



CONTACT: Riptide Communications, (212) 260-5000; Warren Lehrer, Judith Sloan (718) 784-4066

BOOK ON NEW IMMIGRANTS HELPS MOTHER REUNITE WITH HER DAUGHTER

*Separated from Her Child for Three Years Amy Li
Gets Her Little Girl Back*

Development Seen As Victory for Rights of Falun Gong Practitioners in China

Queens, New York – In July of 1999 Amy Li, a fashion designer in Guangzhou Province, China was arrested for practicing Falun Gong exercises in a park. Thinking the policeman who confronted her was joking, she asked why she was being singled out when all around her others were engaged in Tai Chi. The policeman did not think it was funny. He suggested she try aerobics. She soon learned firsthand that despite constitutional guarantees, China does honor freedom of religion. Amy Li would subsequently be arrested as part of a widespread crackdown in which 3000 Falun Gong adherents were detained and beaten. Thus began an ordeal which included her torture and threats to her family and ultimately, a dramatic escape from China to Queens, leaving her young family behind.

In the course of writing a book based on the stories of the new immigrants and refugees who populate their home borough of Queens, documentary artists Warren Lehrer and Judith Sloan met Amy Li. Her story became one of 79 slices of immigrant life depicted in their unique survey of the people of the most diverse place in America: *Crossing the Blvd: strangers, neighbors, aliens in new America (WW. Norton)*. Ms. Li made good use of the several pages that told her story within a chapter on Falun Gong, photocopying the pages and submitting them as part of her effort to reunite with her daughter. The powerfully told story published by a major U.S. publisher had the desired impact and last Saturday, Amy Li and her daughter saw each other for the first time in 3 years, safe, and at home, in Queens. According to Amy Li: *“The publication of my story in Crossing the Blvd. was a Godsend. I used it to lobby my congressman, the Bureau of Citizen and Immigration Services as well as the U.S. Consulate in Guangzhou where my daughter’s file was being withheld. The book provided proof of my experience and proof that my daughter needed protection.”*

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Falun Gong adherents, who are in the process of translating excerpts from the book into Chinese, believe the publications of Ami's story help protect practitioners because it exposes the mistreatment of Falun Gong by the Chinese Government.

Like few other books, *Crossing the Blvd* has an impact of the lives of its subjects. It tells the stories of the refugees and immigrants in the often overlooked borough of Queens, where 138 languages are spoken in choreography of chaotic but friendly co-existence.

Lehrer and Sloan use Queens Blvd., the notorious 12-lane thoroughfare that slices through the borough as a metaphor for the many challenges immigrants endure getting to Queens and navigating their way into the fabric of American life. From 1999 through 2002, the authors traveled the world by trekking the streets of their home borough in search of migration stories and a deeper connection to their diverse community. ***Crossing the BLVD*** is the result of this journey.

For interviews with Amy Li and the authors, please call, (718) 784-4066 or Riptide Communications at (212) 260-5000.