

SE Feature  
 HD Face of Chinese emigration seen changing  
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CHINESE husbands are the training school for those who want to go abroad." This is a classic line in the critically acclaimed Chinese movie "After Separation" (1992) that explores the fever of going abroad by portraying a group of young, ambitious Chinese people who are eager to emigrate to the United States in the early 1990s.

Of course, here, the "training school" doesn't refer to a physical thing but is a metaphor describing the broken relationship between a couple when the wife decides to go abroad.

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The joke is bitter and sarcastic.

The "going abroad fever" seems to have reignited after a huge wave of overseas Chinese came back in the past several years. ForbesLife's latest release, "Hot Spots of Immigrant Investor Programs," in collaboration with Wailian Overseas Consulting Group, shows more of China's "new rich" and middle-class people now feel like moving to a foreign country. Australia and New Zealand are said to be the new favorites, instead of the US.

Another trend is that many Chinese who get immigration visas in a foreign country still prefer to live in China for the sake of lifestyle or business environment.

According to the report "Global Safety and Politics" issued by the China Academy of Social Sciences in 2010, China has become the world's biggest migrant-exporting country. Canada, the US, Australia and New Zealand are among the top destinations for Chinese emigrants.

"Different from the condition in the past decades, many new emigrants are considering good natural environment, better education and more secured welfare benefits in the foreign countries," says Lucia Liu, a consultant working at a local emigration agency. "In the past, some just went outside to earn money."

The first round of the Chinese emigration wave started immediately following China's reform and opening-up policy in the early 1980s, but the financial support was limited. Overseas students often needed to do some odd jobs after class to earn their food and tuition.

However, because of the rapid development and economic expansion of China, today the first step for some Chinese emigrants is to buy a new house in a new land.

Bruce Zhou, a Shanghai lawyer in his 40s, recently got his emigration approval for Australia. He purchased a house there for AU\$800,000 (US\$748,000) six months ago.

"This is only part of my overseas investment. I am an expert in finance. Chinese economy now comes to a standstill, and I want to protect and increase my assets," Zhou says. "When you start the emigration process, you must treat it as a big project. I did a lot of research to locate Australia as my final choice because of its natural environment, economic policies and lifestyle."

Zhou reveals he's also researched Spain and Cyprus with on-site inspection.

Asked about the reason for his emigration, Zhou says it's simply for the child. And this is actually cited as the main reason for many Chinese emigrants.

"Look at the poor air quality with such an incredible PM2.5 index in Shanghai. I really want my son to have many outdoor activities," says Hilary Shi, 42, mother of a 9-year-old son. "And I'm also dissatisfied with the education system here in **China**. It's terrible that children are having academic training classes even when they are still in kindergarten. I hope that he can grow up in a healthy and happy environment, so my husband and I decided to go to Canada."

Shi and her husband are both managers at multinational companies in Shanghai.

A healthy, natural environment and a happy, less-structured education system are the two main reasons that attract **Chinese** elite and middle-class to "step outside **China**."

The appreciation of the yuan in recent years also lowers the emigration cost in some North American countries. Since 2013, European countries also have announced new emigration policies to promote the sluggish economy. For example, one can obtain a permanent residence in Spain if he/she buys a 500,000-euro **apartment**.

Vivian Zhou, a 40-year-old purchasing manager at an overseas bank, is also seeking to emigrate.

"I am too disappointed with the current living conditions in Shanghai. There are always crowds and crowds, whether in the Metro, in the hospital or on the street. The resources of Shanghai are limited, and it is unable to house so many people from every part of **China** for good medical care and good education," she explains.

"Last year, it was a headache just to find a good primary school for my daughter. I feel that I am really tired and I need a more relaxed environment to live in," she adds. "I just want to start a new life."

However, life overseas does not necessarily bring bliss.

"I have been here in Vancouver for about 15 years," says Brian Sun, an experienced IT professional. "But I do find it hard for me to melt into the mainstream here. When my colleagues told a joke and everyone laughed, I just pretended to smile as I didn't get it."

"All my friends are **Chinese**, as we share the same background and feeling. Don't ask me whether I regret coming here; this is a question that I dare not answer. Now my son who was born in Canada has adapted himself well into the local environment. Life is fair to everyone. Once you obtain something, you lose something as well," he sighs.

"**Chinese** people are usually quite reserved and silent," says Feng Yalan, a local psychological consultant at East **China** Normal University. "They are not active in the public and most of them don't have a religion. All these build up a distance between them and the local mainstream in a foreign country."

According to a survey made by American **China** Press in 2009, it usually took new **Chinese** emigrants about two years to melt into the local American society in the 1990s. Now that has shrunk to half a year.

The spiritual emptiness and loss is often the biggest problem for the new emigrants.

"I came to Australia about a year ago, and now I live with my 10-year-old son here; my husband is still working in **China**," says Zhu Peiwen, a 35-year-old stay-at-home mother. "I know many of the new emigrants here follow the same lifestyle as me. As a **Chinese**, there are more opportunities back in **China** than in Sydney."

"My husband's business and social network are all rooted in Shanghai. He can't just give up these things and move here. Most importantly, we need his financial support," she explains. "Certainly, separation is very harmful for a couple, but I can't find a better solution."

Zhu confesses that she has a small circle of friends in Sydney, but she does miss her old schoolmates, friends and colleagues back in **China**.

"Frankly speaking, life is quite dull here, but I have to adjust myself," she says. "Thanks to the new digital technology, I don't feel so far away from them. Luckily, I've found a new interest to kill time — sports. The swimming pool and the golf course are open free to the public, so I practice a lot. My husband said that I look younger and healthier than before. I also learned how to cook. Day after day, I try to develop another lifestyle here."

Zhu's situation is not unusual. For **Chinese** emigrants, it is common for the mother to live with a child in the new place, while the father remains in **China** to earn money.

"I think there are some profound reasons for this new wave of emigrants," says Tang Jun, a senior researcher at the Institute of Sociology at the **Chinese** Academy of Social Sciences. "This reflects that professionals are often undervalued in **China**, which makes this **group** of people feel insecure about their future. Another reason is the resentment toward the rich that has become generalized in **China**."

Some worry that the new wave of emigration reflects a big loss for **China** in terms of talent and money. Others disagree.

"I don't agree with that," says Rebecca Wu, a white-collar worker in her 40s. "The focus of some of the new emigrants is in **China**, and some of the family members still stay and work here. After all, the base of the **Chinese** population is huge. It is another way to export **Chinese** culture to the outside world."

Opinions about emigration

Xue Xiaoyan, 19

Sophomore at Fudan University

"Many of my classmates at the Middle School affiliated to Fudan University went to universities in the US. My mother also hoped that I could follow the same path, but I refused. I like Shanghai very much and I am comfortable with all I have. Frankly speaking, I don't want to start a new life in a foreign land. Maybe I am a lazy person."

Opal Liu, 44

Product analyst at a multinational **company**

"I am satisfied with my current life. I don't want to emigrate to other countries."

John Wu, 35

Accountant at a European **company**

"You just hit the right ball. I am applying for Australian emigration. Both my wife and I want to change to a healthier and more friendly environment. I plan to open a small grocery store there. Actually some of my friends already moved to Sydney, and I look forward to seeing them."

Li Yongjie, 38

Mathematics teacher at a local primary school

"Of course I wanted to emigrate, but I don't have the money. In my eyes, it is better to leave **China** as quickly as possible. The food-safety problem, the PM2.5, the environmental pollution, worsened education mechanism plus the corruption. How could a person settle down in a place where he is worried even about what he is eating or drinking?"

Simon Jiang, 47

Marketing manager

"I know that **China** has many problems for the time being, but I still don't want to move to other countries. I am a middle-class here, and I am unwilling to lower my social status in other places. One of my friends is working for fueling station in Canada. Then why should I give up my current job and work as a blue-collar? After all, no place is perfect."

**NS** gcat : Political/General News

**RE** china : China | austr : Australia | sydney : Sydney | usa : United States | apacz : Asia Pacific | asiaz : Asia | ausnz : Australia/Oceania | bric : BRIC Countries | chinaz : Greater China | devgcoz : Emerging Market Countries | dvpcoz : Developing Economies | easiaz : Eastern Asia | namz : North America | nswals : New South Wales

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