

## A ‘rebellious’ generation

Written by Taipei Times Editorial  
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On Thursday last week, students protesting the government’s controversial adjustments to high-school curriculum guidelines were forced to wrap up their protest because of the approaching Typhoon Soudelor. While many of their peers lament the abrupt end to their occupation of the Ministry of Education’s forecourt, some “grown-ups” have been quick to urge this group of “rude and ill-mannered brats” to return to school and their textbooks.

Taiwanese society has long prided itself on upholding the traditional Chinese value of “honoring teachers and respecting their teachings.”

This traditional value has exerted a profound influence on the nation’s older generation — so profound that it has become their lifelong code of conduct. It has restrained them from second-guessing what school teachers or authorities tell them, let alone challenging them. Over time, absolute obedience and keeping one’s opinions to oneself have become what they believe to be the only safe way to prevent themselves from being branded “troublemakers.”

However, problems emerge when these well-

behaved adults encounter a generation of young people who refuse to swallow everything they are told, who are not afraid to speak up when they see something wrong and who are tired of letting grown-ups and self-interested politicians dominate their destiny and determine their future.

Clinging to the long-established norm, grown-ups tell young people that their duty as students is to stay in school, not the streets. They question young people’s motives for standing up against what the students deem unjust, and assert — as if the students do not have a mind of their own — that they must have been manipulated and encouraged by political interest groups.

They question the protesters’ character and describe their “aggressive” behavior — which the students only resorted to because their voices were not being heard — as impudent and accuse their parents of being irresponsible.

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It appears as if superficial politeness and good behavior have trumped right and wrong, and that it is acceptable to do wrong so long as one appears well-mannered.

However, the “rebellious” youths are not going to grin and bear it.

Young netizens recently lambasted Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) Legislator Alex Tsai (蔡啟芳) for posting on Facebook a photograph on Tuesday last week that appears to have been photoshopped to make student activists look bad.

The picture shows Minister of Education Wu Se-hwa (吳思華) reaching out to shake the hand of a student representative, Liang Yan-jou (梁衍鈞), during a meeting on Monday last week, with Liang apparently ignoring the minister’s gesture with a contemptuous expression on her face.

“[A student] should at least maintain a polite demeanor when a teacher extends his hand... What kind of ‘bullying’ is this?” the caption read.

It was not long before an unidentified netizen managed to locate the original photograph, which showed that Wu was actually trying to shake hands with another student representative sitting next to Liang, whose image was cut out in the version Tsai posted.

Nearly 2,700 netizens left a “thumbs down” sign on Tsai’s Facebook post to voice their displeasure, all of which were shortly deleted. Only comments lambasting the student protesters as being ill-mannered or brats remained.

While the student protesters were forced to end their occupation of the ministry’s forecourt due to the typhoon, a reform of mindset for the country’s “ever-obedient” adults has just started.

Source: [Taipei Times - Editorials 2015/08/11](#)