

Director Fu Yue's (傅月) acceptance speech after winning Best Documentary at the Golden Horse Awards on Saturday obviously riled a few people.

After saying: "I really hope that one day, our country can be treated as a truly independent entity... This is my greatest wish as a Taiwanese," Fu's Facebook page was inundated with angry comments from Chinese netizens, with many of the posts going beyond insults.

In an apparent response to Fu's remarks, Chinese actor Tu Men (涂们), who won Best Leading Actor at last year's awards and was a presenter on Saturday, said on stage that he was honored to be part of the event in "China, Taiwan."

Chinese actress Gong Li (巩俐) declined to present the Best Picture award as she had been scheduled to do alongside Oscar-winning director Ang Lee (李安).

At a post-awards banquet hosted by the ceremony's organizers, Chinese actors who were invited staged a mass no-show.

These reactions were followed by a string of posts late into the night by Chinese celebrities on microblogging Web site Sina Weibo along the lines of: "China, not even one bit less."

While there is a debate over whether it was appropriate for Fu to make political remarks at a prestigious film event saluting artistic achievements, the essence of the situation is that Taiwanese are free to state their minds without fear of being blacklisted or facing retaliation from their own government.

As Fu wrote on Facebook on Sunday evening, the winning documentary, Our Youth in Taiwan (我們的青春), is unavoidably linked to politics, as it focuses on the young people who took part in the Sunflower movement — which started with the occupation of the main legislative chamber in Taipei on March 18, 2014 — and addresses issues about why young people commit so wholeheartedly to social movements in Taiwan, Hong Kong and China.

Fu Yue speech a freedom beacon

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Fu's winning work tells stories of personal, political and social struggle that young people face in social movements. It brings to the screen a genuine work that tackles a hidden aspect of society, characteristics that live up to the spirit of the Golden Horse Awards — to honor, recognize and celebrate exceptional work by artists and cultural figures that encompasses freedom of creativity and expression.

It is only natural for a director to speak up on issues related to work that they devoted so much time and effort to. In Fu's case, it took her six years to complete production.

Moreover, making a political statement at an art event is nothing new in democratic societies. There are many examples.

One classic example is from 1972, when Marlon Brando expressed support for the American Indian Movement by rejecting the Academy Award for best actor for his performance in *The Godfather*.

Saturday's events once again exposed China's peremptory nature, showcased Taiwan's open and tolerant society, and reinforced the fact that democratic Taiwan and communist China are indeed worlds apart.

Chinese netizens might want to continue their senseless bullying and harassment of Taiwanese artists for political reasons, but they will only prompt more Taiwanese to appreciate the preciousness of freedom of expression in Taiwan.

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