

# THE POWER OF TEARS AND LOVE

BY LIU XIAOBO

The Chinese government's detention of the three Tiananmen Mothers only highlights the righteousness of their cause.<sup>1</sup>

On February 28, as the 15th anniversary of June 4th approached, two women who lost their sons, Ding Zilin and Zhang Xianling, and a woman who lost her husband, Huang Jinping, were arrested by State Security police. And so three women deprived of their flesh and blood 15 years ago were deprived of their freedom as well.

And only because at the place where their loved ones fell, these women have stood up, faced the terror, and borne witness to their deaths.

At a place where people were meant to fall and never rise up again, they shed their tears and rose up.

Under a terror that forbids them to mourn their flesh and blood, they have mourned ceaselessly for 15 years.

The terror has not subsided, and their tears have not dried.

The tears shed by the Tiananmen Mothers under terror are tears of agonized, shouting, witnessing, justice-embracing, resilient, rational, sympathetic love.

For each of the past 15 years, on the festival of Qing Ming and on the anniversary of June 4th they have remembered their loved ones and wept together or alone; but their mourning has changed from howls of anguish to cool-eyed witness. They have the courage and wisdom, as well as the patience and faith to continue their fight by all means available, even as they are threatened, monitored, followed, detained and robbed. They have tirelessly interviewed families and witnesses, accumulating every available shred of information, transforming the truth of blood into a living sprout, and the blood-soaked sprout into living memory, bearing witness to the 1989 Movement, bearing witness to the June 4th Massacre, bearing witness to the soul of society, bearing witness to each and every perversion perpetrated by the Chinese Communist authorities all these years. And this true witness, in terms of restoring history and championing justice, is more powerful than mourning, rage or howls.

This endless nightmare has led them to experience firsthand the full barbarity of a system that allows the arbitrary deprivation of human rights and even life, and the extent to

which our life in this society has no security, and how we all live under the shadow of terrorist politics, and how disaster could fall upon the head of any one of us at any time. Today it's my son, tomorrow it's your son, the next day it may be her son. They have already lost an unknown number of children, and it's possible that another unknown number of children could be lost again at any time. Every day that this system continues to exist presents the likelihood that eventually countless more children will be lost. That is why protecting each person's human rights is the same as protecting my own human rights. If the human rights of any person are unlawfully infringed, the human rights of each and every person are infringed. Human rights are the concern of all people. If freedom is a human right bestowed by heaven, protecting human rights is a responsibility that heaven imposes on every citizen.

Being a witness to history started around the time of the Second World War with reparations for the crimes of the Nazi Holocaust. American historian Eli Weisel is a Jewish survivor of the Holocaust, whose mother and sister both died in a Nazi concentration camp. After World War II, under the encouragement of an elderly writer, Weisel fulfilled his responsibility as a witness to the Nazi Holocaust by publishing a series of works and delivering countless speeches, and for that reason he was presented with the Nobel Peace Prize in 1986.

In his role as a witness to crimes against humanity, Weisel has had an advantage over the survivors of June 4th in that he no longer has to face an existing dictatorship, a government that not only refuses to acknowledge its crimes, but continues to perpetrate new crimes; he doesn't have to search for evidence in a terror-filled environment of impenetrable secrecy. In addition, the Mothers don't know how much further this road of hardship must continue, or how much longer they must continue to mourn. Some of the Mothers have already lost the hope of seeing their grievances restored to the light of day; for example, Su Bingxian, a teacher, took her unredressed grievance with her to the grave, where she was reunited with her slain son, Zhao Long.<sup>2</sup> It is possible that other Mothers may also fall during their search for evidence. But I believe that the wrongfully murdered children will not blame their mothers, because they have already done their utmost. In this respect, the collective historical witness of the June 4th families is

more heroically tragic, and even more deserving of concern and support.

The Tiananmen Mothers are ordinary women, but their continued efforts to provide humanitarian aid over the past 15 years illustrate the greatness and selflessness of their love, the tenacity and perseverance of their faith, the courage and fervor of their sacrifice, and their responsibility and willpower to shoulder their burden. In an extremely hostile environment, the Mothers have borne hardship with the resilience of their love, and have ameliorated hardship with the power of their love.

June 4th, that scarlet day, belongs eternally not only to China, but to the world, and like all other major events in human history, June 4th should be part of human memory. A German philosopher once said that all Germans, all Europeans, all the people of the world, each and every one, should understand and remember Auschwitz, not only those who experienced it themselves, and not only for one or a few generations, but forever. For that reason, bearing witness to June 4th is fulfilling one's responsibility not only to the Chinese race, but to all humanity, and to our descendents. Erasing memory and distorting history is not only unfair to the past, it desecrates the present and squanders the future.

In this sense, in the 15 years since the June 4th Massacre, the undertaking by the families of victims to be witnesses to history, to champion justice and deliver humanitarian aid is the true fulfillment of love.

From the point of view of the people of mainland China, collective responsibility does not exist, and therefore there's no point in discussing it; just as freedom is a personal matter, responsibility can only be borne by an individual, and the Tiananmen Mothers are just individual mothers. Bearing witness is a responsibility, every person's moral responsibility. Every person who experienced June 4th should fulfill his or her responsibility by becoming witnesses. If it's not possible to stand up in public, it's still possible to take up a pen and over the course of a few nights to excavate memories, and then disseminate them publicly under a pen name. If that were really to happen, in today's information society there should be a spectacular flood of personal statements! What an immense pressure this act would bring to bear on the Chinese authorities!

We have too many hardships, but very seldom bear witness to these hardships.

There is too much evil among us, but we very seldom bear witness to evil.

As a result, history is a blank, memory is a blank, life is a blank.

And what fills that blankness is artifice, lies and terror.

In mainland China, apart from the June 4th survivors, how many families have similarly experienced the tragedy of suddenly and unexpectedly losing a child, to the point that they have come to recognize these countless "unexpected" incidents as a matter of course in this system. If each individual continues to tolerate this without a struggle, the same disaster will forever remain a matter of course for each and every person. The Tiananmen Mothers have already tearfully taken up the struggle, and they continue to struggle on through their tears,

and for a period of time will continue to tearfully struggle; for the sake of the distant future, the Mothers will never become the kind of mothers who can lose their children without seeking justice and spend the rest of their lives in mourning.

Their tears, and their tear-filled howls and witness, are not only for their own children, but represent countless victims and their families in issuing a challenge against an unjust system. The Tiananmen Mothers movement is an awakening paid for with bloodshed, and relates to each and every person's rights and freedom.

The Tiananmen Mothers are justice, righteousness, faith and love.

Now, 15 years after losing their loved ones, having suffered under the pressure of the dictatorship for 15 years, the arrest of three family members serves as the latest evidence of the hardship they suffer for the sake of love.

A dictatorship that fully controls the country's machinery and social resources has shown itself to be weak, fearful and panic-stricken in the face of the Mothers' empty-handed love. Fifteen years ago they used armed troops to slaughter unarmed youths, committing crimes against humanity. Fifteen years later they use their dictatorial machinery to deprive family members of their right to mourn, not only committing crimes against common decency, but against the most basic Chinese rules of familial obligation.

The Tiananmen Mothers are people who act out of love; they are honorable mothers, honorable women, honorable people.

They bear witness to death and seek justice, not only to lead the world to care about them or about China, but to help make the world more humane.

Lu Xun said, "Lies written in ink cannot conceal a truth written in blood."

The Tiananmen Mothers say, "Knife-wielding terror cannot conquer empty-handed love."

Surely these mothers can reawaken the conscience of China's people!

Written in Beijing, March 30, 2004.

Translated by Stacy Mosher

1. This is a translation of an article originally posted on the Epoch Times Web site at <http://www.dajiyuan.com/gb/4/3/31/n497378.htm>. At the time of writing, Liu Xiaobo was being held under "soft arrest" in Beijing.
2. Su Bingxian, a prominent member of the Tiananmen Mothers, died in Beijing on January 15, 2001 at the age of 65. Her death was attributed to traditional Chinese medicine she was taking for treatment of leg and liver problems. Su's son, Zhao Long, was 21 years old when he was felled by three bullets to the chest on June 4, 1989.