

One of the most sad and disappointing things to recently happen in Taiwan has been the changing of the name of Democracy Hall back to that of Chiang Kai-shek (CKS) Memorial Hall. It is a step backwards for democracy in Taiwan and symptomatic of Ma Ying-jeou's attempts to fabricate past credibility for his Sino-centric (not Taiwan-centric) government. Allegedly there was to be a discussion of the matter of this name change (read that a move typical of Ma's lip service hypocrisy). However, there were little or no publications of this discussion or its details, i.e. who specifically was for the re-naming and who was against it, what polls were taken, what percentage of the people supported it etc. No, before Taiwan knew it and while the Kaohsiung World Games distracted the country, the name was changed back. Perhaps Ma felt a discussion with Taiwan-basher Kuo Kuan-ying was sufficient.

So what made this strange threesome, me a university professor and former Manager of Technology Transfer on Taipei and Kaohsiung's Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) Systems, Freddy Lim the lead singer on Chthonic a popular black metal band from Taiwan, and CKS the dead dictator responsible for bringing the latest group of beggars to take over the temple of Taiwan (ÆòØ€Ús♦R¹«)?

The name restoration brought it about; for there Freddy stole a thought from my mind. When I first heard that the name of the dead dictator (CKS) was going to be restored to the memorial, I pondered. If Taiwanese could not stop this name from being forced down their throats, then how could they protest it? What could they do to the huge statue of CKS there?

First I imagined that teams of loyal followers of Su Beng would periodically and symbolically douse the walls of that white marble mausoleum with red paint to symbolize the numerous deaths that CKS was responsible for in both 2-28 and the subsequent white terror period. This constant red stain on the marble walls would be a steady reminder of the barbarism of that man. If a more dramatic action was desired, I pictured some loyal Taiwanese getting a bazooka or shoulder missile launcher and from a distance placing a shot right through the chest of the statue of CKS. A statue with its guts blown out; now that could be the solution.

Then symbolic thoughts flitted through my mind. What could be a more symbolic criticism? The statue is gigantic; it could not be removed by simply lifting it by crane. When installed, the memorial had been built around it. In Kaohsiung, which had a smaller statute, it had to be cut up and taken away in pieces.

Me, Freddy Lim, Chiang Kai-shek, Art and Taiwan's Identity

Written by Jerome F. Keating Ph.D.
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But what if the statue did not need to be removed entirely? What if the head were simply cut off and the body of the statue left there decapitated. That would be a more practical solution and yet symbolic. A large sign could be put in the lap of the statue stating "Let this be the end of all dictators and enemies of Taiwan's democracy." What could be a more fitting sign of Taiwan's democracy than the headless statue of a past dictator?

It was at this point that in reading the news, I found out that Freddy Lim had already stolen my thoughts. Stole them? Well alright, this heavy metal singer didn't really steal my thoughts; he probably doesn't even know who I am. Instead, he simply beat me to their expression. Recently Freddy and the band had produced a new video cum song featuring the beheading of CKS and the burning of appropriate flags to boot.

A word must be said about Freddy and Chthonic. I had heard them at the Free Tibet concert in Taipei this past July. They put their money where their mouth or their music is. Whether one is into heavy metal or not, one cannot dispute their loyalty to Taiwan and making it a part of their art. There are no current Taiwanese musicians who feel and simultaneously express their sense of Taiwanese identity more stridently than Freddy and his band. Many singers and musicians may be Taiwanese at heart but not wanting to offend the China market will keep their thoughts to themselves or play them low key.

Chthonic's music on the other hand expresses the myths and history of the country. They see it as a country with its own identity. Art need not always make such statements, but in these troubled and tumultuous times, Taiwan needs more artists like this.

Source: [Jerome F. Keating's writings](#)