

(Yiru Chen introducing herself in an auditory description)

Hi, my name is Yiru. I'm a 20 years old Asian woman with short, black hair, black eyes. I'm wearing a black T-shirt.

CZ:

This is Yiru Chen. She graduated with a master's degree in Deaf and Hard of Hearing Education. She now works as an American Sign Language teacher to upper elementary children.

[PAUSE]

Yiru says she gives out auditory descriptions when introducing herself, because this is one of her ways to counter ableism... and she advocates for a shift in perspective when it comes to understanding people with disabilities.

CZ:

Yiru also advocates for feminism activities. October marks the one-year anniversary of Yiru performing on Nvzhizhuyi. "Nvzhizhuyi," is best translated as "women's ideas" or "good ideas."

[PAUSE] This.. is the only feminist stand-up comedy show performed in Chinese language in New York.

(Ambi: ~In Mandarin Chinese~Yiru's voice on Stage. Audience Cheers, Yiru greets them.)

CZ:

The stage is set, the audience is ready, and Yiru is about to perform. This is a space where art meets activism.

YC:

我的直男前任搬走了之后，迎来了一位美丽可爱的 bisexual 的姐姐带了她的日本柴犬。有一天她问我说狗的美国手语怎么打？我说这样打是狗的意思。我突然想到中国手语里面的男人好像也是这么打的。

Translation:

"After my straight ex-boyfriend moved out, I welcomed my beautiful and cute bisexual girlfriend who moved in with her Shiba Inu Dog! One day, she asked me how to sign 'dog' in American Sign Language. So I showed her. All of a sudden, I remembered..in Chinese Sign Language, men..is also signed the same way.

CZ:

On the stage behind her, there are signs in different sizes, some are saying...Patriarchy don't die, autocracy won't cease...we are the last generation...Do you get your period?...We want food not

COVID tests, we want freedom not lockdowns. The largest sign is...我站出来的瞬间...which means...the MOMENT I step out.

Something happened last year that caused Yiru to fundamentally change her performance. A cyberstalker had been harassing her for a long time under the pretext of discussing poems she had published online.

So she went to the police.

YC:

The day I reported to the police is the same day as one of the MeToo rallies at Central Park. So I've finished reporting to the police. And it just went directly to the park. I've experienced all the is,I really want to do something, because at the moment, I feel like this is become very concrete.

CZ:

Yiru spends her life supporting feminism, and she says it is unfortunate and sad that the cyber stalking is connected with something she loves deeply.

YC:

很多的机缘巧合就是说我觉得是注定的。我一定会去为这个事情为这个运动去去去去增加一份力，可是是很不幸的，他跟这个 cyberstalking 发生在同样的一个时间段，这是很不幸的，因为不会希望说女性一定要受到伤害。他才要去支持这个东西

Translation:

I am always determined to contribute to this community and to this movement. But unfortunately, it coincided with the same period as the cyberstalking incident. This is really unfortunate because you wouldn't want to say that women must be harmed before they start supporting such a cause."

CZ:

Yiru also finds herself in a dilemma. As a poet and artist she wants to express herself publicly but she is scared.

She doesn't want to be cyberstalked again.

So she introduced a new way of communicating into her performance. Sign language.

YC:

我觉得手语它给了我一个突破口，因为你不需要文字的形式，你也是可以表达出来的。我觉得它是个非常重要的契机点，你要这么倒过来说的话，就是因为那段时间我发现我，我不知道我该写什么东西，不让自己受到伤害了。就是我还是想表达。我还是想继续创作，那所以的话也会比较自然的去想到用手语去去支持很多东西

Translation: (slow down)

I feel that sign language gave me a breakthrough because you don't need the form of written words to express yourself. I think it's a very important turning point. If I put it another way, it's because during that period, I found myself at a loss for what to write without letting myself get hurt. But I still wanted to express myself. I still wanted to continue creating, so it naturally led me to think about using sign language to support a lot of things.

(AMBI: Soft sounds of hands moving)

CZ:

When Yiru speaks, she is signing at the same time. As Yiru moves her hands in the air, you can hear the gentle swish of motion, the soft taps as her fingers meet. It's almost rhythmic, a dance in itself.

Chenyi is Yiru's girlfriend and also an observer of her world. Chenyi says Yiru's teaching and performances influence her everyday body language.

Chenyi:

她平时就是说话也是手舞足蹈的呗。她是有一些手语跟她要讲的东西是有一些 echo 的，然后就会有有的时候会被吸引过去...然后就不知道你在讲啥了。

Translation:

Even when she's just talking, like she's moving her hands a lot. Her gestures often echo sign language, and sometimes they're so engaging.. You get drawn in and lose track of what she's actually saying.

CZ:

Embracing her vulnerability, Yiru steps back into the spotlight, channeling her thoughts and emotions through the power of sign language.

YC:

然后直到后来说就上台的那个时候。才算是真正的就是说：啊，我现在要重新去去夺回我的词语，我要重新夺回我的我表达的方式，我不想让这个东西变成我的阴影，这样我就再也不表达，再也不 publish 了吗？

Translation:

It wasn't until I got back on stage that I truly felt like I was reclaiming my words and my way of expression. I didn't want this experience to become a shadow over me.. preventing me from expressing myself or publishing ever again?

CZ:

For Yiru, joining Nvzizhuyi isn't just about the spotlight. It's about the message, the movement, the inspiration through a unique blend of artistry and advocacy.

Music...

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