

# JIMMY WANG

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Video Journalist



**How did you end up in China and working as a video journalist for *The New York Times*?**

I grew up in New York City and started coming to Beijing when I was in high school and then when I was in college to study Chinese. I decided to move here after graduate school in film at NYU, and started freelancing for the Discovery Channel. Not long after that I met a producer at the *Times*, which has made a major shift towards new media. I've been working as a video journalist since then.

**Are you the first video journalist for *The New York Times* in Beijing? Tell me about your work process.**

I believe I'm the first video journalist ever to be based in China for the *Times*. Newspapers would love a journalist who could do all facets of a story – report, shoot stills, and produce video – but it's too much for one person.

The past year has been really busy. The *Times* produced "Choking on Growth," a series of articles and multimedia focusing on China's epic pollution problem. I shot, edited, and produced the videos in that series. It was a collaborative effort between writers and new media folk, and collectively we were awarded the Grantham Environmental Award.

In terms of process, usually I travel with print correspondents to produce video for stories they are writing. Other times, I travel on my own.

**What are some of the challenges of working for *The New York Times* in China?**

Sometimes you're sent into villages or towns where locals won't talk or have been told not to talk to reporters. This was the case for a story we produced on Wu Lihong – an environmentalist fighting against pollution caused by factories around Lake Tai. Polluting factories employ locals, some of whom didn't want reporters there.

**What have been your favorite stories to report on?**

I like stories about young Chinese. I did a story on pole dancing aerobics and one on cyber nationalism – both of which were fun because I got to hang with young urban kids I wouldn't have met otherwise.

**Your background is in film. What kinds of films do you like and have any influenced the work you do here?**

I really love both French New Wave and Italian Neorealist Cinema. I think Godard was onto something when he said that "film is truth, 24 frames per second." Some Hollywood films have gotten too clever. Postmodernism in films can sometimes be a drag because it might depend on recycled pop icons and ideas that have passed through several generations of films already. I like the idea of asking whether we can see the truth in someone. I guess what I'm saying is that a film capturing real life is preferable to a film that refers to 200 other films but doesn't have an ounce of life in it. That's what I like about the work I do – I get to go out and see the truth of China today. ☺

*Portrait and interview by Ann Waddell*