

Moving away from discrimination

Written by Taipei Times Editorial
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The video made by self-styled citizen journalist Hung Su-chu (洪素珠), in which she goes after an elderly waishengren and tells him to go back to China, is reprehensible.

However, the incident might be an opportunity for the nation to solve its long-standing ethnicity issues.

The video, which Hung posted on Facebook, shows her insulting an elderly waishengren (外省人, Mainlander) — people who fled to Taiwan with the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) following its defeat in the Chinese Civil War — saying that he has made no contribution to Taiwan, but enjoyed welfare provided by Taiwanese and should go back to China.

The video triggered a public uproar and drew criticism from political leaders, including President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文), Premier Lin Chuan (林錫山) and KMT Chairwoman Hung Hsiu-chu (洪秀柱), among others.

While politicians from different parties usually point fingers at each other when controversy breaks out, this time, they all condemned Hung Su-chu's actions and called for tolerance and respect.

Although the KMT has often opposed legislation aimed at promoting ethnic equality, the party, immediately after the incident, announced that it would propose a bill to ban ethnic discrimination.

While Hung Su-chu's action deserves condemnation, it might be compared to the child who yelled, "But he is not wearing anything at all" in the tale The Emperor's New Clothes.

Ethnic tension does exist in Taiwan and it has existed for centuries. Although people from different ethnic groups do not engage in armed conflict as they used to do, they still make derogatory comments about others on the Internet or in private.

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Netizens use terms such as “Chinese pigs” to describe pan-blue supporters, Mainlanders and people who favor a closer relationship with China; in turn, some Mainlanders, such as former Government Information Office director Kuo Kuan-ying (郭寬盈), called Taiwanese taibazi, meaning “Taiwanese rednecks,” and wokou, or “Japanese pirates.”

Alongside having prejudices about local ethnic groups, many Taiwanese openly discriminate against Southeast Asian and Chinese immigrants and workers.

There are often news reports of migrant workers being mistreated by their employers, or young people physically assaulting them because of their ethnicity.

However, on the surface, most people — especially political leaders — pretend that such problems do not exist.

Everyone knows that there is a problem, but most people are reluctant to seriously look into the issue to find a solution.

It was upsetting to see Hung Su-chu’s video, but it is encouraging to see that most people — from politicians to ordinary people — did not hesitate to condemn her remarks.

Perhaps it is time for Taiwanese to put the issue on the table, seriously face it and find a solution.

Instead of telling young people “we are all the same,” perhaps schools should start teaching that “we are different, but we must respect our differences”; instead of telling children how hard Han Chinese settlers struggled for survival after they arrived in Taiwan, young people should be taught that Aborigines were already living in Taiwan, and their lands were seized by some Han Chinese, in maybe-not-so-honorable ways; and instead of telling students that Southeast Asian workers are outsiders, we must teach them not to discriminate against others and talk about Taiwan’s connection with Southeast Asia.

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Hung Su-chu's insulting video is shocking, but what is more important is whether Taiwanese can make something positive out of a horrible incident.

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