

It is safe to say that few career civil servants, serving or former, have had as much of an impact on Taiwan as Ministry of Transportation and Communications employee-turned-documentary filmmaker Chi Po-lin (齊柏林), who died on June 10.

Since his untimely death in a helicopter crash, there has been an outpouring of grief and tributes to a man who almost single-handedly made it impossible for the average person — or the government — to ignore the devastation wrought by decades of unchecked development, feeble environmental regulations and even feeble enforcement, as well as societal disregard for the nation's land, rivers, forests and coastline.

Chi's *Beyond Beauty: Taiwan from Above* (台灣從上方看) quickly became a box office smash hit after it was released on Nov. 1, 2013, but more importantly the public outrage it created triggered a government crackdown on industrial polluters, mining operations and owners of illegal guesthouses in mountain areas.

The then-Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) government's creation of a special task force to tackle major environmental issues might have been a knee-jerk reaction to the film, but it was long overdue.

That the special task force's and the government's efforts have not gone far enough was made clear after Chi's death when aerial footage he had shot was released that showed the extent of Asia Cement Corp's expansion of mining operations in Hualien County's Sincheng Township (新成鄉), triggering renewed protests over the Ministry of Economic Affairs' approval in March of the company's mining permit for the quarry.

Meanwhile, the Kaohsiung City Government is still battling the courts to allow it to fine Advanced Semiconductor Engineering over discharges from its K7 plant that polluted the Houjin River (后勁河) between 2007 and 2013 because it lacked the required wastewater treatment facilities.

A memorial exhibition of 30 of Chi's photographs that opened in Taipei, Taichung and Kaohsiung in late July led many people, including Cloud Gate Dance Theatre founder Lin

## Prolonging Chi Po-lin's effect

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Hwai-min (何偉民), to ask how Chi's work and his legacy could best be preserved and honored.

Taipei Mayor Ko Wen-je (柯文哲) yesterday said that Lin had suggested that the city establish a memorial hall to Chi, adding that the city was willing to work with Chi's film company to do so.

A permanent venue where Chi's work could continue to be seen and his passion for saving Taiwan's environment be passed along is a good idea, but it would be better if Chi were remembered in more far-reaching and substantial ways on the governmental and individual levels.

Chi in December 2013 told reporters that while *Beyond Beauty* had created a sensation, "we really can't pretend like we're not aware of the problems" and that he hoped his film would encourage people to make small changes to their daily lives to reduce the damage they cause to the environment.

It is evident that Chi's message has yet to hit home from the amount of plastic bottles, food containers and other trash left behind by visitors to the nation's beaches, rivers, parks and hiking trails — or, as Taoyuan city councilors complained in May, from cheapskate New Taipei City residents continuing to dump their trash in Taoyuan to avoid buying the garbage bags required by their city government.

*Beyond Beauty* was only 93 minutes long, but its impact could continue to be felt for decades to come if individuals, through their actions, and the central and local governments, through regulations, would work to stop the pollution and destruction of this land.

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