his people that are under his protection. And I am quite looking forward to that.

**JOHN HUGHES:** You mentioned your acting career and you're focusing on that. What about other plans in the future? What other things do you see yourself doing in your future? And would you ever consider a career in politics in Canada?

**ANASTASIA LIN:** I am an actress. So I would like to take it as far as I can. But if I have my American history right, you're open to have an actor running for the highest office, right? [laughter]

**JOHN HUGHES:** We are almost out of time. And before I ask the last few questions, I have some housekeeping.

The National Press Club is the world's leading professional organization for journalists. And we fight for a free press worldwide. For more information on the National Press Club, visit our website, *Press.org*. And to donate to our nonprofit Journalism Institute, visit *Press.org/institute*.

I'd also like to remind you about some upcoming programs. The Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral John Richardson, will address a National Press Club luncheon on Monday, January 11<sup>th</sup>.

Former Senators Tom Daschle and Trent Lott will discuss their new book. And the title of this book is *Crisis Point: Why We Must and How We Can Overcome Our Broken Politics in Washington and Across America*. They will discuss this book on January 19<sup>th</sup> at six p.m.

And Rod Nordland, an international correspondent at large for the *New York Times*, will discuss his new book on February 10<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m. The title of his new book is, *The Lovers: Afghanistan's Romeo and Juliet, the True Story of How They Defied Their Families and Escaped an Honor Killing*. And again, that's February 10<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m.

I don't know what they give to the winner of the Miss World pageant, but we have a very honored prize at the National Press Club. And I would like to present you with our National Press Club mug.

**ANASTASIA LIN:** Thank you, I need one of those. [applause] Thank you very much.

**JOHN HUGHES:** So the last few questions. The Chinese government regards Falun Gong as a cult. Why is the Chinese government wrong about that?

**ANASTASIA LIN:** Yes, this is like the big elephant in the room, I know that. So I only started to practice Falun Gong after I came out of China. My mother, she gave me



a little booklet. She herself is not a Falun Gong practitioner, but she gave me a little booklet that tells about what is really happening to those Chinese Falun Gong practitioners.

Falun Gong itself is ancient meditation practice that's very reminiscent of Buddhist and Taoist teaching. Ancient times, Buddhist monks and Taoists and scholars would use these kind of meditation practice – we call it qigong exercises – to refine their spirit and refine their body.

And I think the reason why it's being persecuted in China, in 1999, is because the large size in 1999. The official data of Falun Gong practitioners in China was 70 million to 100 million. And that's one out of ten Chinese people, which is such a large size, independent thinkers. I think the communist government was quite afraid.

And Falun Gong practitioners, they were encouraged to think with their own mind and to distinguish what is right and wrong by the principles of truthfulness, compassion and tolerance all the time. So I guess that's why ideologically they are very unlikely to conform to the communist indoctrination.

Falun Gong itself, for me, is very personal. It's almost like a yoga practice that you do. I'm a Canadian kid. Practicing a yoga practice in my home is very different for Chinese person to practice Falun Gong in China. Because they do face life and death decisions.

I hope people can perhaps go in Wikipedia and read more about it. It's all online. But do careful; there are some smear campaigning that's from the Chinese communist side.

**JOHN HUGHES:** So as a representative of Canada in Miss World, what do you think the rest of the world can learn from Canada that perhaps it doesn't fully appreciate, doesn't fully understand now?

**ANASTASIA LIN:** Learn from Canada? In Canada, we have a multicultural society. We accept people with differences, and we do encourage people to be themselves. We are very tolerant of diversity. People need to be who they are, and only then when they're holding spirit, holding thought can they reach the potential that they so richly deserve. Not just in Canada. Also in China.

When Chinese people can be themselves, imagine that 1.7 billion people, what they can really achieve. And I'm really looking forward to that day. I hope it's going to be soon.

**JOHN HUGHES:** Here in the United States, in the Presidential campaign, there's quite a bit of discussion about immigration and refugees and who should be admitted to the United States. Do you have any thought on that debate as you see that happening?

**ANASTASIA LIN:** That sounds like a very political question. [laughter] I have to be very honest. I did not prepare this question-and-answer period like my pageant onstage question. But it feels quite similar. [laughter]

I think people should be able to be true to who they really are. There's so much hatred and fear around the world nowadays. And these divisions were placed in mankind by people, not by God. We should never let religion or race define ourselves or divide ourselves.

I'm really looking forward to the day when we can accept each others' differences and be kind to each other. And that is the main reason why I ran for Miss World Canada. It was not just standing up for the people who are being oppressed, because I think their minds are actually free, although their bodies are in prison. I want to replace the fear and hatred in people with kindness and compassion again. That is what we so desperately need in society these days.

Thank you.

**JOHN HUGHES:** Ladies and gentlemen, how about a round of applause for our speaker.

[applause]

**JOHN HUGHES:** I'd also like to thank the National Press Club staff, including its Journalism Institute and Broadcast Center for organizing today's event. If you would like a copy of today's program, or to learn more about the National Press Club, go to our website, *Press.org*.

Thank you very much. We are adjourned.

[sounds gavel]

[applause]

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