

## Without the Women's League

Written by Taipei Times Editorial  
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This year's International Women's Day — celebrated on Wednesday — was themed “A Day Without a Woman.” In Taiwan, the message seemed to have been lost in translation, at least for some: It became “a day without the National Women's League (NWL).”

The league marked the day by disparaging President Tsai Ing-wen's (蔡英文) efforts to improve the lot of women in Taiwan and engaged in historically myopic attacks against the Democratic Progressive Party.

While Tsai was at an event in Taipei speaking about the importance of supporting women, removing barriers to work, easing small loan requirements for female entrepreneurs and gender equality in the workplace so both parents can focus on their careers, the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) was lambasting her for not addressing women's rights.

The KMT quoted a US Department of State human rights report that said foreign spouses in Taiwan face discriminatory policies. It did not mention under whose tenure those policies were introduced, nor did it mention amendments to the Nationality Act (國籍法) made in December last year that relax regulations for the naturalization of foreign spouses.

On Wednesday, league member Tien Ling-ling (田玲玲) gave a tea party speech penned by league Chairwoman Cecilia Koo (高思雅). The speech concentrated on criticizing the DPP government for using transitional justice as an excuse for a politically motivated campaign against the KMT, with only vague references to the league's work on behalf of women.

Koo quoted French Revolution activist Jeanne Manon Roland — who died by guillotine in 1793 — “Oh Liberty, what crimes are committed in thy name.”

“If justice is defined as oppressing a competing political party or organizations that once supported those parties with no regard for historical truth, then justice runs the risk of being unjust,” Koo said.

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In light of the attention the league is receiving from the Ill-gotten Party Assets Settlement Committee, Koo might have been advised to distance the league from the KMT.

Trying to segue from liberty to transitional justice in support of her argument was historically shortsighted, considering the KMT's own post-war record, and especially so close to commemorations of the 228 Massacre. What crimes are committed in thy name, indeed.

Koo then went on to say: "If justice is defined as..." cherry-picking terms of reference to serve as the foundation of her argument. This is not how justice is defined, nor is anyone attempting to do so.

Her example is "oppressing a competing political party." Oh, rhetoric, what crimes are forgotten in thy name.

Has Koo forgotten the labored birth of the DPP as part of the dangwai (黨外, "outside the party") movement, when the KMT prohibited and oppressed any opposition to its party-state model?

She then said: "with no regard for historical truth." Yes — transparency, the declassification of documents, the establishment of objective facts, the exploding of politically expedient myths — this is precisely what transitional justice is about and is defined thusly, not in any other way.

Koo ends her hypothetical with "then justice runs the risk of being unjust," a dangerous thing in a democracy, like when a one-party foreign regime has control over a host nation's judiciary. Indeed, this is the reason for the government's push for judicial reform.

The merits of Koo's hypothetical conditional can be judged, in spite of the disingenuous historical amnesia and the shaky foundations on which it rests.

However, this is not what transitional justice is, or what it means. For now, the question is to what degree the league was complicit in the KMT's use of national assets and how much it is

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attempting to cover it up, even now.

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