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Walk-ins are welcome but appointments are preferred.

## celeb bio

### Awkwafina

A long road to a quick rise

To look at the past couple of years in Awkwafina's career is to appreciate the joy of an artist reaping the fruits of her hard work. With roles in "Ocean's 8" (2018) and "Crazy Rich Asians" (2018), Awkwafina has proven herself a prestigious actress at the center of enormous box office successes. This swell in her career has been a long time coming. Awkwafina — her real name is Nora Lum — found her way to this moment by committing herself to a dream she thought was

impossible. Born in New York City to a South Korean mother and a Chinese-American father, Lum grew up as far away from the entertainment industry as one could imagine. Her mother died when Lum was 4 years old, and she was raised by her grandmother, whom she cites as one of her greatest influences. Already leaning into the musical talents that would kick-start her career as a performer, Lum attended the prestigious LaGuardia High School, where she was trained as a classical and jazz

## Sudoku

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|   |   |   | 9 | 7 | 4 | 5 |   |   |
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|   | 6 |   | 3 |   |   | 7 |   | 2 |
|   | 8 |   |   |   | 2 |   |   |   |
| 2 | 4 |   |   | 6 | 9 |   |   |   |
|   |   | 6 | 5 |   |   | 9 |   |   |
|   |   | 2 |   |   |   |   | 5 |   |
| 1 | 7 |   | 8 | 5 |   |   |   | 4 |
|   |   |   | 4 |   |   |   |   |   |

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Fill in the grid so that every row, every column,  
and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 through 9.

Solution on page 20

trumpet player. It was there that her rapping alter ego Awkwafina was born, a character who represented Lum's extroverted edge as she struggled to be open with her art and identity. She worked on her music as Awkwafina on the side and chose to pursue jour-

nalism and women's studies at university. After graduating, Lum gave the routine of an office job a try. That life was clearly unsuited for Lum's talents, and ultimately her boss made the hard choice for her: she was fired, and decided to pursue her passion. In 2012, she

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was fully devoted to a profession in the entertainment industry, and one of her comedic rap videos went viral. Suddenly, Lum found herself in demand by comedy acts such as Margaret Cho and Tena-cious D. She continued to create digital content, hosted reality shows and went on a music tour, but her first film role didn't come until "Neighbors 2: Sorority Rising" in 2016. She voiced a main character in "Storks" the same year. Only two years later, she became an audience favorite as Peik Lin in the record-breaking romantic comedy "Crazy Rich Asians" (2018), the first studio film in 25 years to feature an all-Asian cast — Lum's break didn't just open doors for herself, but for many others like her. On being the first Asian-American to make her mark as an actress/rapper hybrid, she said: "Being the first sucks. But I found what I love. I found what I always dreamt of as a kid that would connect with adulthood." From a do-it-yourself artist quietly making beats in her room to a boundary-breaking comedy powerhouse, Awkwafina has found her calling. With roles in the critically acclaimed drama "The Farewell" (2019) and the highly anticipated "Jumanji: The Next

Level" (2019), you can expect to see much more of her in the near future. Listen for Awkwafina's voice when she stars as SkekLach the Collector in "Dark Crystal: Age of Resistance," premiering Friday, Aug. 30, on Netflix.

#### FACTS

- Born on June 2, 1988, in New York, New York (age 31)
- Lived in Beijing for two years to study Mandarin
- Has been heavily involved in the "Time's Up" movement, which advocates for women and condemns sexual harassment in the workplace
- In 2018, became only the second Asian woman, after Lucy Liu in 2000, to host "Saturday Night Live"
- Attributes her comedic instincts to the loss of her mother, saying that making her family members laugh after this tragedy taught her what comedy can do for others

#### QUOTES

"If I didn't have my music, then I didn't have an identity."

"I remember seeing my grandma as someone who was saving me. She was my best friend."



Awkwafina in "Ocean's Eight"