

Taiwan democracy in peril: US senator

Written by Taipei Times

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A US senator said on Monday that some of the gains in democracy that Taiwan has made over the past 20 years “are now in peril.”

Speaking at a special Washington screening of the political thriller *Formosa Betrayed*, which takes place during the White Terror era, Democratic Senator Sherrod Brown said it was a miracle that Taiwan had been able to build a prosperous democracy with a strong middle class.

It happened, he said, because many people made enormous sacrifices.

“Some went to prison, while others gave up their lives or had their lives change abruptly for the worse because they were advocates for democracy,” Brown said.

“I think of the progress made in the last 20 years, but I also notice that today some of the gains are now in peril,” he said.

He said the US Congress must “keep [an] eye on what is happening in Taiwan.”

“Taiwan seems to be moving closer to the People’s Republic of China and that’s of concern to a lot of us,” he said.

The concern, he said, was for human rights and democracy.

“I know that I join many of you in dreaming of the day when US policy is not moving in the direction that some seem to want it to move but rather it is moving towards one China and one Taiwan,” Brown said.

He concluded: “The miracle of Taiwan is something that the people have earned and it is up to us to help them keep it.”

With a budget of about US\$10 million, the movie tells the fictionalized story of the 1980s murder of a Taiwan democracy advocate gunned down in the US on the orders of officials in Taipei.

The screening at Washington’s Newseum — a new museum dedicated to the media — was for members of Congress and congressional staff.

It will now be shown at film festivals around the world.

Written and produced by Taiwanese-American Will Tiao (刁亦男), the film has received wide support and sponsorship from the Formosa Foundation, a nonprofit based in Los Angeles.

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“Taiwan’s fight is not a defunct issue. The congressional screening is designed to raise awareness of the historic and ongoing struggle of the Taiwanese people to build a democratic society. The movie provides a critical analysis of the relationship between the US and Taiwan, as well as current US foreign policy,” Tiao said.

Several members of Congress who attended the screening praised the film and its depiction of life in Taiwan under martial law.

“I want to express my strong support for Taiwan,” Texas Republican Representative Michael McCaul said.

“We like our independence in Texas and I think that’s what we have in common. America stands for freedom and democracy and the fight against oppression and dictatorships. And so we stand with you as we watch this movie,” he said.

Congressman David Wu (王 偉 雄), a Democrat from Oregon who was born in Taiwan, said: “I think it is important to remember all the folks who made sacrifices large and small for the liberties that are enjoyed in Taiwan today.”

“It’s been said that the handmaiden of tyranny is amnesia; the only way that tyranny survives is if we forget what it does,” he said.

In prepared remarks, Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, a Florida Republican, said the film underscored the sacrifices made by those who sought democracy for Taiwan and the commitment of the US to democratic evolution on the island.

“There can be no backsliding in Taiwan’s commitment to democracy,” she said.

“A free and democratic Taiwan stands as the best response to those cynics in Beijing who state that democratic values are incompatible with Chinese culture. A free Taiwan is the ultimate guarantor of an eventually free China,” she said.

“As this film documents, the struggle for democracy in Taiwan was not an easy one,” she said.

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