

can involve sleepless nights, nightmares, fear, loss of savings, loss of relationships, hatred and nastiness, ethical worries, wrongful accusations, frustrations, relentless pressure, heart-ache, tears.'

But, she adds, it certainly has its rewards. And Tanner's book is a major contribution to appreciating the rewards. Better investigative journalism can make a difference in society.

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An identity story without end

***New Faces, Old Fears*, directed by John Bates and Manying Ip, Documentary New Zealand, TV One.**

AT ONE point in this timely documentary 87-year-old Doris Chung, who has lived all her life in New Zealand recalls what it was like to visit China for the first time: 'Here they call us foreigners and there they call us foreigners.' She looked nonplussed at a conundrum with no easy answer.

The issue of identity, both cultural and ethnic, has come to the fore for the significant minority of New Zealanders who are of Chinese descent since the freeing up of immigration regulation in 1987 led to a new influx of settlers. More than 80,000 ethnic Chinese and 20,000 Korean people have decided to call New Zealand home, triggering a several hundredfold rise in the population of New Zealanders with Asian ancestry.

While sparked by economic need,

successive governments have failed to make much use of the human capital. Among many similar stories, the documentary records the experience of Nadia Chen, an experienced, well-qualified team leader in intensive care nursing who unable to find a job in the area was forced to switch to selling real estate. Good on her for making a go of things, but surely New Zealand needs ICU nurses more than real estate agents? The sense of waste is palpable.

As the documentary recounts, for the newcomers there was little support available for people adapting to a new country and customs. It was as if the bureaucrats expected the new arrivals to fit into New Zealand as easily as earlier Chinese migrants seemed to have done. If that was what they thought, they had little grasp of their country's own history.

The first Chinese to arrive in New Zealand came at the invitation of the Dunedin Chamber of Commerce to work the gold fields in 1866. Before the 19th century ended the climate had changed, anti-Asian sentiment was simmering and the Government brought in the discriminatory poll tax that limited the number of Chinese migrants to one person for every 100 tonnes of cargo and payment of a tax that would eventually rise to 100 pounds, a small fortune at the time.

The expense meant the Chinese community remained largely a population of bachelors, sojourners who never expected to stay. Little wonder then that by the 1920s the New Zealand population was in steep decline. Paradoxically, the hysterical and widespread vitriol prompted by fears of the 'Yellow Peril' was fanned when the Chinese in New Zealand amounted to about 5000 people.

New Zealand's official position changed when China became an ally in the Second World War. For humanitarian reasons Chinese refugees, including women and children arrived to settle. By the time of the Communist Revolution in 1949, many of the children and younger members of the community regarded themselves as New Zealanders. Several fought in the armed forces. Families had been raised here. New Zealand had become home.

Most of what can now be called the New Zealand-born community can be traced from that influx. Nor was it easy for them. As Stan Chun, a former air force man and greengrocer recounts in the documentary, he had to face the threat of assault while verbal racial abuse was a constant. By the 1970s historian and archivist Nigel Murphy suggests there was a 'social contract', namely that if the New Zealand Chinese population kept its heads

down the rest of society would not pick on them.

New Faces, Old Fears posits that the immigration of the 1980s and 1990s disrupted this unwritten contract. Suddenly mainstream New Zealand fell back to old ways. Asian bashing became common and newspaper stories and headlines began to ape what had been published more than a century before.

As the documentary finds, the adverse reaction has forced long-term Chinese New Zealanders to rethink their own place. People like Stan Chan began to pay more heed to their cultural identity, to reinforce that he was both a Kiwi and a Chinese person. The new migrants have made strenuous efforts to work out how to live in their new home, organising a multitude of events and festivals that aim to foster better understanding from the annual lantern festival in Albert Park to the Howick in the Park celebrations in what have come to be known as Auckland's far eastern suburbs.

But the warmest story revealed in the documentary is that of the poor state housing area of Northcote. As local community leader Wallace Ngapo recounts, the influx of Chinese to the area brought frictions between poor Maori and not much better off migrant Chinese. Matters came to a head with the beating of an elderly Chinese man.

With help the community has pulled together, bringing the two strands together in a series of language and culture workshops. The local shopping centre is a hub of buzzing vitality and as Ngapo says, the diet of working class New Zealanders may have changed forever.

'Boy,' he says, 'That food is great. And cheap too.'

This story has no end. As Kirsten Wong, a stalwart in the Wellington Chinese community says, the discussion about New Zealand identity needs to be much broader than it has been. The idea of who a New Zealander is must take account of many more strands of culture and identity.

Producers John Bates and Manying Ip have tackled hard issues with deft interviews and uncovered stories that have never made the headlines. Compulsory viewing. I hope the politicians are taking heed.