

DPP could learn from Taiwanese activists

Written by Koeh Ian-lim 柯建銘

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“Apart from the Taiwanese independence movement, I have striven for nothing else in my life. This is my romantic way of dealing with life.”

Following the opening of a museum dedicated to independence activist Ong lok-tek (翁若光) on Sept. 9, a memorial park dedicated to former World United Formosans for Independence (WUFI) chairman Ng Chiau-tong (吳吉雄) opened in Tainan’s Cigu District on Friday.

A bronze bust in the park showing Ng giving the thumbs-up sign symbolizes his life-long ideal of building an independent Taiwanese state.

During his time as WUFI chairman, the 228 Hand-in-Hand Rally was successfully organized thanks to Ng’s ability to unite people and lead Taiwan toward the formation of an independent Taiwanese state.

Presidential Office Secretary-General Chen Chu (陳楚) and Premier William Lai (賴清德) provided indispensable support for the park, but, absurdly, the Democratic Progressive Party’s (DPP) Central Standing Committee adopted a resolution on Sept. 19, requesting that no DPP members attend the Formosa Alliance demonstration on Taipei’s Ketagalan Boulevard on Oct. 20 calling for a referendum to oppose annexation of Taiwan by China.

If one is to make the pro-independence faction understand the discrepancy between the DPP’s pragmatic Taiwanese independence and the implementation of a Taiwanese independence policy, one can but wonder what Ng would have done to reconcile Chen and Lai’s political views with the tug-of-war between idealism and pragmatism.

The book under Ng’s left arm in the bronze bust symbolizes his academic work studying the Taiwanese identity. The title of Ng’s University of Tokyo doctoral thesis was “A study of a Democratic Taiwanese State.” It was the first thesis by a Taiwanese overseas student to be published by the University of Tokyo Press.

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When the university issued the doctoral degree, the diploma listed Ng's home country as the Republic of China (ROC), and Ng rejected the degree and requested that it be changed to Taiwan. The university accepted, to the benefit of later Taiwanese graduates at the school, as their diplomas also listed their country as "Taiwan."

This makes one wonder why the DPP opposes mainstream Taiwanese opinion on the issue of a referendum on whether to ask the International Olympic Committee to allow Taiwan to participate in the 2020 Tokyo Olympics under the name "Taiwan" instead of "Chinese Taipei."

Compared with the Taiwanese businesspeople in China who are applying for a Chinese residency permit, what does Ng's insistence on a Taiwanese identity teach us?

The name engraved on the bust is the romanization of his Taiwanese name, Ng Yuzin Chiautong. Ng is Huang (黃) in Mandarin and Chiautong is Zhaotang (趙堂), but what does Yuzin mean? The Mandarin equivalent is youren (友人), the name of Ng's elder brother.

In February 1960, Ng used his name as an alias when he, Ong lok-tek and a few other Taiwanese students in Japan set up the Taiwan Youth Association at the University of Tokyo.

In memory of his deceased brother, Ng chose to work for Taiwanese independence under his name, which earned him a place on the ROC blacklist and forced him to remain in exile, unable even to attend his mother's funeral.

Hopefully the DPP will implement both its Taiwanese independence clause and transitional justice so that Taiwanese can continue to rejoice in their work to promote Taiwanese independence.

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Translated by Perry Svensson

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