

The Sunflower push to democracy

Written by Huang Kuo-chang 黃國昌
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It has been almost one year since the Sunflower movement began on March 18 last year. The movement has spawned numerous viewpoints and analyses regarding its significance and influence. These discussions are certain to continue for some time.

Among the many aspects of the Sunflower movement up for debate, one question frequently raised is: Who was the chief architect of the movement? To explore this issue, most lines of inquiry center on how the Sunflower movement was planned, organized and carried out. However, a more meaningful and perceptive approach is: Who lit the flame that kindled the movement?

The most straightforward answer is, of course, Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) Legislator Chang Ching-chung (張景雲). Had he not attempted to ram the cross-strait service trade agreement through the legislature in 30 seconds, the Sunflower movement activists would never have occupied the legislative chamber. So, Chang surely played a very important role in the genesis of the movement.

However, from the perspective of the nation's socioeconomic elite, there is no doubt that Chang was merely a puppet, while his controller watched from behind the scenes, pulling the strings.

This puppeteer initiated the political disruption of September 2013 in order to gain complete control of the legislature, with the aim of forcing through the cross-strait service trade agreement and furthering China's cross-strait unification agenda.

To achieve these goals, the puppeteer relentlessly overrode the basic principles of constitutional democracy, prevented the legislature from fulfilling its function of counterbalancing the executive branch and instructed KMT legislators to support Chang when he unilaterally declared the cross-strait service trade agreement had passed the legislature, even though it had not been subjected to the proper review.

This chief architect, the puppeteer in question, is none other than President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九).

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Ma's attempt to meet with Chinese President Xi Jinping (習近平) failed and Ma resigned as KMT chairman because of the party's rout in the Nov. 29 nine-in-one elections last year.

However, Ma retains his hold over the nation's executive power. Meanwhile, not only does his puppet in the legislature, Chang, still hold the position of Internal Administration Committee convener in the legislature, but Chang's cronies — the KMT legislators who assisted Chang in violating the Constitution — also enjoy a majority in the legislature, and continue to obstruct the much anticipated establishment of the cross-strait agreement oversight mechanism and refuse to respond to proposals for constitutional reform.

These people have yet to take any responsibility or pay any price for what they have done; justice has yet to be served. Although this is frustrating, glimpses of hope are evident in the Taiwanese struggle for true representative democracy.

Academia Sinica research fellow Wu Nai-teh (吳乃德) said in his book *One Hundred Years of Pursuit* (一百年的追求) that when looking into the impetus for democratization, most academics usually focus on the “common structural elements,” but neglect “a person's will and action.”

He also said that “if a society believes a person's free will is incapable of effecting historical changes, the society becomes morally apathetic and its ability to exercise moral judgement and volition is paralyzed. The public might even lose the will to strive for a better society.”

Fortunately, in the course of the development of Taiwanese democratic movements, we continue to see admirable intentions and actions, while progressive values have also continued to gain traction.

These actions have not only put a stop to the inequities of Ma and his cronies, but also encourage the hope that Taiwan might be able to achieve true democracy.

These achievements are not only due to the work of activists, but, more importantly, to the

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passionate activities of many unsung heroes from all walks of life. The support of these heroes led to the success of the Sunflower movement, and these voices are providing the real momentum to the pursuit of true democracy in Taiwan.

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Translated by Ethan Zhan

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