

Appendices

The following appendices are provided to share evidence collected by the Falun Dafa Information Center (FDIC) that informed its analysis and conclusions regarding the *New York Times* recent coverage of Falun Gong and Shen Yun. The appendices match references made to them in the text of the report.

Appendix A	pg. 2
Appendix B	pg. 5
Appendix C	pg. 6
Appendix D	pg. 10
Appendix E	pg. 13
Appendix F	pg. 15
Appendix G	pg. 17
Appendix H	pg. 20

Appendix A

Timeline of communication between a former Shen Yun performer featured by the *New York Times* and a Fei Tian professor

[Note: We have redacted this performer's name and identity to minimize the negative attention to her and her family. However, because she has already spoken publicly against Shen Yun, we have included some of her past statements in this report to provide a more complete background and context for the statements included in the New York Times article.]

This timeline documents the significant change in perspective over the course of four years as captured in discussion threads with a Fei Tian professor. Among other things, they demonstrate the overwhelmingly positive attitude of this performer toward Fei Tian and Shen Yun long after leaving the school and company. Critically, they also shows signs of a controlling relationship with her husband and change in attitude coinciding with the timeframe in which the dance studio run by her and her husband began working with Beijing Dance Academy (BDA), a Chinese state-run and funded institution under the Chinese Government's Ministry of Culture. The studio's Facebook Page states that the former Shen Yun performer "studied under teachers from the classical dance department of the Beijing Dance Academy," and lists various collaborations between the studio and BDA, as of August 26, 2024.

- May, 2019: Performer receives diploma from Fei Tian; returns home to Taiwan in early 2020
- April 24, 2020: Performer inquiries about working at a Fei Tian-affiliated school in Taiwan.
- May 23, 2020: Performer asks professor if she can return to Fei Tian in New York.
- June 19, 2020: Performer invites professor to visit Taiwan, and sends good wishes to the professor and his wife.
- August 28, 2020: Performer tells professor she is engaged, and says her fiancé is thankful that Fei Tian helped performer develop well.
- October 7, 2020: Performer invites professor to her wedding the following year.
- November 22, 2020: Performer tells professor she and her fiancé will open a classical Chinese dance school. She says that fiancé feels Shen Yun's artistic product is the best, and wishes to train and help develop talent to send to the Fei Tian schools in New York.
- January 2, 2021: Performer wishes professor happy new year, and asks if Fei Tian is accepting new students so that she can send one of her students to Fei Tian.
- April 21, 2021: Performer re-iterates invitation to the professor to attend her wedding.
- Precise timing unclear: Performer and husband's dance studio develops collaboration with Beijing Dance Academy.
- Late 2023: According to a parent of a student at performer's studio in Taiwan, the performer's husband says mainland Chinese "shareholders" of the dance studio are watching the studio's Facebook page, and so they need to be careful about content posted there. Performer's husband also discusses "investments" in mainland China.
- March 2024: According to parents of dance students at performer's studio in Taiwan, students from Falun Gong families were asked to leave the studio and given refunds. The performer's husband tells parents they need to "pick a side." (professor in New York is not aware of this announcement.)

- April 10, 2024: Performer and professor exchange simple pleasantries, but performer’s answers are cryptic, and performer abruptly ends the discussion. A half hour later, performer says she took her dog for a walk so that she could chat with the professor, adding that her husband does not let her use Facebook. During the course of this conversation, she says “I’m not doing that well. My husband is doing everything...He manages my life kind of strictly.” When the professor asked where she is living, the performer replied: “My husband doesn’t let me say where I am.” Performer ends the conversation saying: “I’m going home now. I will be invisible for a while.”
- After this exchange, the performer’s account blocked the professor

NOTE: original Facebook message exports are on file with FDIC and available upon request.

Sample social media post from performer about her time at Fei Tian schools



Translation:

Graduation is not the end, but a new beginning
 Ten years have passed by in a hurry
 The history class back then was filled with laughter and joy
 "Once a teacher, forever a father"
 We all take note of the teachers’ good intentions for the school and students. I am also famous in school as a funny person. I also like chatting with you during class. It is really a pleasure to take your class.
 “Really appreciate your help and support
 I have a sincere heart to you, As long as you have told”
 What's funny...five years ago? When I first saw this outfit you were wearing, it reminded me of Hulk haha.
 I am also very grateful to the school for the cultivation! Thank you to the office, cultural teachers, and dance teachers! My future is given by you. If I had not entered school, I might not be like this today.
 Graduation is a new beginning...a new journey. Ten years of time, the first time every time~ I still remember the first time I took the bus for three days and two nights~ The first time I stood on the world stage~ The first time It’s the first time I’ve experienced motion sickness, airsickness, and seasickness.

It's the first time I've been to a different place in the world and the first time I've met the person I most want to see in my life!

Really! I have no regrets in this life. These are all given by the school! Without school, I would not be where I am today. Without teachers, my history would not be possible... You have worked hard! Thank you everyone.

Facebook page of performer's dance school



Intro

台北特優成人古典舞教室
師承北京舞蹈學院古典舞系師資的 [redacted] 老師，受益於由多位教授創建、編纂的古典舞系統訓練，累積起紮實且細膩的古典舞基底，體悟著古典舞所構築的世界觀，並在一千多場世界各大知名劇院演出中展現所體悟的舞蹈意境。

Page · Art

專業古典舞教學 以下有我們 [redacted] 古典舞官方Line哦!

Featured

June 24
《葛唱》古典舞大師專訪分享
古典舞最高榮譽: ...

May 18
小品『媚』分享
影片舞者: 小妍
指導老師: [redacted] 老師...

Intro translation:

Taipei's premiere classical dance studio for adults

Teacher [redacted], who studied under the teachers of the Classical Dance Department of Beijing Dance Academy, benefited from the classical dance system training created and compiled by many professors, accumulated a solid and delicate classical dance foundation, gained experiential understanding of the worldview constructed by classical dance, and showcased the dance's spiritual realm she internalized in more than a thousand performances in renowned theaters around the world.

Appendix B

Select social media posts from CCP-backed YouTuber that indicate coordination and collaboration with the *New York Times*.

X/Twitter Post	Translation
	<p>I was the one who introduced people [ex-performers] to the <i>New York Times</i>, especially for the initial interviews. They found additional people through that.</p> <p>I may be mentioned in a future article by the <i>New York Times</i> on Shen Yun.</p> <p>August 18, 2024 [Note: Three days after the <i>New York Times</i> published its first articles about Shen Yun]</p>
	<p>Special thanks to Nicole Hong and Michael Rothfeld from The <i>New York Times</i>, along with Liu Yi and Susan C. Beachy, for your hard work.</p> <p>August 16, 2024</p>
	<p>Zhang Tianliang, the personal and material evidence in the possession of the <i>New York Times</i> has been repeatedly reviewed by their legal team and supported by a large amount of background materials. When published, every word was irrefutable.</p> <p>While the eyes of the Lord Buddha of the Universe and you minions are focused on me, the U.S. federal government's investigation into Shen Yun has already begun. Skynet is still under the hood.</p> <p>Falun Gong is screwed. Shen Yun, The Epoch Times...all are screwed.</p> <p>June 25, 2024 [Note: Nearly two months before the <i>Times</i> published its articles]</p>
	<p>The <i>New York Times</i> article will appear shortly. You'll see the evidence then.</p> <p>April 13, 2024</p>

Appendix C

Email communications from former Shen Yun performers to *New York Times* reporters

Email 1: Written reply from Susan, a former Shen Yun performer quoted in the article, the only positive comment about Shen Yun from among interviewees that was included in the final piece.

I'm sorry I never replied to your original email. I don't really like to do interviews, and basically would prefer not to get involved in this report you are doing. However, after chatting with Daisy a few times and receiving your second email, I gave this a second thought. Even though I don't want to do an interview, I do have a few ideas and concerns that I want to share with you.

Regarding the group of former dancers you have interviewed, I do hope you are doing your homework to really understand their backgrounds. I know many of these people and was with them at Shen Yun. Some have personal issues that actually caused their problems while they were with Shen Yun, and might lead them to exaggerate or distort stories, including the one about my injury. Also, some have complicated backgrounds in China and such. If you really want to dig out the truth, I strongly encourage you to not base your report only on what these people say. Also, these people have known each other and been talking together for many years, so even if a few of them might tell you the same story, I don't think that proves much since they have vented to each other for a long time, and I'm sure over that time, their stories kind of got mixed together. I think it would not be difficult for your critics to dig out these people's full stories, which could undermine your report.

One thing that made me especially uncomfortable about your request for an interview was the topic of injuries. I know that some people have said that the teachings of Falun Gong discourage medical treatment, and that people then like to create stories about similar ideas at Shen Yun. I think this whole idea is a problem for two reasons. First, most reports on this topic I have seen somehow combine what Falun Gong teaches about the source of illness (i.e. karma, etc.) with what to do in medical situations. I know that at the beginning of the persecution in China, the CCP liked to say this kind of thing. And then later, it seemed like it spread to media outside China. But all of this is a misunderstanding of what we actually believe.

Second, many Shen Yun dancers do in fact receive medical treatment, including surgeries for ACLs, knee issues, Achilles tendons, etc. I know many dancers like this and this is the majority, which is an important fact. By the way, to my knowledge, all Shen Yun dancers are vaccinated, including for COVID-19. So how do all these facts line up with some stories about discouraging medical treatment? Again, if your research is really trying to dig out the truth, you'll have to consider these things.

My guess is that you're interested in me because, unlike the dancers I mentioned above who were treated medically and went through proper rehab, even though I did visit the hospital after injuring my knee, overall I took a different approach, and I think some people think I was stubborn, but that was my own personal decision. It can't represent Shen Yun's attitude for injuries. And yes, I'm kind of a headstrong person.

After speaking with one of my former dancer friends who knows a lot more about news coverage and things than I do, there is another point about your request for an interview that made me uncomfortable. In recent years when the New York times has printed Falun Gong-related stories, the paper has basically ignored the major human rights abuses against practitioners in China, and I think it has lied about the source of human rights abuse information. For example, in an October 2020 report (mostly about the Epoch Times, if I remember correctly?), the whole persecution in China that our people have suffered for over twenty years was captured in one small sentence: The group accuses [the CCP] of torturing Falun Gong practitioners and harvesting the organs of those executed. To say that the persecution is just something Falun Gong accuses others of is, I mean, it's just a lie. For example, have you seen this Freedom House report?: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/2017/battle-china-spirit-falun-gong-religiousfreedom>. Does the New York times really think that one sentence fairly describes all that is happening to Falun Gong in China as well as the multiple well-known and well-respected sources that have documented it? I don't know what else to say, but I would encourage you to read the Falun Dafa Information Center's response to this issue, they cover it much better than I can: <https://faluninfo.net/the-new-york-times-spreads-falsehoods-on-falun-gong-in-attack-on-rival-media/>

Anyway, Nicole, I'd like to give you the benefit of the doubt and assume you're trying to understand what Shen Yun is really all about, and so I did want to share these thoughts with you since I know some of the people you are probably interviewing. Please do your homework about these people, and please do not ignore or treat as not important, the horrible human rights abuses in China. There are millions of people suffering. You really can't responsibly tell any Falun Gong-related story without covering what has been happening in China over the last 25 years.

Personally, I cherish the time I spent at Shen Yun. I learned and matured a great deal. I think it's a wonderful institution that creates an inspiring show for people all around the world.

I don't like doing interviews and I'm especially uncomfortable because of the articles I've seen in the last few years that seem to be trying to make our faith (and Shen Yun) look bad, maybe for political reasons or because of things related to the Epoch Times? I'm not really sure, but I hope that's not what you're doing.

Good luck!

Susan

Email 2:

Nicole:

This makes me very sad.

I have just finished reading this report: <https://faluninfo.net/new-york-times-falun-gongdistortion/>

Have you read it? How do you explain this? I know many companies chase dollars in China, but that does not explain all of this stuff. There is something else going on here: it looks like plain old bigotry to me? It seems NYT is bigoted against a faith with which it does not agree, or maybe bigoted against traditional Chinese work ethic and values, esp. tiger mom methods (I think one of you is Chinese... but honestly, that's no excuse. I know many Chinese that are bigots against traditional Chinese things).

Do you know how many friends and loved ones I have that have suffered terribly in China... jailed for their conscience...torture, it's so awful and NYT just doesn't care... I mean, you can say you care, but actions speak louder than words and the only thing I've seen from NYT for more than 10 years is attacks against companies started by Falun Gong. There's nothing real about the persecution of Falun Gong in China...nothing. Can you prove me wrong? Can you point me to any quality coverage of the Falun Gong persecution in the last 10 years that even comes close to representing what's really happening over there? That's a genuine question.

Anyway, back to your interview idea...I'm guessing you want to attack Shen Yun because you are convinced there's "a story" here. I don't know... if you can't see how arrogant it is for you to think you can fully understand and properly characterize the Falun Gong faith for your readers, I just think that's arrogant.

I hope you double-check all your facts, and especially your innuendos... what you choose to quote, and what you choose to omit. Once the full story of Falun Gong, China, and the CCP come to light -- including the full background of those that contributed to this story -- I just think you all will have a lot of very difficult questions to answer.

Anyway, I really have no interest in doing an interview for anti-Falun Gong activists who masquerade as journalists, especially those with the audacity to take the stance that an "inside look at Shen Yun" is far more important than the millions imprisoned, tortured, or killed in China. Please leave me out of it. Please think about what you are doing.

[Name redacted]

Email 3:

Hello, sorry for the late reply, I thought your email was spam, but then I asked around some of my friends if your interview request is real.

To answer your first question, yes I used to dance for Shen Yun, but I never left. I still work in the area.

After thinking a little, there is something I want to share with you guys. Maybe you will understand us better.

Lately, we've been receiving a lot of concerning threats. A while ago, a Chinese YouTuber was making death threats to our campus. He came to our area, and the police and FBI got involved. Last year,

another person was arrested for harassing us. He used to fire his shotgun on the border of our campus and would confront people on the street outside our campus, sometimes with the shotgun over his shoulder. We're also receiving bomb threats, mass shooting threats, and threats to rape and murder our female dancers.

Do you know where all this hate comes from? Yes, the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) propaganda, but also some news outlets like NBC and the New York Times. The way you single us out, criticize our religious beliefs, and paint a false narrative to make us look bad, it's just like what the CCP and its state-run media does to us. I've never seen NYT do that to other groups of faith, such as the Uyghurs, American Indians, or Palestinians, and yet you do that to us? It seems hypocritical, and these false narratives of us can generate real animosity.

If you guys really care about fighting discrimination, hate speech, and violence, then I hope you realize the role you are playing in all this. With every article you guys publish, saying inaccurate things about us and undermining what we really stand for, you are putting us in more danger. We do not want the threats we've received to escalate further. I hope you understand. [Name redacted]

Appendix D

Email correspondence between *New York Times*' reporters, Shen Yun representative, and FDIC executive director regarding factual errors in reporting and medical records of Shen Yun performers

[Note: The emails are displayed in chronological order; the first request from the Times' journalist was sent on August 14, one day before the articles were ultimately published without conveying that timeline to the recipients; these followed a request for comment on other topics that had been sent earlier in the week by the reporters']

On 8/14/24 4:58 PM, Michael Rothfeld wrote:

Dear Ying and Levi,

Thanks again for your responses.

We'd like to review the medical records you reference and any other documentation to support your points if you can provide them by this time tomorrow. *[emphasis added]*

Please detail any of the "basic factual errors" in our findings that you referred to but did not specify, as we want to be certain our article is fair and accurate.

Best,

Michael and Nicole

Michael Rothfeld

The New York Times Mobile:

347-439-9530

████████████████████

On 8/15/24 4:48 PM, Michael Rothfeld wrote:

Hello Levi and Ying,

Please let us know if we should expect anything else from you as per our follow-up email, and if yes, at approximately what time we should look for it.

Many thanks,

Michael and Nicole

On Thu, Aug 15, 2024 at 9:05 AM Levi Browde <[REDACTED]> wrote:

Michael/Nicole:

I'm tied up for the first part of the day, but will discuss with Ying early afternoon. We'll aim to get you a response by this evening... not sure it will be before 5pm, but I think we can get you something not too late this evening.

Regards,

Levi

On 8/15/24 17:03, Levi Browde wrote:

Michael/Nicole:

Yes, I believe Ying will send you something a little later this evening...not too late.

Regards,

Levi

On Thu, Aug 15, 2024 at 8:46 PM Ying Chen <[REDACTED]> wrote:

Michael/Nicole:

Regarding your request for medical records, we just want to make sure we have the same understanding of what you're asking and what this entails. You are asking us to get a significant representation of medical records for treatment of injuries going back some number of years... obtain the necessary signoff from each patient in order to legally share these private medical records, and hand all those over to you, with a 24-hour turn-around? You do understand our artists have been treated by medical professionals across Taiwan, Japan, South Korea, the U.S., Canada, and Europe? The procedures and persons involved, and complexity of doing that is clearly not feasible in your time frame, nor are we clear on what volume / representation you would need to correct this false narrative in your findings. Perhaps we're misunderstanding your request?

When we say we can "prove it," we mean it, but in a legal context where there are clear legal procedures and lawyers in place to protect privacy and properly handle evidence. Also, from our perspective, your failure to even acknowledge, let alone make some attempt to address, what we believe are the significant

flaws in your findings regarding Falun Gong teachings and beliefs gives us little confidence in handing over a litany of private medical records.

As an alternative idea, we wonder if you would find it useful and informative to speak with several of our artists who have received various levels of medical treatment so you can hear from them first-hand about their injuries, treatment, and recovery? Please let us know. *[emphasis added]*

Regarding details for the basic factual errors, we have two main concerns about this request.

First, while we could provide a series of fact-checks to you, our real concern is why these factual errors exist within your findings to begin with? They suggest you may not have done basic fact-checking on the accusations made by your sources, when such fact checking is entirely possible. For example, one accusation in your findings states that "performers spend at least five months of the year on tour." In fact, if you look at our annual tour, it's typically four and a half months in total (across all eight troupes), but for any given troupe, it's often less. Regardless, it's rare that a single troupe is on the road the entire time. Usually, they are on the road 1-3 months before returning, at least for some time, to the headquarters. Furthermore, this should be very easy to confirm yourselves: just look at our tour schedule which is publicly available year-round on our website. For past years, any web archive site will show clearly the schedule for that year. This is all very simple math and web searches. Also, could you not ask your sources to substantiate this claim themselves? Do they have any receipts, credit card records...anything that would prove they are on the road that long each year? If they don't, could they at least explain the discrepancy between their statements and the publicly available tour schedule? If they were not able to substantiate the claim, why not note that in your findings?

Doing such fact-checking is even more vital considering your sources: these are people who, for the most part, have demonstrated public animosity toward Dragon Springs and have been talking it with to each other, in some cases, for years: plenty of time and precisely the right environment for a false, or at least exaggerated, narrative to take hold. Furthermore, have you scrutinized the background of these sources, some of which have direct ties to Mainland Chinese institutions, such as the Beijing Dance Academy, which is run by the Chinese government? That alone should be a huge red flag, especially given the CCP's widely documented campaign of [transnational repression against Shen Yun](#) and Dragon Springs. Do you plan on disclosing these ties in your article so that your readers are fully informed of the background of some of your sources, which at the very least, constitutes a conflict of interest?

Our second concern is the moral question of your basic fact checking request, at least from our perspective. In our initial response, we articulated a series of flaws that we believe are very serious misrepresentations, rising perhaps to the level of journalistic malpractice. Mainly, the grossly distorted picture of Falun Gong teachings and beliefs, the absence of any persecution context and how the ongoing persecution is inextricably tied to the story of Dragon Springs/Shen Yun, etc. Since these priority concerns of ours were not addressed at all in your subsequent reply, we assume you have no intention to address them? If that is the case, please try to see this from our perspective: you are gearing up to publish a picture of our community and faith that largely regurgitates CCP-crafted disinformation and that will surely incite hatred and possibly violence against us, and yet, you look to us to fix a series of factual errors that can only exist in your findings if you failed to do basic fact checking on the

accounts provided by your sources. It appears to us that you are taking our accusers at their word, yet demanding proof and documentation from us. You're asking us to sharpen the weapon that you will wield to strike against us in a manner that, we feel, is anything but "accurate and fair." Therefore, we feel you need to do your own fact checking and properly vet your sources, and where proper and necessary, provide your readers with disclosures representing possible bias and conflict of interest of those sources.

Regards,

Ying Chen, *Vice President*
Shen Yun Performing Arts

Levi Browde, *Executive Director*
Falun Dafa Information Center

On Thu, Aug 15, 2024 at 9:38 PM

Thank you. We will take all of this into consideration.

Michael Rothfeld

The New York Times Mobile:

347-439-9530



Appendix E

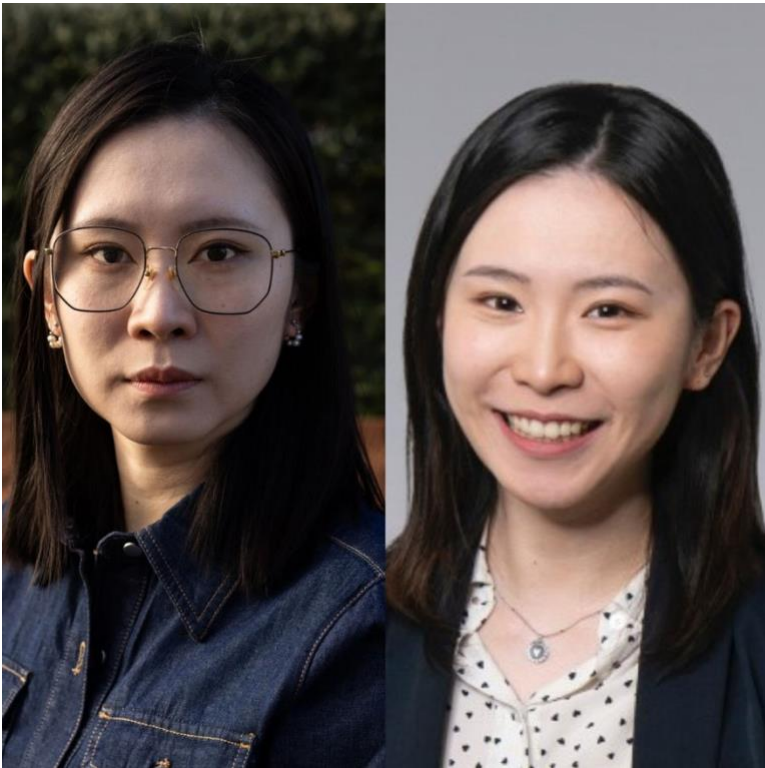
Photos of former performers used in the article compared to photos on their social media accounts, websites, or photos from Shen Yun

To demonstrate the extent to which the *New York Times* report utilized photos with a gloomy, wintery light, melancholy poses and facial expressions, we have set the *Times*' photos of interview subjects (left) side-by-side with publicly available photos (right) of the interview subjects.

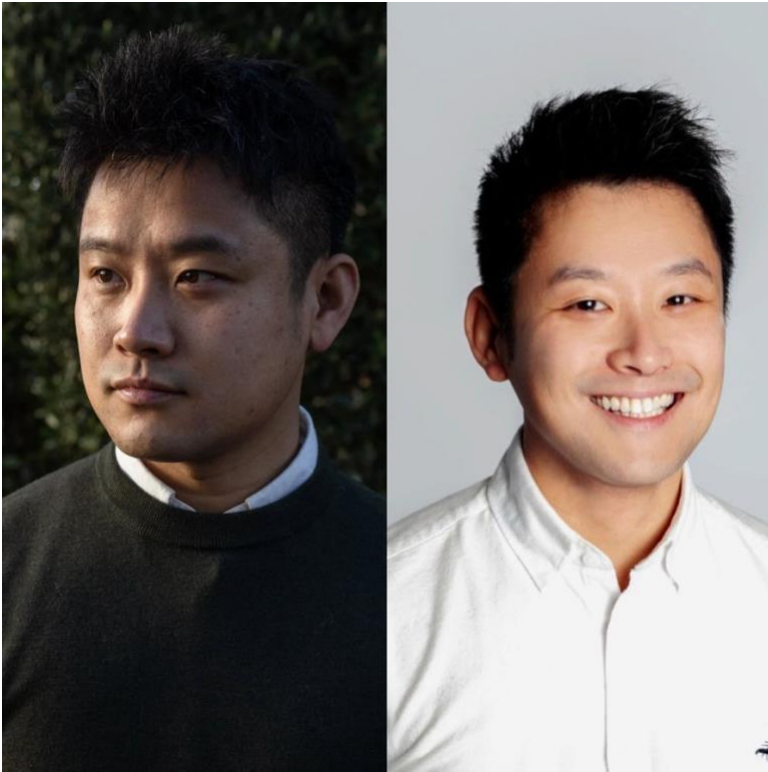
New York Times image (left) compared to photo on his own website (right)



New York Times image (left) compared to LinkedIn profile picture (right)



New York Times image (left) compared to LinkedIn profile picture (right)



Appendix F

Scholar and expert statements on whether the “cult” label should apply to Falun Gong

“Chinese state media and officials have offered their own explanation for the crackdown, seeking to frame the campaign as a necessary move against an alleged ‘evil cult’ that had a nefarious influence on society. But such claims run counter to internal party documents and the lack of harmful outcomes in other countries where Falun Gong has spread. International scholars have repeatedly concluded that Falun Gong does not have the attributes of a cult.”

— *The Battle for China’s Spirit* report, Freedom House, 2017

“It was Mr. Jiang who ordered that Falun Gong be branded a ‘cult,’ and then demanded that a law be passed banning cults.”

— November 9, 1999 report by the *Washington Post*

“The group [Falun Gong] didn’t meet many common definitions of a cult: its members marry outside the group, have outside friends, hold normal jobs, do not live isolated from society, do not believe that the world’s end is imminent and do not give significant amounts of money to the organization. Most

importantly, suicide is not accepted, nor is physical violence...[Falun Gong] is at heart an apolitical, inward-oriented discipline, one aimed at cleansing oneself spiritually and improving one's health."

— Ian Johnson, formerly with *The Wall Street Journal*, who won the Pulitzer Prize for his reporting on Falun Gong.

"The entire issue of the supposed cultic nature of Falun Gong was a red herring from the beginning, cleverly exploited by the Chinese state to blunt the appeal of Falun Gong and the effectiveness of the group's activities outside China."

— David Ownby, Director of the Center of East Asian Studies at the University of Montreal

"[The Chinese Communist Party] enthusiastically adopted the language and arguments of the Western anti-cult movement in its propaganda against Falun Dafa ... China has attached itself to the anti-cult movement to justify its crackdown."

—February 14, 2001 report in the Asian edition of *The Wall Street Journal*

"They [the Falun Gong] are not murderers; meanwhile, in its 51-year history ruling China, the Communist Party has been responsible for the death of tens of millions of innocent citizens, including its own supporters. Perhaps the evil cult is Jiang's own party."

— June 2001 article in *Time* magazine

Appendix G

Former *New York Times* reporter's testimony to the [China Tribunal](#), a 2019 panel of experts on organ harvesting in China

Berlin, 23.02.2019

Dear Judges of the Independent Tribunal into Forced Organ Harvesting from Prisoners of Conscience in China,

Please note the some half a dozen stories I wrote about human organ transplant while working as a journalist in China (at the *New York Times*.) My research began without any preconceived idea about the situation. It was prompted by a report that Chinese airlines were not cooperating in getting organs to recipients in time. I followed where the reporting took me – the result was this series of articles.

I would also like to submit the following observation, and four additional points:

Observation: While I personally believe there is an illegal organ trade, I remain unsure of its scale and the sources of organs. I think probably these are not “only” death row prisoners and prisoners of conscience but may also include e.g. missing persons, victims of murder gangs, mental health patients, otherwise healthy victims of accidents whose relatives are paid for the organs, soldiers who desert, and others. As for numbers: I don't know.

Additional Points:

1. In early April 2016 I attended a Red Cross Society of China event at Beijing Hospital 北京医院, where senior state health officials spoke about organ donation in China and commemorated organ donors. April 5th is Qing Ming, China's day of the dead. Following the morning event I went to lunch with Dr. Chen Jingyu, a lung transplant surgeon from the Wuxi People's Hospital whom I had written about previously. Dr. Chen brought along a friend of his from Beijing Hospital, a lung surgeon called Dr. Tong (Dr. Tong said he had previously conducted lung transplants but was not doing so at that time as his hospital had stopped doing the procedure.) Also present were a Chinese journalist from *Global Times* and a postgraduate student at Tsinghua University who said he was the head of a student organization there, researching medical issues. We were a party of 5. During the lunch Dr. Chen accused me of causing him a lot of trouble with my reporting. Recently organizers at a major heart and lung transplant conference in Washington D.C. had rejected a poster of his after initially accepting it, on the grounds that the research was based on death row prisoners. Dr. Chen did not deny this but said it was my fault for having caused him “trouble” with my articles. I said, I had nothing to do with the poster, and if it was rejected due to involuntary donors such as death-row prisoners then that was his responsibility, not mine. Dr. Chen asked, “But what are we supposed to do?” I replied, “Don't submit findings gathered from before you said you stopped using involuntary donors” (i.e. Dec. 2014.) He looked at me as if to say, “that's impossible,” but said nothing further to me on the topic. During this conversation Dr. Tong was listening carefully. He turned to Dr. Chen and the following is a verbatim record of their brief conversation, from

memory, which I wrote down immediately afterwards (the lunch was not a reporting event.)

Dr. Tong: "Prisoners can't be used?" ["死囚不能用吗?"]

Dr. Chen: "No (we) cannot use (them)." ["不能用"。]

Dr. Tong: "What about prisoners of conscience?" ["良心犯吗?"]

Dr. Chen: "Can't use any of them." ["都不能用。"]

Dr Tong looked down at the table and said nothing further. Dr.Chen also fell silent.

I drew three – analytical – conclusions from this conversation:

- The use of prisoners of conscience for organ transplant has taken place (the state has itself admitted the use of death row prisoner organs.)
- It is common knowledge, at least among some medical specialists.
- The Dec. 2014 ban on using death row prisoner organs may not be effective or even real, since even a lung surgeon like Dr. Tong was apparently unaware of the ban. If it was a real ban it might be reasonable to assume he would know, since the state and party through their propaganda and information systems are able to transmit messages of importance very fast.

Point 2: Soon after the publication on Nov. 16, 2015, of a story in which I reported the use of death row prisoner organs was ongoing, a defamation campaign against me was quickly organized by the state. It went like this: the office of Dr. Huang Jiefu contacted me (they had not responded to previous requests for an interview,) and, surprisingly, agreed to allow me to interview Dr. Huang. When I arrived at the interview location there were already two journalists present from Chinese media. During the 2-hour long interview these people barely spoke but observed the interview with Dr. Huang and took notes. The next day many identical reports began to appear in the Chinese media accusing me of erroneous reporting.

Point 3: About a year later, I was required to go the Foreign Ministry for a warning, about an unrelated matter. While there I asked my interlocutor about the organs reporting, how the state viewed it. She replied, "You can do that reporting." I was a little taken aback and asked, "Don't you find it too sensitive?" She responded, "Just be sure you make clear that the leaders are going to deal with this" (within the context of our conversation I took this to mean Xi Jinping.) I asked her about the military hospital system and organ transplant practices there and she froze, saying only, "I know nothing about that."

Point 4: Finally, I'd like to say that it was my impression the New York Times, my employer at the time, was not pleased that I was pursuing these stories, and after initially tolerating my efforts made it impossible for me to continue. The newspaper made a hash of the edit of my story of Nov. 16th 2015, substantially changing its sense through an unfortunate cut at the end, and a senior colleague in Beijing attempted to pin the blame on me. The subsequent correction, which was not delayed due to needing to check anything (as it says) but simply due to inattention

or overwork on the part of editors, shows that there were two editing errors only, not reporting errors. More broadly, I conducted several conversations in person or by email with senior editors but essentially my requests to continue this line of investigation – for which I'd need time – were ignored. Editors appeared to believe the organ donation issue in China had been solved by the state's admission that they had used prisoner organs and its promise of Dec. 14 they no longer were doing so. I was told there was "nothing new" to the story. Another editor commented, when I tried to broaden the investigation from death row prisoners to prisoners of conscience, based on my conversation with Dr. Chen and Dr. Tong described above, that people who believed that prisoner of conscience organs were being used were on "the outer fringes of advocacy" – that is, not rational. The usual arguments were presented, for example that Falungong are irrational and unreliable, and so on. It was clear to me the issue was unwelcome. I cannot be sure, but I suspect that this series of articles contributed to a decision by headquarters in February 2017 not to promote me, against the advice of regional editors. I left the paper in June 2017.

I hereby declare this all to be true and exactly as happened, according to the best of my memory and based on notes taken at the time.

Didi Kirsten Tatlow

Appendix H

Examples of statements from China experts, exile journalists, dissidents, and ordinary readers questioning the *New York Times* coverage of Falun Gong and Shen Yun.

- Dr. Anders Corr, Publisher of the Journal of Political Risk and international affairs analyst:

“A @NYTimes article quotes a @YLSChina scholar as saying there is no evidence of systematic forced organ harvesting from Falun Gong practitioners yet there is a recent peer-reviewed journal study that finds exactly this (link below). The quote is misleading and the NYT authors do not provide readers with authoritative alternative opinions that have a better grasp of the evidence and were subject to more rigorous academic review. The NYT should issue a correction and the scholar should issue an apology.”

<https://x.com/anderscorr/status/1824595420888305757>

- Sarah Cook, independent China expert and former Research Director for China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan at Freedom House, said:

“NYT's China coverage is usually pretty good, but gosh-this Shen Yun hit piece is highly questionable. Over the years, I've gotten to know many in the Falun Gong community-incl Shen Yun performers. They do not isolate from society or abuse their children. I'd encourage skepticism. The depictions of the repression Falun Gong practitioners face from the CCP are also completely downplayed. At least take time to read statements like this one that poke clear holes in the reporting.”

https://x.com/Sarah_G_Cook/status/1825590742586175891

Well-known Chinese exile journalists and commentators publicly refuted the *New York Times*' articles, criticizing its siding with the CCP:

- Zhao Lanjian, exile journalist: “It is shameful for *The New York Times* to ignore the suffering and grief of the Chinese people and become an international thug of the Communist Party.”
- Hu Ping, prominent pro-democracy commentator who has published work on Falun Gong: “The *New York Times* should have done its homework and read what people have already researched on the issues rather than just repeating the CCP.”
- Helen Chen: “The NY Times does not condemn the CCP's persecution of Falun Gong but instead attacks Shen Yun and Falun Gong, which leads people to return to truthfulness, compassion, and forbearance. [NY Times] is definitely on the side of the CCP.”

- Yu Jinshan: “Has no one in a ballet company ever been injured? How many American athletes were injured in artistic swimming? The *New York Times* said that Shen Yun performers were not treated for injuries. If so, wouldn’t Shen Yun be short of performers? The more we judge from common sense, the more we find that it [NY Times report] is wrong. They interviewed some former performers. In such a large group, there are always some dissatisfied people. Is there a group in the world whose members are all satisfied?”

Several *New York Times* readers also reported to FDIC that the comments they attempted to post under the article (when comments were open) and **which questioned the narratives were not published by website moderators**. Two individuals kept copies of the comments and shared them with FDIC:

Comment 1:

Just weeks ago, Falun Gong adherents marked a grim anniversary: it has been a quarter century since the Chinese Communist Party began a campaign to (in its own words) "completely eradicate" the spiritual faith. The suppression that followed has been unrivalled in its sustained intensity, with tens of thousands of extrajudicial killings, and, cumulatively, millions of people imprisoned and tortured without trial for their spiritual beliefs. New York Times readers may not know any of this; since 2001, the paper has published only two stories on the suppression of Falun Gong in China. A former Beijingbased correspondent, Didi Kristin-Tatlow, was told by her editors not to investigate credible reports of systematic organ harvesting against Falun Gong prisoners. What's striking to me is that, in the face of oppression, Falun Gong adherents haven't resorted to violence or intimidation; nor have they lashed out in anti-social ways against the institutions that cruelly ignore or abet their suffering. Instead, they formed a dance company with an earnestly salvific mission, and became very successful. And *that* is what the New York Times chooses to attack.

Comment 2:

I grew up in the Chinese-American diaspora and knew some Falun Gong practitioners, both my age and older. Some of my childhood friends did go on to join Shen Yun. Sam Pu, one of the dancers mentioned in this article, was one of them.

In one of our latest conversations, he mentioned his own side hustle - a fact which the article does not include - as a YouTuber (@3MusketeersUSA) documenting his life as a performer and asked if I had seen his latest short film. In his videos, you see the toughness of their training, but also the camaraderie between the performers, the exhilaration of performing on stage, and the support they're given by their teachers and peers. He also shows footage of their break days and what they do in their leisure time, experiencing the wonderful sights and sounds of the world. It's a striking contrast against the draconian world painted by this article.

I also believe that how this article represents faith is a bit incomplete. Like with any spiritual text, what is said denotatively is not often what is meant directly, and when

taken out of context, could sound weird. Falun Gong is a complex topic, and I think the Times owes us an even deeper dive and more balanced reporting here.