

Returning Taiwan to Taiwanese

Written by Liberty Times Editorial
Friday, 18 December 2015 07:26

The Taoyuan City Government has established the Chung Chao-cheng Literary Award and Chung Chao-cheng Literary Park, both of which were named after Taiwanese writer Chung Chao-cheng (鍾昌成).

However, Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) City Councilor Lu Shu-chen (盧樹成) asked: “Who on Earth is Chung Chao-cheng? Is he still alive? Why should we set up an award for him? Why do we arrange these things if he is still alive?”

As if that was not enough, she added: “Former Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) chairman Wu Poh-hsiung (吳伯雄) is also a very famous person, why is there no award named after him?”

This string of arrogant and ignorant questions stunned many Taiwanese netizens.

“Unbelievable” and “shameful” were two of the most reposted comments.

Chung is a national treasure thanks to his literary achievements. Born in Taoyuan’s Longtan Township (龍潭) during the Japanese colonial era, he received a Japanese education and did not learn Chinese until after the end of World War II, when he began to write and translate in Chinese.

He was born in 1925, the same year as late Taiwanese writer Yeh Shih-tao (葉石濤). Both men witnessed historic changes, struggled through the hardship and challenges of switching from one language and culture to another, and both were relentless in their efforts to depict the life of Taiwanese in their writing.

Chung was held in great esteem as one of the greatest writers in northern Taiwan, as Yeh was in southern Taiwan. Chung’s origin in Taoyuan is a pride for both Taoyuan and Taiwan. Only an ignorant politician would hear Chung’s name and ask: “Who in the world is this Chung Chao-cheng?”

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Lu's questions are not only humiliating to her, they also highlight a lack of concern for Taiwanese history and its people.

The same mentality was displayed several months ago when a news anchorwoman reported that a painting by Chen Cheng-po (陳成波) had been stolen. The anchorwoman had no clue as to who Chen was and said that Chen himself was also very worried when his painting was stolen.

Chen was one of the most outstanding artists during the Japanese colonial era. Ninety years ago, one of his paintings portraying the streets of Chiayi was selected and showcased at the then-Imperial Fine Arts Exhibition, making him the first Taiwanese to have his work displayed in an official Japanese exhibition.

During the 228 Incident in 1947, he played the role of peacemaker on behalf of Chiayi residents only to be humiliated, tortured and killed by the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) in front of Chiayi Railway Station. Seventy years later, the anchorwoman delivered a news report about him without knowing that he sacrificed his life for the residents of Chiayi.

Whether it is a city councilor or an anchorwoman, when they display this utter ignorance of well-known Taiwanese artists from the Japanese colonial era, they are making themselves the butt of jokes that are not funny at all. It not only shows that they are unprofessional, but also that they have the wrong attitude.

When they questioned or reported news stories about Chung and Chen, even if they did not know who these people were, in the age of the Internet, all they would have needed to do was to go online and do some research. This would have immediately and easily allowed them to gather the information they so badly needed. However, they chose not to do what they should have done, which only goes to show that they are both unprofessional and disrespectful of their work.

The most notable thing about these two mistakes is the public figures' negligence of the people and events that shaped Taiwan's past. In practical terms, this means that after the end of World War II, the Sino-centric policies that were imposed on Taiwan resulted in the removal of

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Taiwanese elements from Taiwan's social development. Whether it was culture, the arts or fashion anything Taiwanese was looked down, upon while everything Chinese was praised.

Sino-centrism was incorporated into the educational system beginning from elementary school and was pervasive in subjects such as history, geography and language. It was as if a Chinese chip was implanted in every student's brain.

Within this framework, in which China was emphasized and Taiwan was undervalued, the nation's people, history, geography and other aspects of Taiwanese identity were disdained and marginalized. Consequently, Taiwanese were trained to think highly of foreign values and neglect the rich and multifaceted culture around them. That Chung and Chen, both of whom are national treasures, are little appreciated by politicians and the media is proof of this mindset.

The removal of Taiwanese identity has been carried out mainly through political means, using education and the media as the main tools, and arts and entertainment as the auxiliary tools. This scheme was temporarily postponed under the tenures of former presidents Lee Teng-hui (李登輝) and Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁). However, transitional justice could not be completed during the terms of these two leaders.

Taiwanese continued to be oppressed and humiliated and Taiwan was placed in a worse condition when President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) took office and his administration attempted to reintroduce Sino-centric policies, such as revising curriculum guidelines, in an attempt to once again brainwash Taiwanese.

As the public have seen, in politics, a political party that includes "Chinese" in its name has long governed Taiwan and openly endorses the "one China" policy of Beijing. Still, that same party also chants the "one Taiwan" slogan because it wants to trick voters into supporting its candidates.

In the realm of international competitions and games, Taiwan's national name is "Chinese Taipei," a misnomer which was invented as a result of China's oppression.

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In addition, Taiwan's national flag and national anthem are also prohibited at international events. Even when international media call national sports teams "Taiwan," local politicians and media still use the term "Chinese Taipei," a prime example of self-abasement. In the entertainment business, Chinese films are prioritized over Taiwanese films in the Golden Horse Awards. Some singers, actors and actresses are so profit-oriented that they call China "the mainland." As far as these people are concerned, Taiwan is already a part of its own enemy.

Fortunately, after the majority of the younger generation were awakened and netizens started making powerful use of the Internet, the propaganda aimed at making Taiwanese stop being Taiwanese has become difficult to perpetuate.

The upcoming presidential and legislative elections are the opportunity to put an end to the KMT's governance, which neither serves the land nor the people. Taiwanese should seize this opportunity and let what belongs to Taiwan be returned to Taiwan.

If this can be done, since the younger generations of Taiwanese were born and raised on this land and since they are growing up to identify innately with Taiwan as a sovereign nation, it should indeed be possible to realize Taiwan's development into a normal "country."

Translated by Ethan Zhan

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