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"Not One Less" Star is Current BYU-Hawaii Student

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Rosemarie Howard | [University Advancement](#) | 24 April 2007

On a Saturday in 1998, a car pulled into the village of Shuiquan in the Heiben province of the People's Republic of China. There was no school on Saturday, so 13 year-old Wei, Minzhi and her twin sister, Wei, Congzhi, were playing in the street with their friends.

The youngsters were curious to know what the people who got out of the car were doing. They soon found out. Although her twin was too nervous to sing, Minzhi sang and danced for the man behind the camera. When asked if she would like to be an actress in a movie, Minzhi said, "Yes," and wrote her name on the women's hand so it would not be forgotten.

Several weeks and six auditions later, loihinj, the assistant director for "Not One Less," visited the Wei family and asked Minzhi's parents, Wei, Yuqing and Zhao, Jinhua, to allow her to be in a movie. "She will become a very famous person in China," said loihinj.

"My parents didn't believe her," said Minzhi. But they gave their permission.

For two months Minzhi worked 8 hour days on the movie set. It was her first time away from home, and she missed her family, but had no communication with them.

"loihinj was a hard worker and very friendly," said Minzhi. "She helped me feel comfortable." After the shoot was over, Minzhi went back to her village.

"That movie changed my life," said Minzhi. In the spring of 1999, the movie came out and Minzhi traveled for a month with the promotion team to 15 cities in China. Because of her role in "Not One Less," Minzhi did indeed become a very famous person in China.



Star of "Not One Less," Wei, Minzhi, and movie director, Zhang Yimou.

She was invited to study at Jingying Education Group, a high school in Shijiazhuang city. When she finished high school in 2004, she was offered a scholarship to Xi'an International Studies University.

During her first year there as a film student, she had many opportunities to talk with visitors from other countries. One of those visitors was Peter (Yeekong) Chan, a teacher in the Brigham Young University Hawaii School of Education.

He encouraged Minzhi to learn English, and to come to BYU-Hawaii to study. "I didn't believe that could really happen," said Minzhi. "I was 19 years old and had no money to study in another country."

After studying English for four months with another BYU-Hawaii teacher working at Xi'an University, and encouraged again by Chan, she took the English test. She also met Napua Baker, BYU-Hawaii Vice President of University Advancement, and Duane Roberts, Director of Communications, during their Concert Choir pre-tour China visit in April 2006.

It was at that time that she decided she really wanted to study at BYU-Hawaii "At Xi'an University I learned how to become a director, how to create films," said Minzhi. I had a lot of friends and teachers who were all very kind to me." She also had a part-time job as a city news reporter for the Xi'an TV station. "I wanted to add to my Xi'an experience in film directing," said Minzhi.

20 April 2006, Minzhi arrived on the BYU-Hawaii campus, where she has been taking classes and working in the campus media production studio with Lawrence Lau and Tom

Griffiths doing editing and film production. She has also been improving her English skills.

"My goal is to be a movie director," said Minzhi. "BYU-Hawaii is a wonderful school. The aloha spirit is here. The teachers and students are friendly and helpful." Her plan is to graduate from BYU-Hawaii in 2010 with a degree in art. Because of her experiences at BYU-Hawaii she says, "Now I feel I can meet my goals."

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