

February 28, 2-28, Taiwan Remains a Day of Mixed Emotions

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One can always look at Taiwan in terms of the past or in terms of the present. Never is that brought home more than on February 28th. In terms of the present, today many are celebrating the victory of the DPP party in 3 of the 4 by-elections held yesterday. Again as a statement of no-confidence in the Ma administration's policies, and despite heavy campaigning by the KMT including President Ma, the voters by way of the ballot box re-iterated the fact that Ma's approval ratings and performance ratings remain low, a low that is somewhere between 20 to 30 per cent. So Taiwanese can be happy that they can democratically and freely express their disapproval. But 2-28 means more.

It was also on 2-28 also known as er-er-ba, that the oppression by the KMT reached its boiling point in 1947, and so began the period of White Terror and subsequent Martial Law under the KMT as well as the death of some 30,000 Taiwanese. That is one of the ever-remaining sad points of Taiwan history; the blood-stained reality that has never been righted by transitional justice.

But that is not all. It was also on 2-28 in 1980, a bare thirty years ago, that the two twin daughters and the mother of Lin Yi-siung were brutally murdered at high noon in their own home while it was under 24 hour surveillance by the KMT officers and secret police. The mother and little girls were stabbed some 13 times each while Lin Yi-siung was in jail being tortured for his participation in a Human Rights Day Protest in December. A third daughter survived after being stabbed six times and left for dead. This is the most poignant sadness and each year, the Lin family and friends have a commemoration service in their previous home, now a church and then a visit to their graves.

That sadness is all the more poignant because the killers have never been brought to justice. Further, many of the KMT officials involved and either directly or indirectly responsible are still alive today; some of them continue to hold office. The KMT party has always maintained a "don't ask, don't tell" attitude about its horrendous past hoping that time will blight its memory. But only recently Kuo Kuan-yin a man who was then a lowly bureaucrat in the Government Information Office (GIO) admitted that the murders of the period were common knowledge among officials. That is the legacy of 2-28. One can only hope that some day, some where, justice will be served them and their families.

Source: [Jerome F. Keating's writings](#)