

HK's tears shame an insane regime

Written by Joseph Lee 李卓人

Thursday, 02 October 2014 07:05

Moral action in politics prevents the spirit of justice and compassion from being extinguished among us. This is particularly true for the “umbrella revolution” in Hong Kong, where pro-democracy activists used umbrellas to protect themselves from pepper spray and tear gas last weekend. The shocking images of riot police throwing tear gas canisters at the crowd and beating up unarmed civilians tarnished the territory’s reputation as being cosmopolitan, open and tolerant of dissent within China.

The week-long strike by Hong Kong’s university students has drawn much international attention to China’s attempt to restrict electoral reforms and prescreen candidates for the first direct election of the territory’s chief executive in 2017.

Young people have stood up for themselves and organized spontaneous protests against Beijing’s handpicked agents, who have obstructed their upward mobility and deprived them of civil rights. They used social media to break down the government’s censorship machine to disseminate news through which Hong Kongers could make sense of the evolving political crisis and mobilize themselves based on credible information.

History shows that authoritarian regimes that rule by fear also rule in fear. Even though Beijing-supported Hong Kong Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying (梁振英) had several pro-democracy student leaders and lawmakers arrested before the police crackdown, such measures only revealed the growing paranoia of the government.

Once Hong Kongers acquired their own sources of information outside the official media, this became a terrible omen for the Leung regime. As the government is losing control of the situation, the Hong Kongers are ready to step in and take over in the name of freedom and democracy.

The courage and determination of Hong Kongers to remain defiant in the face of violent threats and attacks remind us of the pro-democracy student movement in Beijing’s Tiananmen Square in the spring of 1989, 25 years ago.

Like the umbrella revolution in Hong Kong, the Tiananmen movement began with Chinese

HK's tears shame an insane regime

Written by Joseph Lee 李卓人

Thursday, 02 October 2014 07:05

students' protests against rampant and blatant corruption among communist officials.

Then the students launched hunger strikes and occupied Tiananmen Square, urging the public to join them in forceful and inspirational language and calling for democratic transformation of the one-party state. Even though these demonstrations had many things in common, access to electronic communications technology is a major difference between Hong Kong today and Beijing in 1989.

The Internet, Facebook and FireChat have empowered the Hong Kong youth and equalized their relations with the Leung regime. Thanks to the diffusion of electronic and social media, the message of direct democracy has now become easily accessible to Hong Kongers.

Everyone was outraged when watching on TV and YouTube videos of the riot police harassing, attacking and brutalizing unarmed protesters. The tears and sweat of the demonstrators shamed the Leung regime and inspired the rest of the population to get involved. Widespread access to independent sources of information have allowed Hong Kongers to see through the official lies and propaganda being fed to them.

New media have created an invisible electronic highway that transcends physical boundaries and permits the activists to share information, exchange ideas for countering the riot police and discuss new visions and strategies online. Hong Kongers now have much greater resources for mass communication at their disposal than the Tiananmen students did in 1989.

After the police crackdown this weekend, the umbrella revolution has reached new heights in Hong Kong. The protesters have awakened their fellow citizens, inspiring them to organize spontaneous occupation campaigns across the territory and disgracing the Leung regime through selfless sacrifices.

They declare themselves to be democratic citizens, asserting their rights to challenge the power-obsessed Leung, who is determined to maintain his control, rather than having dialogue with the activists.

HK's tears shame an insane regime

Written by Joseph Lee 李卓人

Thursday, 02 October 2014 07:05

Faced with the government's indifference to their demands for freedom and democracy, Hong Kongers have seized the moral high ground and captured much public sympathy. They have expressed their anger and frustration peacefully by occupying several downtown areas, condemning police brutality and calling for Leung's resignation.

They have transformed Hong Kong from a giant shopping mall into a gigantic political theater, gaining a sense of self-empowerment and winning support from all sectors of society. Such grassroots mobilizing efforts have enabled them to make legitimate demands of their government and to engage the Chinese Communist Party leaders in negotiations about the future of "one country, two systems."

Joseph Lee is professor of history and co-director of the Global Asia studies program at Pace University in New York.

Source: [Taipei Times - Editorials 2014/10/02](#)