

Students bid to remove Chiang Kai-shek statues

Written by Taipei Times

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Students stand in front of a statue of Chiang Kai-shek at Taipei Municipal Jianguo High School on Monday, holding signs calling for the statue and all others like it to be removed from campuses nationwide.

Photo taken from YouTube

A group of high-school students from across the nation has launched a campaign advocating the removal of statues of Chiang Kai-shek (蔣介石) from all campuses nationwide, announcing their initiative through a video released on Monday.

Taipei Chenggong High School (成公高中) started filming the clip and was later joined by various high schools, including Taipei Municipal Jianguo High School (建國高中), Taipei First Girls' High School (第一女中), the Affiliated Senior High School of National Taiwan Normal University (師大附中), National Tainan Girls' Senior High School (台南女中) and St Ignatius High School (聖 Ignatius 高中).

The video's release was timed to coincide with the 27th anniversary of the end of the Martial Law era on July 14, 1987.

Titled '7/14 Beginning of our modern democracy, banish all Chiang statues from school campuses', students say in the three-minute video that it is time to do away with reverence for Chiang's authoritarian rule at schools.

They joined up with fellow students currently enrolled at several leading high schools. Filmed on location, the video aims to show viewers that at these schools, statues of Chiang, symbols of his authoritarian rule and the Martial Law era are still displayed prominently.

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Holding placards, the students are seen standing in front of a Chiang statue at Taipei Municipal Jianguo High School saying: “July 14. On this day, the government order to abolish martial law was made. It marked the end of authoritarian rule and the start of Taiwan’s modern democracy.”

“Although the era of authoritarian rule has ended, its legacy in the form of Chiang Kai-shek statues is still in place at many schools and university campuses. We believe it’s time to remove them from all schools so ‘transitional justice’ can be achieved,” they say in the video.

“After July 14, we have our current democracy, freedom and human rights. These were fought for and gained by the democracy activists of yesteryear. Let us all commemorate this day together,” they add.

“Although Chiang made contributions to the Republic of China [ROC], he imposed martial law and the ‘White Terror,’ severely violated human rights and repressed democracy and freedom. All these are contrary to the ideals of ROC founding father Sun Yat-sen (孫逸仙),” the students added.

“Why is Hitler repudiated by people everywhere, but Chiang Kai-shek is still worshiped here? We do not have to track down who was responsible for past crimes, but why does Chiang’s statue still stand at schools? The man denied the people democracy, freedom and human rights. Why should people pay respect to him?” they said.

Near its end, the video lists the names of victims of Chiang’s White Terror era, while the song used by the government to commemorate the late leader plays ironically.

The students said they want Taiwanese to remember that the democracy they enjoy today was won by the blood, sweat and sacrifice of many activists.

“We can forgive, but must not forget history. The fight against authoritarianism starts on school campuses. So let’s remove all Chiang’s statues from schools,” they said.

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