

White Terror victim to be honored in NTU memorial

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Chen Wen-cheng poses with his family in an undated image.

Photocopied by Lin Cheng-kung, Taipei Times

National Taiwan University's (NTU) university affairs committee yesterday passed a proposal to name a campus plaza in honor of NTU Mathematics Department graduate Chen Wen-cheng (陳文成), a well-known victim of the nation's past authoritarian regime in a move lauded as a step toward transitional justice. The plaza is also to include a monument for Chen.

Born in 1950, Chen went to the US for his doctorate after leaving NTU and worked as an assistant professor in Carnegie Mellon University's department of statistics.

Like many of the young people who went abroad to study at the time, Chen closely followed political developments in Taiwan and participated in US-based Taiwanese student associations and human rights groups.

He returned to Taiwan for a visit in 1981.

A supporter of Taiwan's democratic movement who had made donations to the pro-democracy Formosa Magazine, Chen was found dead next to the NTU graduate library on July 3, 1981.

He had been taken by the Taiwan Garrison Command for questioning the previous day.

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His death remains unsolved.

At the NTU committee meeting yesterday, the proposal was discussed and put to a vote.

With 75 votes in favor and 22 against, the motion passed.

The plaza next to where Chen's body was found is to be named "Chen Wen-chen Incident Memorial Plaza." A monument inscribed with Chen's story is to be built as well.

NTU president Yang Pan-chyr (楊潘啟) said the move is a milestone in the nation's democratic development.

NTU Graduate Students Association president Sherry Chou (周雪莉) called it the university's first step to transitional justice, and said that there is a wide consensus that the monument should be erected as soon as possible.

An event held every year on July 3 in memorial of Chen will continue to take place to inspire people to remember the nation's history, she added.

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