

Pro-independence candidate evokes legacy of Su Beng

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Pro-independence activist Su Beng, right, helps Na Su-phok put on a denim jacket that Su gave him in a symbolic gesture of passing on the torch for systemic reform at a media event in Taipei on Friday at which Na announced his decision to run for a legislative seat in his hometown, Taoyuan's Taoyuan District.

Photo: Chen Chih-chu, Taipei Times

Student activist Na Su-phok (藍士博) evoked the legacy of prior Taiwanese independence advocates as he announced his intention to enter the legislative race next year.

A doctoral student of Taiwanese history at National Chengchi University, Na has built a decade of experience in grassroots activism, with a strong focus on promoting Taiwanese cultural identity through works of history and literature.

At a news conference in Taipei on Friday, Na, 32, accepted an iconic denim jacket from 97-year-old historian and revolutionary leader Su Beng (蘇炳文), who is often described as the godfather of the Taiwanese independence movement.

"Young people are the masters of our society now; nobody talks about the world going backward," Su said as he draped the denim jacket — similar to his own — over the shoulders of his younger compatriot.

Na also received a rare first edition of Su's most renowned work, Taiwan's 400-Year History (台灣四百年史), initially published in 1962 during the leftist historian's exile in Japan, where he founded several revolutionary organizations.

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The two activists from different generations crossed paths in 2009 when Na launched an oral history project documenting Su's life.

Over about 18 months, Na led a team of 10 college students in a series of 30 interviews with Su, which culminated with the Oral History of Su Beng (蘇炳文), published in 2013.

The three-volume text, which won the Golden Tripod Awards for Publication last year, was instrumental in the production of a documentary on Su's life — The Revolutionist (革命者) — which is in theaters now.

On Friday, Na announced his bid to enter the race in his hometown, Taoyuan's Taoyuan District (桃園), which would pit him against Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) Legislator Yang Li-huan (楊立煥), who clinched a decisive victory in 2012 with 58 percent of the vote.

While currently an independent, Na said he would not rule out "any forms of cooperation" with other like-minded parties, including the Democratic Progressive Party or recently launched smaller parties with progressive agendas.

Na has participated in efforts to ensure that Taiwanese history is included in high-school curricula and founded the Gongsheng Music Festival, an annual event aimed at raising youth awareness of the 228 Incident.

He also played a key role during the Wild Strawberries movement in 2008, in which thousands of students accused President Ma Ying-jeou's (馬英九) administration of crushing dissent with police brutality during a visit from a delegation of Chinese officials.

Na said that Taiwan has yet to go through its first complete alternation in power, as the KMT has always held control of the legislature.

He urged opposition parties to join forces to prevent the KMT from retaining a majority.

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