

LONG ISLAND / NASSAU

Glen Cove St. Patrick's parade includes Chinese group



Members of the Chinese Cultural Association of Long Island perform at the Glen Cove St. Patrick's Day Parade on March 19, 2017. Photo Credit: Marlo Jappen

By Marlo Jappen

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Amid a sea of green, a group clad in canary yellow sparked attention at the Glen Cove St. Patrick's Day Parade last Sunday.

The Chinese Cultural Association of Long Island wore vibrant clothing as they performed with waist drums to raise awareness about the benefits of Falun Dafa, a meditative practice that originated in China.

Also called Falun Gong, adherents say the practice centers upon four gentle standing exercises, sitting meditation and the principles of truthfulness, compassion and tolerance. Yellow is associated with the practice because in Chinese tradition the color is believed to "come from heaven."

— Falun Dafa practitioners say the Chinese government has been persecuting group members since 1999. Among their accusations are that people were killed so their organs could be sold as part of an organ transplant business, a topic featured in the 2014 Peabody Award-winning documentary "[Human Harvest](#)."

The Chinese government strongly disputes these allegations, and calls the group a cult. Huang Jiefu, a former Chinese deputy health minister, called the accusations of forced organ harvesting against practitioners "ridiculous" during a speech at a Transplantation Society conference in Hong Kong last year, according to a [New York Times story](#).

Judy Tao, of Flushing, Queens, said she fled China two years ago because she faced imprisonment for her practice.

"They would have tortured me," she says.

Tao and her daughter spent a year in San Francisco and then moved to New York so her daughter could attend Borough of Manhattan Community College. She says that Falun Dafa helped relieve her sleeping issues, and it motivated her to think more about others.

"It's very good for health and purifying the mind," she says.

Tens of millions of people practice Falun Dafa in China today, according to the Chinese Cultural Association of Long Island, but it's not as well-known in the U.S.

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— Falun Dafa instructor Jimmy Mo from East Setauket holds classes every Sunday at the Town of Brookhaven New Village Community Center in Centereach.

"It's powerful and easy to learn," he says. "You can release stress and become more peaceful."

Falun Dafa classes — which are listed on [Falundafa.org](#) — are often offered free of charge at local libraries and community centers.

The group sessions, Mo says, draws Long Islanders of all ages and walks of life.

"If we get benefits from the practice, we want other people to get benefits too. It's a practice of compassion."

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