

Students pledge to continue activism

Written by Taipei Times

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Even though the student occupation of the Ministry of Education's forecourt to protest against high-school curriculum guideline changes ended on Thursday last week due to the approach of Typhoon Soudelor, student leaders yesterday said that the experience of confronting the nation's bureaucracy has not dulled their passion for social justice and vowed to continue their activism.

Critics of the controversial changes to high-school curriculum guidelines, which led to the widespread student protests, allege the adjustments impose a China-centric view on history education and obscure the history of the White Terror during the nation's Martial Law era, when civil liberties were suspended and major incidents of political repression, such as the 228 Incident in 1947, were perpetuated by the then Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) government.

"We learned how to become truly courageous," said Liao Chun-lun (廖俊倫), a senior member of the Apple Tree Commune, a student club at Taichung First Senior High School that was the first student body to publicly criticize the planned adjustments to the high-school curriculum guidelines.

Liao conceded that fighting the government's bureaucracy was tremendously stressful, especially after the public conference with Minister of Education Wu Se-hwa (吳思華), in which Wu rejected many of their demands.

Students said that Wu repeated the government's stance last month "like a broken record" and that they were dejected, because their efforts were met with insincerity from the ministry.

Liao said he persisted, because he did not want to let the public down or see the protest to fail, adding that he plans to continue to be active in causes involving his school and neighborhood.

Apple Tree Commune spokesperson Chen Chien-hsun (陳建勳) said the protest was about the principle that education should be objective and fair, adding that after three months protesters had successfully drawn the public's attention to the "black-box curriculum revisions."

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Chen said he also learned that confronting government bureaucracy is difficult, adding that the movement would continue as the students plan to practice activism in their neighborhoods and schools in the form of speaking events on the street.

Apple Tree Commune member Hsiao Chu-chun (蕭楚春) said the protest awakened the social consciousness of high-school students and provided the impetus for their participation in public affairs.

Unfortunately, he added, the government decided to hide behind barbed wire.

He said that his greatest fear is that other students might quit the movement out of despair over the government's indifference, appealing to his fellow protesters to not lose hope and stay engaged in social issues, "because there is so much that deserves engaging."

Meanwhile, Taipei Mayor Ko Wen-je (柯文哲) is scheduled to meet with students today to discuss the incursion into the ministry compound last month.

A group of students, citing their dissatisfaction with the ministry's failure to respond in a substantial manner to their demands, broke into the ministry compound on July 23.

The police arrested 33 people including three journalists, which sparked accusations that the police had infringed on the freedom of the press.

Ko later apologized for the arrest of the journalists and convened a special task force led by Taipei Deputy Mayor Teng Chia-chi (滕章齊) to investigate the Taipei police department's conduct in the incident.

Source: [Taipei Times - 2015/08/11](#)