

## **Lonely far from home**

By Sylvia Chang (China Daily USA), 9 May 2014

1. A growing number of young mainland professionals working in Hong Kong find life here lonely and are thinking of giving up. As Sylvia Chang reports, efforts are being made to halt an exodus of talent, which could seriously erode the SAR's competitiveness.
2. Chris Xia, a 29-year-old from Hunan Province, looked cool in his T-shirt and canvas shoes, though his five o'clock shadow had blossomed into a two-day beard and he looked tired.
3. "I have been working overnight for almost two weeks. We can't even rest on holidays," said Xia, a young man with a future.
4. He's a graduate from a Hong Kong university, now working in the HKSAR as a financial analyst with the mainland's leading, Internet-based e-commerce company.
5. Xia's been in Hong Kong for six years. Next year, he'll be eligible for permanent residency, yet he's considering giving up on Hong Kong and going home.
6. "Few friends," Xia fired back when asked why. "I feel like a faceless drone. I don't have time to make friends," said Xia. He eats at the office and goes home late, to an eight-square-meter room in a shared flat. He wants to get married but hasn't the time nor the opportunity to find a girlfriend.
7. "As I get older, my chances of finding one are fading fast," Xia said.
8. Xia's sentiments reflect a common complaint among the gang piao, translated as "Hong Kong drifters". Gang piao are the young mainland graduates, mostly "post-80's generation," pursuing career goals in Hong Kong, but who feel isolated, finding it hard to break out of their small circles of mainland friends.
9. It's for people like Xia that the arrival in Hong Kong on May 5 of a team from what is reputedly the mainland's most popular dating show is a big deal.
10. Fei Cheng Wu Rao (loosely translated as If You Are The One)- a program launched in 2010 by Jiangsu Satellite TV - had amassed an audience of 36 million by May of 2013, according to Beijing-based CSM Media Research.
11. Two days of local auditions will give lonely hearts from Hong Kong's gang piao community a chance to be featured on the program sometime during the next two years.

12. "There's no limitation as to region and career, only that the person is unmarried. We hope to see as many attractive ladies and gentlemen from this charming city as possible," said the show's producer Li Zheng at a Hong Kong press conference.
13. Ms Zhao, a 26-year-old gang piao, is considering attending the auditions on May 24 and 25 at the urging of her family. She graduated from the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) two years ago, and now works as an English teacher for a local agency. She said her parents call her a sheng nu, or leftover woman -unmarried into her late 20s. They urge her to find a boyfriend whenever she calls.
14. "I feel like a kite willing to fly high but cannot go far with one end of the string dragged by my family," she says.
15. "This program arouses people, especially those working in highly-competitive societies like Hong Kong, to re-examine their pursuit of happiness," said Huang Han, a professor of social psychology at the Party School of Nanjing and a marriage counselor of Fei Cheng Wu Rao at the Hong Kong press conference.
16. "The stresses and strains of fast-paced living in Hong Kong lead to narrow social contacts among people from the mainland," said Huang.
17. "To pursue a material lifestyle measured by personal income and living space, or to pursue a happy life with satisfying personal relationships?" are the choices Huang proposed, urging that people evaluate their goals carefully.
18. "The program is a platform for mainlanders in Hong Kong to make friends or even find a mate," says Andy Zhang, a 25-year-old from Zhejiang Province. He's the co-founder and marketing director of gang piao quan (literally translated as Circle of Hong Kong Drifters), an online community for mainland people and the Hong Kong organizer of the television program's audition.
19. The arrival of Fei Cheng Wu Rao underscores a problem that augurs difficulties ahead for Hong Kong's competitive standing in the global economy.
20. Given the city's low fertility rate and a rapidly aging population, the SAR faces a major threat to its economic viability. The city needs to recruit enough workers from outside to maintain its workforce. High-quality professionals from the mainland are the prime targets. Several programs are designed to attract mainland talents here.

21. By August 2013, the cumulative total of mainland students and professionals coming here over a 10-year span stood at 160,000, according to the Hong Kong Immigration Department. Most, however, choose not to stay.
22. A survey by Hong Kong Ideas Centre, a non-government organization, reveals that only three percent of 500 students and professionals interviewed were prepared to make long-term commitments to Hong Kong. This could have serious consequences.
23. "Hong Kong cannot attract enough talent to support companies' growth, businesses may be forced to go where talent is available. If this comes true, it could create a downward spiral that would weaken Hong Kong's competitiveness and ability to attract talent," the Public Engagement on Population Policy reveals.
24. "Feeling lonely and the lack of friends" is the major reason gang piao give up and go home, according to the Hong Kong Ideas Centre Study.
25. "Hong Kong is exciting," said Xia. "But, I don't have the feeling of home." When he has time, he prefers to hang out with friends in Shenzhen or Guangzhou, he said.
26. Ting Kwok-fai, a professor at the Department of Sociology at CUHK, does not see the television program as a serious solution.
27. "This program is entertainment. It's not a major way of looking for a spouse," he said, adding that the best hope for success is for people to find their mates among their circles of friends.
28. Zhang, who graduated with an MA in Chinese Studies from Hong Kong Polytechnic University two years ago, is one example. He's newly married, and now operates a restaurant with his wife, who was his junior classmate at university. The most important reason for him to choose to stay in Hong Kong, he said, is his wife." She stays, and I stay. If she leaves, I'll leave," said Zhang.

**Writing task**

You have read this article and you have decided to write a response in the form of a letter to the editor. Write this letter in about 400 words. Give your letter an interesting title.