

The Golden Horse event exemplifies Taiwan

Written by Michael Lin 林俊宏

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In her acceptance speech after winning Best Documentary at the Golden Horse Awards on Nov. 17, Taiwanese director Fu Yue (傅月) said: “I really hope that one day our country can be treated as a truly independent entity.”

Fu’s statement opened a Pandora’s Box. Fearful Chinese filmmakers rolled out “united front” clichés on stage; the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP) publicity department banned Chinese-funded films from participating in future Golden Horse ceremonies.

The films of many winners this year addressed social issues in China. Films that explore topics such as people’s livelihoods, social inequality or medical problems in China have never been shut out of the Golden Horse Awards.

This shows Taiwan’s inclusiveness and its willingness to care about China’s social ills.

However, while these Chinese filmmakers might have the courage to talk about their nation’s social issues, they do not dare to say no to the CCP’s ridiculous territorial demands.

Fu’s documentary, *Our Youth in Taiwan* (我們的青春在台灣), is essentially an exploration of Taiwanese’ resistance to China’s influence, how they see themselves, and why there are Chinese willing to stand up and defend Taiwan’s resistance against Chinese oppression.

However, the awards ceremony showed that Chinese filmmakers clearly have no intention of engaging in dialogue. Chinese-language cinema has been damaged to the point of no longer being able to change society for the better.

If those in attendance possessed the courage to point out the social problems where they live, then perhaps they will also be able to consider the root cause of the problem.

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Have the filmmakers who criticized Fu's speech ever wondered how the award organizers, although pressured by Taiwanese who are wary of so many Chinese artists and filmmakers winning, still manage to judge films in a professional manner and often select Chinese winners?

Since Taiwan's democratization, the government has never asked Chinese filmmakers to side with it politically before they enter the nation, but the Chinese government has repeatedly forced Taiwanese artists to publicly side with it.

Since she received funding from the Ministry of Culture, Taiwanese actress Ruby Lin (林心如) was reported to be a supporter of Taiwanese independence.

There are countless other examples of the Chinese government's partiality in treating Taiwanese artists, including Lawrence Ko (柯俊雄), Leon Dai (戴立忍), Crow Lu (盧冠廷), Yoga Lin (林育群) and Chou Tzu-yu (周子瑜).

The Golden Horse Awards ceremony is so valuable because it is a stage without taboos — presenters and winners have no fear about being arrested for what they say.

Art has the ability to break down political barriers, to transcend language barriers — and Taiwanese respect that.

However, before the Chinese government talks about "respect," it should pull back from the disrespect it has shown Taiwanese performers over the years. More important still, it should start respecting its own artists.

If not, the tightening red grip of state control and censorship over so many years will lead to a chilling effect that makes people afraid of their own shadow — and the two sides of the Strait will grow ever more estranged.

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