“Chineseness”: Continuity and Change

Is the Past a Foreign Country?

Culture as Ideology

Perspectives: China’s Youth Abroad

Corporal Punishment and China’s Assertive Only Children

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Nicholas Young, Special Contributing Editor

Born in Zambia and educated in the UK, Nick Young moved to China in 1995 and founded the China Development Brief (CDB), a specialist newsletter in English and Chinese reporting on development issues and the growth of China’s civil society. The Chinese authorities shut down the English version of CDB in 2007 and barred Nick from re-entering China. Nick previously worked as a journalist in Nicaragua and Malawi and wrote for the Financial Times, Economist, Africa Confidential and other publications. He currently lives in Uganda and is writing a memoir, China: Recollections from Exile.
We are pleased to present this issue of *China Rights Forum*, “Chineseness: Continuity and Change,” with special contribution from Nick Young, veteran China observer and analyst and founding editor of *China Development Brief*. Founded in 1995, *China Development Brief* is an independent, non-profit publication devoted to increasing communication and strengthening constructive engagement on development issues.

Nick's concept of examining China's civil society and his idea of talking to young Chinese abroad have now shaped an issue richly populated by voices from different vantage points about what it means to be Chinese, and very moving reflections on the differences between Chinese and Western cultures.

“Is the Past a Foreign Country?” is a discussion among a scholar, a historian, a journalist, a poet/novelist/painter, and a writer, on the meaning of “Chineseness”—which in different contexts can be either a geographic identification, a cultural and linguistic identification, or a political identification. Among the other issues discussed are whether the entire 5,000 years of Chinese history is indeed Chinese history, and the changing political status of neo-Confucianism in modern Chinese history.

“Culture as Ideology” is an essay about the tug-of-war between the Chinese youth and traditional culture.

“Mobilizing Youth, Molding Minds” outlines the Communist Party's efforts in shaping the thinking of China's children and youth.

“Perspectives: China’s Youth Abroad” consists of two “focus group” discussions that HRIC conducted in New York and Hong Kong among students, activists, and scholars from China. They were asked to share their insights and experiences of studying, researching, or traveling in China and abroad. The answers they offered went far beyond their educational experiences to include keen observations on the differences between China and the West. What they said is by turns refreshing, surprising, and moving, and reveals a lot about what the young people think of themselves as Chinese as well as their view on China's place in the world.

“Corporal Punishment and China’s Assertive Only Children” is about China’s new breed: a generation born under China’s one-child policy. Brought up by parents whose efforts centered on them and them only, they are more assertive than children have ever been in Chinese history: they talk back not only to their teachers, but to their bosses as well!

“HRIC Talks with Hong Kong Activist” features Christina Chan Hau Man, a 21 year-old philosophy student at Hong Kong University who catapulted to both fame and infamy—depending on how one views activism—on May 2, 2008, by leading a protest during the Olympic torch relay in Hong Kong. She is idealistic, thoughtful, and a true believer in the individual’s right to speak.

In this issue, we also offer a selection of poetry written after the Sichuan earthquake that reminds us of the necessity of poetry for enduring grief and tragic loss.

As China emerges strengthened from the spectacularly staged Beijing Olympics and as it continues to grow in economic and political clout, human rights organizations such as HRIC are now facing the challenges posed by a more complex and dynamic terrain. It is a new field of action that calls for ever more effective and constructive ways to engage both the Chinese authorities and people to promote change. The challenge of bridging the vast information and understanding gaps between different individuals, communities, and societies also calls for greater humility and optimism as we continue our efforts to promote a more open China.

Sharon Hom  
Executive Director, Human Rights in China  
September 2008
IDENTITY AND CHANGE
Yan Li: Chineseness (zhongguoren de guominxing 中国人的国民性) in politics is manifested in the fact that up to now ordinary people are still waiting for a virtuous official. We are more willing to trust good officials than good laws. This is a very particular phenomenon that has been a part of Chineseness for thousands of years. When people appeal to higher officials, they’re hoping for a virtuous official who is able to solve their problems for them. They aren’t appealing to the law, which indicates that the concept of law is very weak.

Rose Tang: But the number of people bringing cases to court is increasing. Civil cases, in particular, have overcrowded court dockets. People go to court over almost anything: relocation, the withholding of pay to migrant workers . . . Today the concept of the rule of law is very strong amongst ordinary people. Particularly after the case of Sun Zhigang,¹ there has been a huge change. Amongst the people as a whole, the concept of rule of law is very strong. There are some migrant workers, rural people, who have very little basic education but teach themselves law and then utilize the language and rhetoric of the government itself. These cases of appealing for help and using legalese are increasing. So there is a little hope.

Peter Kwong: But this is still within a limited range. If a case involves politics or policies, then it’s out of the question.

Yan Li: And if it involves officials, it’s also out of the question.

Rose Tang: The people are still very cautious. They won’t touch those issues.

Gao Wenqian: This topic is huge. “Chineseness”—you can’t find it in the English-Chinese dictionary, it’s a made-up word. Of course, it is a concept that refers to a sense of identification, a national sense of identity. But there are many different angles, standards, and divisions. Right now, this piece of land that looks like a rooster or a maple leaf, this piece of yellow land that is China can be defined geographically. You can also define China historically. It has 5,000 years of history, 5,000 years of civilization. This is something in which many Chinese people take pride. America has 200 years [of history], that’s equivalent to one chapter in a very thin book; China’s book would be very thick. So, history has become a source of identification. There is [also] cultural identification. There are a lot of Chinese people. Even if they don’t live in mainland China but in Malaysia, in Singapore, they still speak Chinese and they identify themselves as being of Chinese descent. So from a cultural and linguistic viewpoint, there is a sense of identification. And then there is the issue of citizenship. Your passport, is it a Chinese, American, Singapore, or Hong Kong passport? Finally, there is political identification. Politically, do you identify mainland China as being the People’s Republic of China? Is identifying with the land of China the same as identifying with its so-called social system? Here, we can see that nailing down a concept of China is very confusing. When talking about the Chinese people and how they became Chinese, people have different starting points and different standards.

Peter Kwong: Our concept of “Chineseness” basically comes from how we are taught. There are two basic perspectives on what makes a person Chinese. Some Chinese people identify themselves by their family (jia 家), and the place where they are from (jiaxiang 家乡). No
obedient. When we were young we were always told to be obedient, and listen to our parents, teachers, and the Party. We were asked to take on a subservient, slave-like relationship.

Going back to the topic of education: from my personal experience in elementary and middle school, when I read Chinese history textbooks, I thought I couldn’t be tricked, not at that age at least. But they brainwashed us so strangely. Each chapter in our textbook covered a different dynasty, and for each dynasty there was a very specific map of China’s territory. We learned that China was its biggest during the Yuan Dynasty [1271–1368 CE] and then it got smaller and smaller: Haishenwei was signed away, and then Hong Kong. This was meant to cultivate our sense of nationalism and patriotism. But at the time I wondered to myself, was the Yuan Dynasty China? Was the Qing Dynasty China? [During those times] we were slaves. Those were other people’s countries. We brag the most about the Yuan Dynasty, but was the Yuan Dynasty really ours? What, really, was China? I asked our teachers and they said, “Of course this is China! Where today can you find Mongols and Manchus? We assimilated them. They came to rule us but in the end we assimilated them.”

Peter Kwong: This is very important, this idea that the Yuan and Qing Dynasty rulers were assimilated by us. It reflects the mindset that no matter if it’s the Tang Dynasty or the Yuan Dynasty, China always had a system, and that this system would always be victorious. But after the invasion of America and Europe, we were no longer able to consider our system eternally victorious. So, we have made these claims like, “the territory we had in the Yuan Dynasty is still ours,” but today now that we have been bullied by Europe and America, we have to realize that “Chinese” is a dynamic identity. It is not static.

Rose Tang: I’ve been thinking, why does the [Chinese] word “country” (guojia 国家) combine the words “nation” (guo 国) and “family” (jia 家)? In China, ruling a country is just like ruling a family; ruling a family is like ruling a country. It’s top-down. The elder generation, the grandparents, manage the parents, and the parents manage you. It’s not equal or democratic. It has always been this way. When it comes to politics and the nation, the emperors or national leaders rule over the ordinary people. It’s still this sort of top-down hierarchy.

This power structure is the same as that of a feudal clan. The national power structure and the family power structure are still like this even today. It’s a little better now. Some of the Chinese media have written articles saying people have to teach their children how to interact as equals. They can’t just tell them to be good, to just be obedient. When we were young we were always told to be obedient, and listen to our parents, teachers, and the Party. We were asked to take on a subservient, slave-like relationship.
Gao Wenqian: This also touches on history and culture. In Chinese culture, the most basic, most essential guiding principles were the “Three Cardinal Guides and Five Constant Virtues” (san gang wu chang /san gang wu chang/): officials must obey the emperor (jun wei chen gang /jun wei chen gang/), sons must obey their fathers (fu wei zi gang /fu wei zi gang/), and wives must obey their husbands (fu wei qi gang /fu wei qi gang/). This is one of the most basic set of principles. Another is the concept of “great unity” (da yi tong /da yi tong/). This concept is actually at work in the innermost part of Chinese people. [China] must be big, it must be united, and only in this way can the country become great.

Peter Kwong: However, the ancient kingdoms and the modern country of China today are completely different. The interests and scope of the ancient dynasties were very small. As long as you paid taxes and were not in opposition, you were fine. Everything else you did yourself. Today’s society is different. The government wants to participate in everything.

Yi Ping: Yes, this is true. China’s geographical domain is very large, but the society is small. A village is a few hundred people, society is only that size.

Peter Kwong: Right, [overseas] China-towns are like this too.

Yi Ping: They all manage themselves. [They are] autonomous and have nothing to do with the government. Before it was true that officials’ power extended down only as far as the county seat, and below that there was no government.

Rose Tang: This is small government: the government doesn’t manage too much and lets things run their own course. But the Communist Party manages everything. Neighborhood committees, this kind of thing . . . . In America, my biggest realization has been that the neighborhood committees here are totally different from ours [in China]. The neighborhood committees here claim their own rights over the buildings and the street, and they take initiative with protection, civic leagues, neighborhood activities. When I talk to my parents in China about these neighborhood committees, I have to spend half the day explaining it, because it’s such a completely different concept. China’s neighborhood committees have a system for registering permanent residents, and they keep a personal dossier [on citizens]; these are very restrictive in a frightening way.

Gao Wenqian: After the Communist Party took power in 1949, they destroyed 2,000 years of village traditions, including the tradition of local autonomy. From top to bottom, they controlled things, right down to the individual. They took away every social function that had existed before and changed it into an omnipotent, totalitarian society. For rural people, this meant that if you were born in a particular village, you could never leave it. These conditions show that there’s an essential difference between traditional Chinese society and the post-1949 communist society. The household registration system (huji zhidu /huji zhidu/) allows the government to manage you all the way to your deathbed. Of course, since the reform and opening of 1979, the developing trend is that this [system] is slowly eroding. But, rural people are still second-class citizens. When they go into the city, farmers-turned-migrant workers have to do the dirtiest work. Education for their children, housing, and so forth are very big problems. On the other hand, I think that civil society is slowly expanding. Although this expansion is very slow, I think that sooner or later it will inevitably go down this road.

Rose Tang: I think the key is the development of civil society. In the aftermath of the earthquake, we saw and realized the strength of civil society.

Peter Kwong: While there has been some change, it is
still the case that if the public is dissatisfied about something, there isn’t a system in place to solve the problem. People let it stew inside until they can’t hold it in any longer, and in the end they resort to violence. Then, it turns into . . .

Yi Ping: It turns into a Weng’an incident.³

Peter Kwong: Now, violence is erupting in too many places. Things have to change. These violent uprisings are not normal. The authorities used to say, “If you don’t obey us, we’ll come find you,” but now there are simply too many problems. This is a challenge for the government to address. One of the reasons behind Hu Jintao’s rise was that when Jiang Zemin was in power, he overlooked these issues. They were hoping Hu Jintao could fix these problems, but he didn’t have any answers either.

Rose Tang: The scope of this problem is too broad and it exists on too many levels. Before, it was only migrant workers, farmers, or laid-off workers. Now, every social class is being affected. Everyone is being affected by repression or corruption. No matter where you go, you see signs of injustice. People don’t think of government officials as Bao Qingtians.⁴ Instead, they place their hope on journalists to act as virtuous officials and resolve wrongs is a tragedy for society, and furthermore, journalists can’t even report on most of these issues. I know many very daring Chinese investigative reporters who, if they are determined to report something in their own locality, have to hide their family members. I know one reporter who carries around a police baton so that he will be prepared to fight anyone who might give him trouble. This Beijing reporter says that he receives dozens of pleas for help over the phone almost every day. But if he is able to report even one of these stories a month, that’s pretty good. The media is slowly gaining some freedom, but it is also subject to many restrictions. The only hope for ordinary people is this one little channel that the opening up of the media provides. Young reporters especially are extremely brave and skilled. Also, they know a lot about the world because they go online and use various methods to see blocked websites. They understand how it is, but they are also very unhappy. They are like teapots that have no way of pouring out tea. They are almost ready to explode. The whole thing is like a volcano. There are small eruptions here and there. Nobody knows when the whole mountain will explode.

Sharon Hom: Looking back over China’s history, is there a tendency to promote intellectual orthodoxy or discourage plurality of opinion? Does China’s cultural and historical heritage suppress diversity?

Gao Wenqian: China is a one-party state. It has to stifle dissenting voices, shut out anyone it doesn’t like, and strike down civil society groups. This reality has been passed down through history. [In] the Spring and Autumn [Zhou Dynasty] and Warring States periods, there were the contending “Hundred Schools of Thought,” and the country was divided into many small kingdoms, kind of like Europe today. Even a provincial city could be a kingdom. But after the Qin Dynasty, China was unified. During the Han Dynasty, there was a very clear policy of wiping out the “Hundred Schools” and only allowing people to learn Confucianism. Having many different schools of thought was no longer allowed, scholars were only allowed to study Confucius and Mencius. If you studied them well, you could serve as a government official. If you didn’t study them well, you could go farm, but you wouldn’t have any way of moving upwards in society. This mentality was passed down even to the time that authoritarianism established by the Party in 1949. Of course, much of the authoritarian system came from the Soviet Union, but the traits were already in our own history and culture, and that is why it was so easy for [the Soviet ways] to fit
in. Mao famously said during the Cultural Revolution that he was a combination of Marx and Qinshihuang. Mao said it himself. Marx represents the things brought over from the Soviet Union, Qin Shi-huang represents the wide-ranging influence of China’s own despotism which dates back from when it first became a country.

Rose Tang: Why is it that the study of traditional Chinese culture has been renewed? How does studying Confucius count as studying traditional culture? What about Lao Zhuang6 Liezi7? Why do all the other philosophers get ignored? Under the current definition, studying traditional culture means only studying Confucianism.

Gao Wenqian: Almost a hundred years ago, during the May Fourth Movement, they were already speaking of overturning Confucianism. During the Cultural Revolution, they wanted to completely destroy Qufu8 in Shandong. At the time, Tan Houlan9 brought people and destroyed Confucius’s tomb and his ancestral temple. So why is it that Confucianism is emerging again now? First of all, I think it’s because Communism in its original incarnation is completely bankrupt. The party used to depend on ideology. (Unlike how it now depends on violence and mobsters—that came later.) They used ideology to make you censor yourself. So at the time, the people didn’t dare think too much about anything. Communism as an ideology went bankrupt, after the Cultural Revolution, people didn’t believe in it anymore. This left an empty space in people’s thinking. Then a lot of different types of thinking emerged amongst the people; for example Falun Gong, or [ideas] from the West, these things all came in. The government had to think of a way to keep a hold on the people. So in 1995, Jiang Zemin introduced the idea of “governing the country based on morals” (yi de zhi guo 以德治国). By this, he meant bringing back Confucius and Mencius. Of course, many of the people promoting the study of traditional Chinese culture are professors at top universities, but behind the scenes the government is propping them up. They give them a lot of resources, allow them to go on CCTV and give lectures. Why is this topic so hot? Because the things that used to be there are no longer there. Since Deng Xiaoping’s reform and opening the people have turned to material goods and money. As a result, the morals we used to have are now lost. People are killing others, swindling them . . . .

Rose Tang: But you shouldn’t underestimate the people. The eyes of the people are sharp. They won’t necessarily believe whatever the Party promotes. Yu Dan, Liu Qiuyu, Yi Zhongtian, these people who are advocating the study of ancient Chinese civilization. . . . [I heard] Yu Dan10 recently went to Xiamen, Fujian, to publicize her book, and she was totally unable to sell tickets; no one wanted to go hear her speak. I think this is very interesting. Those of us in the field of media sometimes get quite worried that perhaps this is the start of a new age of brainwashing. But I don’t think it’s necessarily so.

Sharon Hom: So you’re saying that the public may not be on the same page as intellectuals?

Rose Tang: The people are not so easy to trick now, they’re really not.

Peter Kwong: We used to identify someone by whether or not they were “red” (hong 红), not by their profession. But now 70 to 80 percent of the Central Committee have a college background. Three people on the Politburo have PhDs. The number of people with PhDs [in the government] is higher than in America. They think that since these officials have PhDs they must be qualified for their positions. If you’re a graduate of Fudan, Peking University, you are qualified. These are all ideas from before: revering Confucian scholars. It’s not just that they’re promoting [Confucianism]. In many ways they are really putting it into action.

Rose Tang: Universities and academia have totally been bought. If you want foundation grants or whatever, you can’t butt heads with the government. You have to keep up friendly relations with them.

Sharon Hom: Yan Li, Yi Ping, do you think that intellec-
Gao Wenqian: Why are there so few serious [written] works now? The reason is very complicated. First of all, it has to do with how fast-paced society is now. People don’t have as much time as they did before; readers want things fast. The concept of “spending ten years to polish a sword” (shinian mo yijian/斯坦磨一剑) doesn’t exist. People want to read very short stories. As for writers, they are in a very difficult predicament. They can’t write anything that is profound and criticizes reality. You can’t touch Tiananmen, you can’t touch the Cultural Revolution, you can’t touch the Anti-Rightist Movement, and you can’t touch Falun Gong. Second, they themselves need to make a living. They have to cater to the speed of the market, the baseness of it, and popular demand. It is very difficult for them to make a decision that lies somewhere between these two.

Sharon Hom: Then where is the impetus for change? Is it in the market economy, the next generation, urbanization, new technology like the internet, or increased contact with the outside world? Which do you think is more influential? Are there other possibilities? Where is the hope?

Yi Ping: The key is freedom of publication.

Rose Tang: I don’t think it’s just a problem of censorship and freedom. The problem is that the spirits of writers and artists have been worn away. Many of them are led by the trends of the market. They only think about becoming famous and making money. Their hearts are not at peace. As we said before, the pace of society is too fast, but the other thing is that their spirits are confused. It’s an overall degeneration. It’s a tragedy of civilization. I’ve heard about our 5,000 years of civilization since I was young, from classical texts to Lu Xun’s in modern literature, but today there is nothing good. It’s terrible. There is nothing. Where is China’s civilization?

Sharon Hom: Where does reform come from then? We want to help promote progress and change at HRIC. We don’t have the luxury of being pessimists.
Peter Kwong: I think there is a very important reason for optimism. From the Chinese government’s point of view, they see themselves as a dynasty. We have had 13 dynasties, and some of those dynasties were divided into “former” and “latter” time periods. Some dynasties were long, some were short. If we feel now that the system is imperfect, that it has many flaws, that it is in decline, and so forth, the most important thing is to ask, “what kind of pressure are the people putting on it?” If there is more space, and free speech is allowed to emerge, this creates a kind of weakness in the system; it also creates a kind of pressure. Will the Chinese government be able to change? They themselves know that the current system has huge problems. The optimism lies in the fact that dynasties must always fall.

Gao Wenqian: There is a Chinese saying, “you should take a two-pronged approach” (shuang guan qi xia 双管齐下). On the one hand you need to push the system. At the same time, you also need to push forward the economy, culture, society, and the humanities. If you push on all fronts, then eventually you may have a little progress, but it’s an extremely long process.

Rose Tang: In line with that comment, I think it’s important to ask: To whom are we catering? In my opinion, the next generation is the most important. Young people now go online, and they think things are free, things aren’t bad, China is pretty good. They criticize America and Bush, and they think the government is very open, that the army is very powerful. During the earthquake everyone was quite happy with the system, and then the Olympics. . . .

Yan Li: The post-1980, post-1990 youth, they think that society has been good to them.

Rose Tang: They think everything is great. They are the ones who have been most profoundly brainwashed. I think this is a focal point. How do we enlighten this generation? I am in contact with some young people on the Internet. There is a minority that really knows who Wei Jingsheng is. This is very gratifying to me. I didn’t learn about Wei Jingsheng until after I moved abroad after 1989. But now there is a group of this kind of people. And then there are also people who are doing volunteer work in NGOs. They might not have gone abroad. They might not have much of an understanding of democracy or human rights. They have a self-initiated sense of justice because there really is too much injustice. I’ve been to a lot of places and after I reported some of these, I really felt that I didn’t want to do this work any longer. There is too much injustice. As a journalist, there was nothing I could do to help these people. I felt very powerless.

But in recent years, since 2003, everywhere in China from the Northeast to the Northwest, Sichuan, Yunnan, NGOs have emerged. Some were started by migrant workers; some are environmental groups started by students. Negotiating salaries, resisting relocation, there are many kinds. They’re all self-initiated, but they lack a guiding ideology. As a journalist, I’ll have a meal with them and chat, but there’s only so much I can say. There are some things that I can’t bring up because I don’t want to get them in trouble. But they can see everything online. When I bring something up with them, they’ve already seen it on the Internet. But the majority of people, I think, have been brainwashed, even students who have studied abroad. The Wang Qianyuan incident has strongly demonstrated that. But she has also given us some hope. She is so young, but so brave.

Peter Kwong: In my opinion, there is a lot of talk about the so-called nationalism of these overseas Chi-
nese. But I think this will gradually change on its own. For example, I came from Taiwan. Once I encountered the American government’s view of Taiwan, once you encounter these things then you know, and you begin to change. If objective news about society can enter China, then this will force Chinese people to face reality, and to open up.

Rose Tang: Right now there is a fake opening up. You’re not allowed to open your mind.

Peter Kwong: With what has been happening with the Olympics, you can talk about how bad the foreigners are. But slowly they will start asking questions. As more news is allowed to enter, and as more people go abroad, there will be a kind of natural struggle.

Sharon Hom: But doesn’t what you say just reflect the Washington consensus? That things will naturally become more open with the entrance of more news, more contact with the outside world? That change is inevitable and will happen on its own? But it might not actually happen that way. Even if those in China are able to encounter more diverse types of information, will it really reach the public? Not everyone goes online. And the ones who go online are usually educated and male and urban.

Rose Tang: Also the majority of people who go online are just chatting or playing games.

Gao Wenqian: I think we need to be more tolerant, more embracing of the post-1980 and post-1990 generation. I am from the generation that was brought up during the Cultural Revolution. When we were young, we all “drank wolf’s milk” (he langnai 喝狼奶). In other words, we bought into the Party culture. We all used to believe in Mao Zedong, we believed in him fanatically. But afterwards, we were the ones who rebelled against this system. So from my own personal experience, when looking at these young people, I think we shouldn’t lose hope. The paths of young people inevitably change direction. The most important thing is that you give them the facts: both truth and falsity. Open up information and let them compare for themselves, let them use their minds to contemplate this comparison. They’ll come to their own conclusions.

CONTRIBUTORS

Gao Wenqian, a scholar in the contemporary history of China, has over 14 years’ editorial experience and is currently the Senior Policy Advisor and Editor-in-Chief of Chinese Publications at HRIC. In China, he was an Associate Research Fellow and Deputy Editor-in-Chief at the Communist Party’s Research Center on Party Literature. In the United States, he was a visiting scholar at the Woodrow Wilson Center, the East Asia Institute at Columbia University, and the Fairbank Center at Harvard University. His research areas include the Sino-U.S. relationship and Chinese foreign policy of the 1970s. He is the author of Zhou Enlai: The Last Perfect Revolutionary.

Peter Kwong (PhD Columbia University) is Professor of Asian American Studies and Urban Affairs and Planning at Hunter College, as well as Professor of Sociology at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. He is best known for his work on Chinese Americans and on modern Chinese politics. He is the author of Chinese America: The Untold Story of America’s Oldest New Community and Chinese Americans: An Immigrant Experience, co-authored with his wife, Chinese historian Dusanka Miscevic, among other works. Dr. Kwong recently returned from Sichuan, where he was working on a documentary piece on the earthquake aftermath.

Rose Tang has been reporting on China since 1996. She was a visiting professor of journalism and fellow at Princeton University in 2007. Born and raised in Sichuan, she worked in Hong Kong and Australia as a journalist for 15 years. She was named the “Best Local Journalist” by the Society of Publishers in Asia in 2005, and won a gold medal in New York in 1997 for a radio documentary. She worked for The Standard, CNN and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. She is currently writing a book on China.

Yan Li is a Chinese avant-garde poet, novelist, and painter. He was born in Beijing in 1954 and in his formative years he became associated with the Stars Group of artists and writers, noted for their abstraction and surrealism, and the Misty Poets, who gained recognition in the late 1970s for their subversion of social realism through reliance on emotion and personal imagery. In the mid-1980s, he moved to New York where he founded the magazine First Line (Yi Hang), which collected the writings of many contemporary Chinese poets and translated American poetry. His work has been translated into French, English, Italian, Swedish, Korean, and German.

Yi Ping is Editor of HRIC’s monthly online journal Ren Yu Ren Quan. He is also a poet and an active member of Chinese PEN. He graduated from the Chinese Department at Beijing Teachers College. After teaching Chinese literature and language for 11 years at Beijing Foreign Trade School and for six years at Mickiewicz University in Poland, he came to New York as a visiting scholar in the Asian Studies Department at Cornell University from 2001 to 2003.
Notes

1. Sun Zhigang (孙志刚) was a young college graduate beaten to death in 2003 by police in Guangzhou. He had been taken into custody for failing to carry his temporary living permit and identity card with him. Public outrage and calls for a special investigation led by Chinese lawyers triggered the most significant police reform since the founding of the P.R.C.

2. Haishenwei (海参崴) is now a city in Russia called Vladivostok.

3. On June 28, 2008, up to 30,000 people in Weng’an (瓮安) County, Guizhou Province, stormed government buildings in reaction to what many saw as official mishandling of an investigation into the alleged murder of a teenage girl.

4. Bao Qingtian (包青天) was a Song Dynasty official whose legendary devotion to justice and virtue has made him a popular symbol of the “pure official” up to the present day.

5. The Hundred Schools of Thought (baijia zhengming 百家争鸣) extended from 770 to 221 BC. Regarded as the golden age of Chinese philosophy, this period saw the creation of China’s most influential schools of thought, including Confucianism, Taoism, Mohism, and Legalism.

6. Lao Zhuang (老庄) refers to Laozi (老子) and Zhuangzi (庄子), the two thinkers commonly attributed with writing the essential texts of Taoism during the Warring States Period.

7. Liezi (列子), believed to have lived during the Warring States Period, wrote the Taoist book Liezi.

8. Qufu (曲阜) is the birthplace of Confucius.

9. Tan Houlan (谭厚兰) was the famous leader of the Jinggangshan Regiment from Beijing Normal University who in 1966 led a group to Qufu to destroy Confucian relics.

10. Yu Dan (于丹) is a professor at Beijing Normal University whose lecture series on the Analects and Zhuangzi has been a bestseller in China.

11. The Chinese Writers’ Association (zhongguo zuojia xiehui 中国作家协会), established in 1953, is led by the CPC. Its self-professed purpose is to organize writers to “study the guiding policies of the party.” It awards literary prizes, publishes journals, runs a press, and operates several literary institutes.

12. Lu Xun (鲁迅) was a prominent writer and intellectual in the early 20th century. He is widely considered to be the founder of modern Chinese literature.

13. Wei Jingsheng (魏京生) is a democracy activist who played a prominent role in the “Democracy Wall” movement of 1978.

14. Wang Qianyuan (王千源), an undergraduate at Duke University, was vilified by other Chinese students after she tried to encourage dialogue between Tibetan demonstrators and pro-Beijing demonstrators in April 2008.
The longevity and continuity of Chinese culture and civilization is legendary, so goes the universal mantra of today’s mainland tour guides. Emphasis on continuity itself has a long pedigree; it was, indeed, a central preoccupation of Confucius, who some 2,500 years ago set out not to “create” a philosophy but rather to articulate and pass on what he saw as wisdom and traditions that were already ancient. The point for Confucius was not to change the moral world but to describe and preserve it; and in that sense he was quintessentially and quite deliberately conservative.

In modern Chinese history, since the rebellions, colonial intrusions, and wars that convulsed the Qing Dynasty, two broad and interrelated issues have preoccupied—and frequently divided—Chinese intellectuals, officials, and rulers. First, whether and how far to break with the past, and whether to reaffirm and stand by its traditions and values. (As the most extreme effort to break with the past, Mao Zedong’s Cultural Revolution proved so spectacularly wretched that it is hardly surprising there should now be a countervailing revival of interest in a more “traditional” China.) Second, how much to borrow from overseas: Is it enough to transfer scientific and technical know-how or is it also necessary to study, adopt, or adapt political, legal, commercial, and administrative systems and institutions? (This discussion has now reached the interesting terrain of innovation. Will an economy that depends largely on technological imitation ever be creative enough, without institutional change, to rise above reliance on cheap and disciplined labor?)

These debates continue today—indeed, now that communism has disappeared in all but name, they have renewed resonance—and they are audible in the contributions of the roundtable panelists presented in the previous section (pp. 6–14). There we find echoes of pride in Chinese civilization, offset by a feeling that this pride has been manipulated and corrupted by the Communist Party, as well as a feeling too that China labors, as Gao Wenqian puts it, under the “burden” of history. In a sense it is a double burden. There is actual history marked by the perennial struggle to maintain intact what is, by a very long measure, the world’s most populous and enduring empire; and there is the officially constructed history, with its deep and assiduously cultivated sense of grievance—that China was brought low by outsiders, notably the West and Japan—which distracts attention from the need for internal change to create more equitable and sustainable rule. All of this can generate a feeling that China is somehow trapped in itself.

But real continuity, even continuity of the cage, requires cultural transmission: new generations must think and act in much the same ways as their forebears. So, given the zigzagging discontinuities of the last few decades, it becomes relevant to ask what is going on in the hearts and minds of young Chinese people today.

FAREWELL TO ALL THAT

There are at least four respects in which the life experience of Chinese citizens born within the last 30 years has differed profoundly from that of their parents. Some of these changes are internal to China; others reflect, to varying extents, global change.

First, owing to the notorious family planning policies of the “reform” era, today’s children and youth are/were raised in small families, very many of them as “only children.” In China one often hears the complaint that this produces over-indulged “little emperors,” spoiled (but also pressured to achieve) by parents and grandparents who have only one focal point for their care and vicarious ambition. However, Ai Bai has a different story to tell in the article that follows (pp. 49–51). His decades of experience as a rural teacher and youth worker lead him to conclude that today’s youngsters are more assertive and confident, and less inclined to the unquestioning obedience that characterized the Confucian ideal.
Second, there has been a pronounced increase in formal educational opportunity and attainment. Many Chinese and international educators and activists have pointed over the last decade to alarming disparities in access to and quality of education, and quite rightly so, because these inequities are marked and growing. There is even some evidence of rising illiteracy among the poorest and most marginalized social groups. (This reflects current patterns of poverty that extend well beyond China’s borders: a few people enjoy great wealth; many just about make ends meet; a sorry underclass gets left further behind than ever.) But this should not obscure the facts that, overall, a larger proportion of the Chinese population than ever before is completing nine years of elementary schooling, a larger proportion is going on to complete high school and college, and a larger proportion is studying overseas. (See “Education: More Extensive but Less Equal” on p. 47–48.)

Education is a basic form of cultural transmission and the state of course has a strong interest in—and, in China, more or less absolute control over—shaping curricula in order to shape citizens. Indeed, China’s state has long led the world in this. Some of the shaping that happens today is cultural in a narrow sense (first-graders learn Tang Dynasty poetry); some is clearly ideological (the official narratives of history); and some invoke rituals of allegiance (raising the flag and singing the anthem). The near-universalization of state education strengthens national and centralized constructions of history, language, and identity at the expense of localized and customary worldviews. This is especially true in China, where the distinctive cultures of non-Han nationalities (shaoshu minzu 少数民族) are at least still recognized in official parlance as nationalities, not merely “ethnic minorities.”

However, this kind of thought control, which all states exercise to at least some extent, is by no means total in China today. Over the last two decades, both curricula and teaching methodologies have changed substantially in response to pressure to promote national development and international competitiveness, and new disciplines have opened up in higher education. Significant factors have included: (i) new managerial, technocratic, and business elites who want better schooling for their own children—this includes Chinese “sea turtles” (haigui 海龟) who have studied overseas, and whose brains the Chinese government is determined to lure back, and who will want better schooling for their own children; (ii) educational researchers and administrators, many of them whom have studied at postgraduate level overseas, as well as schools that are eager to attract fee-paying students from new elites, have shown interest in “quality education” methods that pay less attention to rote learning and somewhat more to creative collaborative work; (iii) at tertiary and, now, high school level, there is much greater interaction—and growing competition—with international institutions; (iv) the ability to read foreign languages, most notably English, has spread rapidly and was initially far more important than the Internet in making non-Chinese thinking available to the intelligentsia.

Intellectual freedom is hardest to find in the humanities and social sciences, but even in these fields there is greatly increased latitude compared to 20 years ago, at least in terms of what can be read, not only in foreign languages but also in Chinese. For example, Chinese publishing houses recently put out translations of James Scott’s Seeing Like a State and Amartya Sen’s Development As Freedom, two favorites of mine. Sen’s book was quoted liberally in the 2005 United Nations Human Development Report for China, Development with Equity, which was written by Chinese researchers from the State Council’s own Development Research Centre. There was a long delay in publication while the National Development and Reform Commission studied and demanded changes to the text; but eventually a somewhat milder version did see the light.

Of course, it is fair to say that this relative freedom is largely confined to intellectual elites and seldom extends to publishing original opinions. It is also true that Chinese students from kindergarten onwards are subjected to intense pressure, both competitive and parental, driven by the belief that “education changes fate.” The teaching and assessment system is heavily geared to pushing children to the top of the academic ladder rather than meeting the real-life needs of the majority, who step off on lower rungs. This handicaps students from rural and, especially, minority nationality backgrounds who, contending with relative poverty at home and second-rate classroom environments, are
the least likely to rise far, and so must continue to endure the ignominy of hearing from their urban cousins that they are people of “low quality.”

Yet, despite all of these and many other shortcomings in formal educational provision, there is no doubt that most Chinese people in their twenties today are far more knowledgeable and have had more exposure to diverse opinions than their parents, whose education in most cases was largely confined to parroting Mao Zedong. This does not mean that China will suddenly become a nation of libertarian free-thinkers, but it may mean that the orthodoxies promulgated by Party ideologues will have to become somewhat better-reasoned and more evidence-based (as, indeed, has been signaled in the Hu-Wen “scientific approach to development” rubric).

An interesting subplot of this story is that, in its eagerness to expand tertiary education, the government has created far more university and college places than graduate employment opportunities. A growing pool of unemployed graduates may well prove harder to control than illiterate peasant “surplus labor,” especially if the graduates are endowed with some of the assertiveness and independence of spirit that Ai Bai has noted.

GLUED TO THE TV

A third major change for China’s younger generations is that they were born into an era of mass communication. A great deal of attention is currently paid to the impact of the most modern, interactive communication technologies: the cell phone, Internet, chat, Facebook, etc. Again, these changes encompass the globe, not just China, and they do beg fascinating and important questions. But in my view it is still too early for answers; leastwise, those who get the right answers will either be prescient or just lucky guessers, for we do not yet have much real evidence or experience on which to base an opinion.

It is worth considering, though, a powerful medium that is sometimes overlooked because its novelty has worn off: television. In 1982, only two percent of Chinese households had access to television. By the mid 1990s, coverage had become virtually universal, barring only the new underclass. Today’s Chinese teenagers are thus the first generation to have grown up with the constant stimulus (some would say anesthetic) of TV. It has, like formal education, become an important mode of cultural transmission, a new shaper of citizens. It is, like formal education, subject to state controls and thus, prima facie, might serve as a vehicle for promoting ideological conformity, just as it promotes and universalizes the national language.

The power of television is evidently not lost on China’s political leaders. The point of recruiting Zhang Yimou to direct the Olympic Games opening ceremony was that it had to look good on TV—and not just to a billion Chinese viewers but to an estimated three billion foreigners. (Zhang, even without the support of Steven Spielberg, was an astute choice. I once attended a dinner where Zhu Lin, wife of former premier Li Peng, angrily denounced Zhang who, she said, “just made films for foreigners” that “did not show the real China.” So he was definitely the right man to impress the world!)

But the Communist Party is not prescient and it is unlikely that it foresaw the full impact of following richer countries into the television era. Controlling news content is relatively easy—but not altogether so, as Chinese media professionals begin to discover their vocation and aspire to compete with international networks. In other programming, TV opens up new lenses and mirrors, offering glimpses of previously invisible worlds as well as showing ordinary people representations of themselves in soap operas and dramas that attract huge audiences. Policing these is much less easy because, if they fail to reflect real concerns and interests, viewers will simply vote with their remote (and are, in ever increasing numbers, going online to find shows that don’t make the satellite networks).

Elsewhere, TV has proved on the whole to be powerfully demotic, tending to dislodge “high” culture from the elevated position that it occupied across Europe for centuries. Today the Queen of England has come out of the Royal Opera House and into the music hall: she watches TV along with the rest of us. Politicians in democracies have found “telegenic” qualities increasingly essential (even without democracy, Chinese leaders will come under similar pressure). New heights of populism are
now being reached (or depths plumbed) with “reality TV” and the associated phenomenon of ordinary people becoming celebrities who can oust the royal families of Europe from the continent’s gossip magazines. And these trends are rapidly internationalizing. Shows in the style of American Idol, with audiences participating as voters, have become highly popular with Chinese viewers, and a show in the style of Friends, which also borrows dashes of “reality” from the UK’s Big Brother, draws 1.5 million viewers to the Mofile video website.

None of this is to say that TV is an unequivocal good, or even a good at all. Some would strenuously argue the contrary. (See Robert Putnam’s Bowling Alone for a detailed and data-rich argument that in the United States, TV has impoverished civic associational activity, undermined community bonds, and lowered social trust.) But it is certainly a powerful shaper and reflector of perceptions and self-perceptions, of what “the masses” think about and how. And the Communist Party is not in any real sense leading the development of this cultural space; it is reacting to it. Naturally the Communist Party wants to control and manipulate the space, but is it so omniscient that it really knows how? I doubt it. Last year an edict was issued requiring TV entertainment to be “ethically inspiring.” As management strategies go, this looks no more inspired than Canute’s edicts to the tides.

And how will China’s traditional esteem for moral sages and intellectual elites fare under the rising tide of popular culture? Can we imagine Confucian tele-evangelists competing with shopping channels and game show hosts in the TV ratings? Well, maybe. But having to compete in the marketplace of ideas and cultural influences was no part of the original Confucian vision.

**DETACHED FROM THE NANNY STATE**

Another aspect of universal TV coverage—the power and reach of its advertising—relates to the fourth point I would highlight which is, obviously enough, the development of a mixed economy and entrepreneurial society. This has strong elements of crony capitalism, for economic opportunity in China remains intimately connected with administrative power. If local entrepreneurs lack political connections, they generally have to do without credit from state-controlled banks and often endure bureaucratic interference from rent-seeking local authorities. At the same time, although the Communist Party adopted an almost entirely laissez faire approach to “township and village enterprises”—which, during their heyday in the 1990s were a key driver of economic growth and seemed a kind of halfway house to a private sector—the Party remains strongly interventionist, intent on developing, sheltering, and directing powerful “pillar enterprises” to hold up the new sky.

Nevertheless, and in complete contrast to the experience of their parents, Chinese people born since 1980 have grown up in a society where personal initiative is not the political liability it once was, but rather, an increasingly important asset. Following parents into the field or factory, keeping their heads down, and doing only what they are told is neither a necessity nor much of an option for today’s youngsters. Fortune favors the adventurous, whether their options are as narrow as working on a construction site in the county town or as expansive as selecting a university for overseas study. But without special connections and influence, they also face intense competition for scarce opportunities and niggardly state or collective protection against personal failure. Personal freedom can be both daunting and tough.

Chinese parents and grandparents, whose own youth was spent in such different circumstances, are not necessarily well equipped to advise their children on how to navigate these new waters. An emerging “generation gap” is a growing concern on both sides of the gap, especially among better-off, urban families whose young people are beginning to enjoy some of the material prosperity and personal liberties that came to Western youth decades ago: some disposable income and choice of how to spend it; moving out of the parental home and into independent accommodation before marriage; sex without (not merely “before”) marriage and more chances to explore sexual orientation; more opportunity to experiment with creating their own lifestyle and identity—all under the marked influence of TV. This new kind of life experience and the difficulties it brings to communication across generations cannot but nibble away at the traditional bonds of parental authority, if not affection and respect, while eroding the
power of elders as the custodians of morality.

Extensive personal freedom is, of course, mainly the privilege of what are often called—somewhat misleadingly, since their incomes are well above the median—“China’s middle classes.” A proper understanding of generational change in China would require a distributional analysis of how it differs across social groups; for economic reforms are bringing not just a “free market”—which sounds so cheerfully liberating—but increasingly complex social stratification in which the costs and benefits of production and consumption are distributed far from equally. Nevertheless, the factors I have mentioned (smaller families; more opportunities to receive a wider-ranging education; a broader cultural life with more space for self-examination; greater need for self reliance) touch all but the destitute underclass to at least some extent. And it seems to me that this is making young Chinese significantly different from their parents.

This does not necessarily mean that new generations will be politically radical, or actively resist Communist Party rule. To all appearances, the great majority of young Chinese today continue to concentrate, much as their parents did, on personal and family advancement. (And they should not be despised for that. In China there is an immense, pent-up desire to enjoy better living standards after long years of almost universal austerity and poverty. Only the genuine ascetic, who has denied herself all material comfort, has any right to frown on this.) China’s youngsters may, however, prove more assertive than their parents in defense of their own interests, although not necessarily under the banner of—or even with any special interest in—human rights. Maybe. We do not yet know.

It is also the case that many young people are beginning to exercise not just personal but also civic activism and initiative—partly, although not exclusively, through around 5,000 NGOs, according to China Development Brief’s last rough count (in 2006). It should by no means be assumed, however, that all voluntary, civic activity must somehow be politically oppositional or even tend naturally in that direction. The 13 years I spent in China closely observing this field led me to conclude that most of it isn’t and doesn’t. The majority of social activists I knew were aiming not to unseat the Communist Party but only to co-exist with it. This does suggest a developing plurality of sorts, but not the “democratic surge” that outsiders, looking at China, often hope to see and that some try, usually ineptly, to promote.

It is also instructive to remember the generation gap that was perceived in the late 1960s and early 1970s in the United States and Western Europe. This too occurred against a background of momentous change in the actual experience of life. Oral contraceptives gave women, for the first time in human history, easy and reliable control over fertility; while generations of men coming of age would, in at least some countries, never have to face being press-ganged by a local lord or the nation-state into dying in some war. This was in many ways liberating and, in my view, it brought profound cultural change. But it was not, in the end, the politically radicalizing development that many at the time predicted. In fact, somewhat to the contrary, many of the Parisian soixante-huitards who ran around in the late 1960s thinking they were Maoists, and the baby boomer weekend hippies who sat around smoking pot and listening to The Grateful Dead, went on to bear children who in very many cases proved more politically conservative.

But the fact remains that generational change is clearly happening in China—even if it does not fit the wishful vision of some observers—and that this entails a cultural shift, a significant pulling away from tradition. For
better or worse, Chinese people are, like everyone else, being drawn into a post-traditional world; and, unless we regard culture as no more profound and meaningful than a folkloric badge (a kilt for a Scotsman, chopsticks for the Chinese), it is perfectly obvious that Chinese culture is changing significantly. (And why not? Things that do not change have, sooner or later, to be pronounced dead.) The continuity story is precisely that—a story. In most respects today’s 20-something year-old Fudan University graduate has far more in common with her counterparts in New Delhi or San Francisco than with the Chinese contemporaries of Confucius.

CULTURAL RECONSTRUCTION

It is entirely understandable that, having abandoned its “dictatorship of the proletariat” project, the Communist Party of China should seek to prolong its reign by renegotiating its relationship with the Chinese people. This is not because it is “communist” or because it is Chinese; it is simply in the nature of human institutions to reinvent reasons and strategies for their own continued existence when their operating context changes. (Do we ever hear of political parties or movements voluntarily disbanding because their historical task is accomplished?) Thus, creating new narratives of legitimacy is an urgent task for the Party. Over the last two decades legitimization strategies have largely centered on stability and prosperity—the argument that only the Party can hold China together and deliver development—but this claim has been weakened by the growing social divisions that a more dynamic but much less equal economy has brought. It is now a perfectly logical strategy for the Party to try and bolster its standing by associating itself with the idea of—even implying that it should take the credit for—a Chinese cultural renaissance.

The reinvention of “Confucian” society is of course a chimera. It might be possible to reconcile the Confucian ideal of structural stability and permanence with a stagnant, autarchic form of communism, but it is impossible to reconcile with the restless dynamism of global capitalism. For, as Marx famously emphasized, capitalism is all about change: sweeping away old customs, destroying “Asiatic culture” (New York Tribune, 1853), and “battering down all Chinese walls” (The Communist Manifesto, 1848). And it is hard to imagine a form of capitalism more offensive to the Confucian ideal, with its attachment to public virtue, than China’s current state of robber baronetcy, with not-so-virtuous officials deeply engaged in capital accumulation.

But these points are in fact largely irrelevant to the process of ideological reinvention. A mythology does not have to be true in order to matter; it just needs to be believed. Besides, there is a rather glaring precedent for re-connecting with antiquity: the European renaissance, when the Catholic church began to lose its ideological grip and classical Greece and Rome came back into scientific and artistic fashion, leading Enlightenment thinkers to cast themselves—even if somewhat speciously—as intellectual descendants of city-state democracy. (Democracy with slaves, bien sur.)

So the real question is, what can the Party make people believe? I don’t know the answer, but, prima facie, there is plenty for Party ideologues to exploit, and build on their past success. For in China, there is already a deep desire to believe in cultural unity and continuity. (A Chinese person is far more likely than a Canadian or a Patagonian to take offense at my skeptical approach to cultural continuity; I can anticipate the bloggers’ obloquy.) And, in times of great change, when many people yearn for some moral certainties to hold on to (as is also suggested by the rise in both authorized and unauthorized religious belief in China), it can be comforting to believe that one is securely anchored to one’s past. The brilliantly ahistorical claim that things have “always” been this way—e.g., that Tibet has “always” been part of China—lends a comfortable solidity to the status quo.

But, on the other hand, the Party also has to cope with new, cosmopolitan yet demotic cultural influences: from TV sitcoms to the “management success for idiots” books that, irritatingly, clog up Chinese airport bookshops. (Where is the poetry, for God’s sake? That’s what I want on a plane.) The Party allowed this to happen, but I have no sense that they are in control of the consequences. We live in a puzzling era of deliberative and elective culture, where Western corporations have snatched the baton from NGOs in celebrating diver-
sity—just look at HSBC’s advertising campaigns—and in which people, lucky people that is, mix ‘n match a bit of this and that: tai chi (taijiquan 太极拳) before breakfast, black jazz musicians after dark. This has hitherto mainly been the privilege and habit of Californians, but my experience of China was that Californication had started, in at least some places. I don’t know what to think about this except to repeat that we need, if we want to understand anything, to watch and listen out for young Chinese people instead of poring over the annals of Party history and whatever damned decision was made at whatever plenum of whatever forlorn committee.

It is, finally, also the case that “Confucianism,” just as much as Marxism or Christianity, lies open to a variety of interpretations. Confucius has been the victim of journalistic simplification, in that (non-Chinese) broadsheet readers tend immediately to connect him with authoritarian rule. (In this, his fate resembles that of Plato, whose “Republic” comprised only a small and untypical part of his vast output; yet, to modern readers it is by far the best known part, and routinely anathematized as politically unsavory; the noted philosopher and defender of liberal democracy Karl Popper famously dubbed Plato, along with Marx and Hegel, the “enemy” of “the open society.”) But this is a very narrow reading.

Vodaphone is currently running an advertising campaign across the UK with the slogan “I am who I am because of everyone.” This strikes me as a fairly direct rip-off (and not a bad summary) of the Confucian concept of the person—as being not the freewheeling, autonomous moral agent of the Enlightenment that Kant and Hume and Sartre took for granted, but part of a moral nexus, defined by responsibilities and duties to others. (And therefore, logically, we just have to keep phoning and texting them all at only 10p per message!) The rip-off troubles me, but I find nothing scarily totalitarian about the original thought; rather, it’s how my life feels to me.

And how about Confucius’s “san ren xing, bi you wo shi” (三人行必有我師), roughly: “where three people walk together, at least one of them must have something to teach me.” Not a bad anthem, I would say, to human reciprocity, exchange, and participatory learning. (And if I see it on an advertising hoarding next year I will revert to autonomous moral agency and sue.)

We have already seen how, in China, “harmonious society” has become the rhetorical framework within which people argue about politics and society; often with hues of subtlety. A resurgence of Confucian studies and discourse need not mean an end to contestation, dialogue, communication; it might even be a new beginning. And it is by no means necessarily a bad thing that a Chinese philosopher, rather than a European Marx or Lenin, should provide the intellectual framework for this debate. Activists and observers alike will just have to brush up on their Analects.

Notes

1. James Scott’s Seeing Like a State critiques the large-scale experiments run by central governments in the 20th century, including Mao’s Great Leap Forward. Scott challenges the attempt to model society based on scientific laws, and argues that these experiments most often resulted in disastrous human tolls.

2. In Development as Freedom, Nobel prize-winning economist Amartya Sen argues that development cannot be achieved through markets and GDP growth alone, but also hinges on rights such as political freedoms, education, and healthcare.
For Chinese children, the experience of grade school is inseparable from the Young Pioneers—founded by the Communist Party—which claims 130 million members (ages 7–14), making it the largest children’s organization in global history.

Nearly every student is initiated in second grade and thereafter participates, both during and outside of school hours, in activities designed to inculcate patriotism and loyalty to the Communist Party and its leaders. In addition to attending daily flag-raising ceremonies and learning tales of hardship endured by young martyrs of the past, students act as hall monitors or serve on safety patrols to foster a sense of personal duty to the Party.¹

At age 14, youngsters become eligible to join the 75 million-strong Communist Youth League (CYL), and the most promising students are strongly encouraged by teachers and school officials to do so. Workers and rural youths may also form CYL clubs, and these account for nearly half of the total membership.²

The League delivers political education through lectures, meetings, discussion groups, film screenings, and so forth. It also arranges social activities to build esprit de corps. Members are required to submit periodic reports on their ideological development.

The League is in turn a major training and recruiting ground for full Communist Party membership (which is by invitation only). It is also an important arena for acquiring political experience and a power base; Hu Jintao is among the current, senior Party leaders who formerly held high office in the League.

Based on the Leninist, Soviet model to deliver the Party “line” to young people, these “mass organizations” seem rather anachronistic in today’s fast-changing society. Many members take the ideological instruction with a large measure of salt, but still see membership as a sign of social status and a means of personal advancement—especially since Jiang Zemin’s “Three Represents” theory urged the Party to embrace technical and business elites. Nevertheless, as one former Pioneer told The New York Times, “Little kids don’t really understand the talk about ‘loving the Party,’ and later you may think some of the Young Pioneer stuff was funny... But that kind of talk gets into your blood.”³

Over the last two decades, the Youth League has moved some way toward embracing a social welfare, as opposed to exclusively political, role. In 1989, the League established a Youth Development Foundation whose flagship Project Hope has been China’s most successful state-sponsored philanthropic institution, raising more than $200 million to support education projects, most famously, scholarships to return drop-outs to school. In addition, the League oversees several Youth Cadre Training Colleges that once offered only political programs but that are now also training youth and community development workers for placement with urban district governments. This evolving social role has been encouraged through exchange and partnership programs with dozens of youth organizations from Hong Kong and overseas.

Still, the League’s formal apparatus continues to provide a comprehensive—indeed, quasi-military—command structure for mobilizing loyal youth in political campaigns, and a channel for disseminating new orthodoxies. There is clear potential for them to adopt a more “Confucian identity” in the future; indeed, doing so may make them more credible to youngsters puzzled by the convoluted turns of a latter-day Communist ideology.

What happens, meanwhile, to the tens of thousands of young Chinese who now study abroad (and many of whom are Youth League members)? Are they off the ideological leash?
Every Chinese embassy around the world includes at least one official from the Department of Overseas Chinese Affairs (qiaoban 侨办), whose job it is to liaise with local diaspora communities and muster among them support for Beijing’s position on major issues (e.g., Taiwan, Falun Gong, Tibet). To pursue these ends, the government of China provides generous funding for local diaspora Chinese associations and media. As China rises economically, these efforts appear to be bearing fruit, especially among Chinese communities in Southeast Asia, where ever more business and community leaders are enthusiastically embracing Beijing.4

Relatively unresearched, however, is the question of what, if any, links the qiaoban has with overseas student communities, and what, if any, measures the government of China takes to maintain the students’ political allegiance during this period of international exposure. The numerous, campus-level Chinese Students Associations are, at least formally independent.

Historically, however, the hearts and minds of Chinese overseas students have not been unswervingly set on the motherland, for China continues to suffer a brain drain from students who decide to settle overseas. According to a 2007 study by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, of 1.06 million people who had left China since 1978 for overseas study, only 275,500 had so far returned.5

Notes


The Young Pioneers (少先队)

(Excerpted and translated by HRIC from the organization's official website, http://cyc6.cycnet.com:8090/ccylmis/cypo/jczs.jsp)

**Members:** Anyone between the ages of 7 and 14 who is willing to join, willing to respect organizational rules, and has applied to and been accepted by the group committee can become a group member. Currently, there are 130 million members of the Young Pioneers.

**Flag:** Red flag with a five-pointed star and a torch.

**Emblem:** A red ribbon inscribed with “Young Pioneers,” along with the five-pointed star and torch.

**Uniform:** Red Scarf

**Salute:** The right hand should be raised high above the head with all five fingers together. This is to signify that the people’s interest supersedes all.

**Slogan:** “Be prepared to struggle for the cause of Communism!”  [Response:] “Be prepared at all times!”

**Song:** “We are the Successors of Communism”

**Pledge:** “I am resolute in following the instructions of the Communist Party of China: study hard, work hard, labor hard, and be prepared to devote all my strength to the Communist cause!”

**Work Conduct:** Honesty, courage, vivacity, and unity.

**Founders and Leaders:** The Young Pioneers was founded by the CPC. The Communist Youth League, commissioned by the CPC, has direct leadership over the Young Pioneers.

**Mission:** To unite for the purpose of educating young children, to obey the Party, to love our country, love the people, love work, love science, and take care of public property; to diligently study, exercise, and develop skills; to resolutely contribute to the establishment of a modern socialist country with Chinese characteristics; to work hard to become the talented people needed to establish socialist modernization; and to serve as the successors to the cause of communism.

**Organization:** Schools (or villages) organize large or medium detachments, which are then composed of smaller divisions.

**Advisers:** The Communist Youth League selects a few outstanding members, invites teachers who have displayed ideological progress, moral integrity, abundant knowledge, and a love for children; or leading individuals from various fields to serve as advisers or instructors to the Young Pioneers. They are close friends and mentors for Young Pioneers members. They help the medium or large group committee members with their work and organize activities. Currently, there are 4 million school advisers, as well as 800,000 outside advisers.
Members: Chinese young adults between the ages of 14 and 28 who have acknowledged the rules and regulations of the group and are willing to participate in a division of the group, invest energy into their work, execute the group’s decisions, and pay their membership dues in a timely manner can apply to join the Communist Youth League.

Members who have joined the CPC can still retain their membership in the Communist Youth League. If they are 28 years old and do not hold a post in the League, however, they may not retain their membership.

Flag: The flag of the CYL is red, to signify the success of the revolution. In the upper left-hand corner is a yellow five-pointed star surrounded by a yellow circle, which signifies the generation of Chinese young adults closely united around the CPC. The flag can be used at any of the group’s important meetings or on days set aside for CYL activities.

Song: “How Glorious, the Communist Youth League”

Mission: The Communist Youth League firmly endorses the guiding principles of the CPC. Guided by Marxist, Leninist, and Maoist thought, as well as the theories of Deng Xiaoping and the “Three Represents,” they thoroughly implement the concept of scientific development, emancipate the mind, pursue the truth, keep up with the times, and unite young adults from every ethnic background across China in order to establish a stronger democratic, civil, harmonious, socialist, and modernized country, and to struggle for the eventual realization of Communism.

Emblem/ Badge: The CYL emblem includes the group flag, a wheel, a sheaf of wheat, a rising sun and its rays, and a ribbon inscribed with “Communist Youth League.” It signifies that young people from all different ethnic groups are united under the glory and brilliance of Marxist, Leninist, and Maoist thought, and are forging valiantly ahead in the direction to which the Party points them. The group’s divisions and members should use the emblem according to regulations.
This group of eight Chinese people studying in the United States, aged 19-33 and ranging from undergraduate to post-doc, includes two with longer-term experience living in the U.S. and others with a social activist background. Asked to describe their major impressions of being overseas, and the differences from their experiences in China, the participants responded so willingly as to leave room for only one follow-up question: what, about China, do they most take pride in? In deference to Chinese tradition, the oldest participant gets the first word.

GQ (Male, 33, undertaking post-doctoral medical research in USA): I am the oldest, and am no longer called a young person. I am 33 years old. I studied medicinal chemistry at Beijing Medical University. Then I went to Peking Union Medical College Hospital for my PhD, also in medicinal chemistry. I researched AIDS medicine for five years. Now I am serving a three-year stint as a visiting scholar at the University of Pennsylvania. I am currently researching children’s medicine.

I grew up for more than 30 years under China’s political system. Once I came to this country, which was completely unknown to me and operating under an entirely different political system, the impression I got was that it was very free. Perhaps Mr. Gao has much more experience than I with this. It is so free here. I can give you a very small example. Please do not use my real name in this, because I would like to return to China alive.

Yesterday afternoon I went to listen to a talk by the Dalai Lama in New York. I didn’t completely understand everything because the jargon was specific to religious theory, but I was quite interested in what happened after the class was over. Before he had started his talk, there had been people outside protesting, people who opposed him. They were demanding that he stop talking, “give us back freedom of religion in Tibet,” etc. What I noticed was this: after the talk, the Dalai Lama had already left, and the people who had been listening to his talk were leaving. These were the people who supported him, so as they came out there arose a sort of stand-off between the two parties. They started protesting against each other. What were the police doing during this time? Confrontations are very common. They happen in every society, but the attitude of the police was a reflection of the difference between China and America. If this were to happen in China, things would be very different. First of all, before the meeting, people who oppose the Dalai Lama wouldn’t have even let you in. And afterwards, the [authorities] would not have allowed the two parties to be on the street confronting each other. What they are always trying to sustain is a “harmonious society,” one that appears on the surface to be completely harmonious, with no voices of dissent and no conflict.

However, police in America seem to be more concerned about preventing incidents which could result in peoples’ physical harm. Both sides have the right to fully express their own opinions. They give you space.

So when the two parties had pretty much protested to their heart’s content, and supporters of the Dalai Lama were holding up a dollar bill saying that the others were “bought off by the CPC” (zhonggong shoumai de 中共收买的.) The police waited until the protesters were done, drove a car over, and peacefully carted them.
away. Then it was over. This is a major difference between China and America. We can think about what they would do in China if they were unable to prevent the protest from starting. If they didn’t anticipate that there would be a protest, and suddenly one erupted, like a Falun Gong-related protest, then they would employ different measures to take care of things. They would not use peaceful methods to achieve resolution.

“In America, there are vast amounts of opportunities given to [people] for free … to improve themselves, to experience the beauty and wonder of this earth, to learn new things, and to acquire tools for their own personal growth.”
— GQ, male, 33, post-doctoral medical researcher

A second example in which I noticed a difference would be in the teaching of humanities-related subjects. If you were to study chemistry in China, it would be pretty much the same as studying in America but studying the humanities is different. Humanities depends on your method of thinking, or who you are inside, or your understanding of culture and the profound background behind certain issues. When I was in [Washington, D.C.] it was like this too, but in New York and Philadelphia, you could get into all the museums for free. Or at least there are one or two days a week that are free for the public. Libraries are also very accessible. There are so many opportunities for you to experience cultural traditions. It doesn’t matter who you are, a professor, a PhD, or a black person. When I was at the library, I noticed that quite a few black people came in, didn’t pay a cent, and were able to read as much as they wanted. They were treated the same as white people. They were treated the same as professors and lawyers. Commoners are given the opportunity to improve their own circumstances. There are so many opportunities for commoners to improve themselves, to experience the beauty and wonder of this earth, to learn new things, and to acquire tools for their own personal growth. In America, there are vast amounts of opportunities given to you for free. In China, the educational system is very different. In China, you are controlled by tests. Even if you had a leisurely and carefree attitude and wanted to take two days off to visit some museums, it would be of no use. Visiting museums doesn’t help you on tests. But in China, you don’t have the opportunity to freely visit whatever museum you want anyway.

A third difference, that shocked me was that [in America,] you hear ambulance and police sirens every day. Every few minutes there’s a siren blaring and a car goes by. I asked my friend why this was the case. I’ve never seen this in China. Why does this occur? At night, right when I’m about to fall asleep, I hear sirens everywhere. I asked, if it was because public services are so practical and readily available in America. If you have the smallest problem, someone is there immediately to help you. He said, “You seem to be right, at least for the most part this seems to be the case.” In China, public services and institutions don’t have this attitude toward the needs of commoners. They are busy doing other things.

“In China, you are controlled by tests. Even if you had a leisurely and carefree attitude and wanted to take two days off to visit some museums, it would be of no use. Visiting museums doesn’t help you on tests.”
— GQ, male, 33, post-doctoral medical researcher

STT (Female, 24, studying social security and labor relations): I pretty much agree with GQ. I have been here for about the same amount of time. I can talk about a few different aspects. First, I’ll start with differences I’ve noticed in everyday life. At first glance, the environment of Beijing and New York seems to be pretty much the same (tall buildings, bustling, fancy, etc.), but I soon realized that when looking at the details, things are actually very different. What deeply impressed me was the people. No matter if you’re on the subway, on the street, or anywhere else, I get the impression that people are very gentle. Maybe because you know everyone has their own problems, people seem to be well-mannered. If you accidentally bump into someone and you say, “I’m sorry,” and the other person says, “That’s fine.” It
makes you feel better. If this happened in China, you could start a fight if you're not careful. This is one thing.

Another thing [that made an impression on me] was riding the bus. The bus stops are very small, and there's a bus stop on every corner. The bus drivers drive very slowly and they say "good morning" to you and tell you where to get off the bus. Also, they provide excellent services for handicapped people on public buses. They even have those elevators that go up and down for them.

In Beijing, riding the bus is horrific. The drivers are very scary; they curse at people.

Also, we live in an apartment in New York provided by an AIDS organization and it's a very big building. They provide persons with HIV/AIDS with rooms; they have their own property. I think, in China, they wouldn't provide this for them. In addition, anything the government might offer this kind of a group wouldn't be this nice. Also, people living there can get training: medical training and work training. Their setup seems very nice and it's decorated very nicely. It appears from the outside to be very clean. This is very different from China.

Also, I have met a few students since I've been in America. There are many differences between them and Chinese students. American students seem very independent and very good at analytical thinking. They have their own opinions. They know what their own interests are. This is what Chinese people lack. For all these years, we have been force-fed like ducks. For so many years, our teachers have been telling us what to study. And they're very utilitarian. We study what we're told is good, but anything other than that, we don't even give a cursory glance. But American students are very interested in many fields, including international relations, and other topics. And they are so happy to help others. This is a major difference.

I just mentioned independence and will give an example. I have a friend whose daughter came to America to attend high school or something. Now she is a university student. During her summer break, she went to Ireland or some place like that to visit. When she got there, she got a temporary job. Later, she realized she didn’t have enough money left to buy a plane ticket home, so she stayed there for a little while longer. Her mom helped her get a plane ticket home in the end. It's unbelievable to me that a university student would be courageous enough to go out traveling like this all by herself.

Another difference that has left a deep impression is in the area of information. When I came over from China, I was, you could say, a naïve child. I have worked for LD's organization for almost a year now. I'm pretty good-natured, and I'm only working part-time at this organization, so I think that even though I'm slightly aware of the dark side of things, like what happened with Falun Gong, June Fourth, etc., I am not deeply affected by it and I'm not extremely shocked. But after I came here, I have met so many people, including many June Fourth activists and other dissidents. You could say that my former positive impression [of China] has been completely overturned.

“American students seem very independent and very good at analytical thinking. They have their own opinions. They know what their own interests are. This is what Chinese people lack. For all these years, we have been force-fed like ducks. ...This is a major difference.”

— STT, female, 24, student of Social Security and Labor Relations

Even when I was at the Chinese embassy watching the Tibet protest...people were out there yelling, “Free China!” and “China's lying!” To people who have just come over from China, this can leave a very bad impression. It can be very shocking because they are criticizing a representative of the nation that you once thought you could trust. And then they’re telling you that things are not as you thought. I have slowly come to learn more about the Dalai Lama and Tibetan issues. Just this morning, I went to a meeting about the Dalai Lama. All these things have made me realize how closed China really is. It has made me realize that the Chinese government is fooling people. Perhaps all of you
already knew this, but if you were to ask Chinese people to come to this conclusion on their own, it would be very difficult.

“[In the US], there exists a very interesting culture of diversity in which people coexist. ...You can have many people oppose you, but there is no need to cater to others. In China, when you do something ... you have to consider what would make the person above you happy. There are no alternatives.”

— GW, female, 20, student of Political Science, Psychology, and Economics

GW (Female, 20, studying Political Science, Psychology, and Economics): I would like to add to that. When I came to America, my impression of America was two-sided. A country like America does not rely on a sort of fatal attraction, but instead it relies on the strength of forgiveness. Here, I think there exists a very interesting culture of diversity in which people coexist. For example, you can have your own thing that is completely different from other people's things. You can have many people oppose you, and there is no need to cater to them. In China, when you do something, you have to think, you have to guess, you have to consider what would make the person above you happy. There are no alternatives. You are not the same as the person above you; you can't guess what he wants. You have to get into Peking University, Tsinghua University, or another good university. Actually in America, if I go to Duke or Harvard or Yale, it's all the same. Even though each school has its differences and they have differing degrees of fame, no one actually cares which school you go to. When I was applying to these schools in China, I only applied to the top ten schools. I was upset for a very long time about being refused by Harvard. After I came here, I realized your opportunities are equal. That is to say, life gives you many choices. If you don’t choose A, you can choose B, C, or D. It’s not necessarily true that if you are unsuccessful early in life, you will have more problems later. If you slowly accumulate success, things may get even better for you.

I've realized how multi-faceted life is. I have realized that a major difference between China and America is that one country's culture pursues the natural course of events, while the other pursues man-made standards. These standards, whether from a document or an attitude put forth by the national government, are something you can't come up with just by guessing. Also, China has many talented actors, such as Zhang Ziyi, Jet Li, etc. If they say or do one thing wrong, all of a sudden they are cursed all over the Internet. It makes you feel like it is very difficult to know how you should live—very, very difficult. It is difficult to know what to say, what to do. What should you do? Don't do anything!

So since I have come here, I have learned how to be myself, how to not care what others think of me. Thus, as a 20 year-old, I make my mistakes, I walk my path, and whether or not it is successful I choose to follow my heart. I feel that in China, you use your mind to influence your heart. In America, you attempt to use your heart to set goals in your mind. You don’t have to make long-term, five-year, or ten-year plans, and then find in the end that you aren’t even walking that direction anymore because life changes faster than your plans.

“Since I have come here, I have learned how to be myself, how to not care what others think of me. Thus, as a 20 year-old, I make my mistakes, I walk my path. ... I feel that in China, you use your mind to influence your heart. In America, you attempt to use your heart to set goals in your mind.”

— GW, female, 20, student of Political Science, Psychology, and Economics

I really like some aspects of Buddhism and Taoism. It was actually not until I came to America that I began to like various aspects of Chinese culture. When I was in China, I liked American culture. People are like that; they like things that complement each other. They treasure the things they can’t obtain. I live in rural
America, in North Carolina. There are trees all around, there are plenty of places to visit, and you can practice meditation or yoga when you're in a bad mood because you can really enter into nature. Sometimes I swim at a river with my friends. It's one of those places where the rock has been blasted out and turned into a quarry. There are people, dogs, and even snakes there. On Independence Day weekend, there were tons of people there. I don't know where they came from, but as soon as it was the Fourth of July, people young and old, male and female all went. It was an atmosphere of happiness. In China, though, the doors of people’s homes are closed. At least that was how it was in our community in Qingdao, I'm not sure about others. No one wants to air their dirty laundry. But in America, you can just take off your shoes, wear plain clothes, go out to the river and jump in laughing. You can do whatever you want to do. Some people [there] do carpentry. Even though they don't produce the most beautiful work, they'll tell you, “This is what I was able to make. Perhaps this isn't the best, or what you might want, but it's what my heart considers natural beauty.” It just feels so natural.

I recently ran into a bit of friction with my friends ... it reveals some differences between China and America as well. You have to be open with others. Because I’ve just come over from China, when I do things I am still especially intense and my emotions fluctuate a lot. One day I'll be happy and they'll all want to be with me, but then yhr nrcy, I’ll be sad and they feel that I am internalizing things.

“I have learned two things here [in the US]. First is how to deal with personal relationships and love others. Second is how to love nature and society; to move outwards instead of stuffing things inside.”

— GW, female, 20, student of Political Science, Psychology, and Economics

I just read an article that was saying that China's history is personal history. Shi ji (史记), for example, is all about individual’s stories. Chinese people feel that the 1840 Opium War still influences the feelings of the Chinese people today. My friend and I often discuss politics, and he said to me, “Chinese people always say that they’re ‘offended.’” But you can’t let your feelings affect the way you perceive society. People are too easily hurt. I don't know why this is, perhaps it is because in Chinese society, they make sure that on the surface they look beautiful, even if they are very deeply hurt on the inside. Any small thing—even something that doesn’t have anything to do with them—can hurt a person. Take, for example, those who practice Falun Gong. If something does not happen as they had hoped, or if there is something in society that makes them unsatisfied, it can cause great disruption in their hearts. This little thing triggers them to think about the unhappiness they have experienced in their past life.

“In China, if people hear that you are so and so’s child, like Chen Xiaodan at our school, the grand-daughter of Chen Yun [late vice-chairman of the CPC Central Committee], . . . She is using the nation’s money, and she would go to class wearing necklaces worth a million yuan. She could do whatever she wanted to do, and she never studied. . . . In America, it would be very difficult to get the approval of people by acting this way.”

— GW, female, 20, student of Political Science, Psychology, and Economics

In conclusion, I have learned two things here. First is how to deal with personal relationships and love others. Second is how to love nature and society; to move outwards instead of stuffing things inside. Still though, I am often hurt because I haven’t learned these things completely.

YL (Female, 19, studying Advertising and Media, also works part-time in catering): There is quite a difference in the education systems of America and China, especially in the weekday/weekend schedules. In
realized what I had said wrong. When I returned to Beijing once, I visited my cousin at his university. I remember him telling me that university was “hard to get in, easy to get out,” whereas in America, it’s “easy to get in, hard to get out.”

Also, I know that in America we have financial aid. I am not sure if they have it in China, it seems that they don’t. In America, if you don’t have money, you can still go to school, you still have many opportunities. In China, you don’t. If you didn’t get a good score on your college entrance exam, you have to take it again before you can get into university. In America, they can separate out different students. If you aren’t a good student, but you test really well, you can still get into a good university. And if you aren’t a good tester, but are good at other things, you can also get into university. But in China, the education system is very difficult. I remember when I was visiting a friend in China once, I was complaining to him about school. I said, “My homework is too hard, I have to memorize 200 years of history.” My friend looked at me and said, “Are you joking? China has 5,000 years of history, how can you even begin to compare your workload with mine?”

Also, it’s easier for people in China to study English. In Chinese, you have the four tones, and every character is different. For Americans, studying Chinese is very difficult. It’s almost impossible for them. I have a lot of friends studying Chinese at Baruch, and they’re about to go crazy. They say, “I don’t know how you learned all this!” So, I feel like it is easier for Chinese to come here. It will be easier for them to learn English than for Americans to go to China [and learn Chinese].

GW (Female, 20): I have noticed that in America—because I’ve been working in the admission’s office—people really like those who have come from a rough family background and have taken on challenges. They don’t care if they are at the same level as others. Everyone is different and they all have different family backgrounds. Take, for example, the children of immigrants. Even after studying, they may perhaps only get a 700 on their SATs. They may feel that you are still better than a candidate who comes from a family in which both parents went to Harvard and who got 800s on their SATs.
They would feel that you are quite impressive. Your parents never went to school, and you were an immigrant, and you had to study English, and you have to study and make the grades all while having to work and provide for the family. There are many who are willing to give people more opportunities. They feel that you shouldn’t have to compete unfairly.

In China, the better your circumstances or the more money you have, the less you have to work. But in America, if you have money, you have to study even harder. Otherwise, people will just say, “I’m sorry, I don’t care if your parents graduated from Harvard, we’re not just going to let you in.” No one will just hand you this kind of opportunity.

For example, take someone like Paris Hilton. Everyone thinks she is just a money-worshipper and not the slightest bit intelligent. But in China, you can be so and so’s child—like Chen Xiaodan at our school, the grand-daughter of Chen Yun—and use the nation’s money, and go to class wearing necklaces worth a million yuan. She can do whatever she wants to do, and she never studies. It is very easy for her to get into high-level banquets. In America, it would be very difficult to get the approval of people by acting this way.

When I hear Chinese students complaining about how hard school is for them, I don’t even want to hear it. Since I’ve come to America, I don’t get to sleep until 3:00 or 4:00 in the morning. There is a lot of academic pressure because in a good school, everyone is smart. So getting a good grade is still important to me, but it isn’t the most important thing. There are too many things to consider, too many things of interest that I want to explore. Right now I am really interested in Psychology, so every day I get a huge pile of books on Psychology and read them continuously. There are many lectures, and when I don’t have too much to do, I can go to a concert. There are some things about Buddhism and Taoism that I would like to study. I want to go to France and Italy. I’m actually studying three languages right now, and I haven’t learned any of them particularly well, but these are opportunities. I feel that if people can have this many options, they can decide for themselves what they want to be devoted to and go for it.

In China, students still complain, even though they have a teacher telling them that if they study A, B, C, and D, they will get a good grade. I don’t get it. In America, teachers’ requirements are much higher than your realistic abilities. You get the impression that only 10% of students are able to get an A. Whether you’re at Harvard, Yale, or Columbia, only 10% of students get A’s. And all of these students are so gifted. In competing with them, you find that even if you choose not to sleep, you still can’t necessarily get a high grade. Also, no one will tell you how to do well on the test, and if you don’t sleep, you might do even more poorly on the test. My first semester here, I was constantly struggling with the question of whether or not to sleep and how much I should study. It wasn’t until later that I just relaxed and stopped complaining. I decided that whether I get a C, or B, or A, it doesn’t matter. Take things step by step . . . . No one tells you how to do it; you have to find out on your own. We have all the resources, we have an academic advising center, but no professor will tell you the “best” way to study. Even if you go to their office hours, they still won’t tell you how to study.

WYS (Male, 21, senior at Syracuse University, studying Politics, International Economics, and Marketing. Born in Shanghai; came to the U.S. at age 9): I would like to add a few thoughts. My Chinese isn’t very good. I came to America when I was quite young. When I first got here, I was in the fourth
everyone understands the rules regarding demonstrations. This is very different from the demonstrations in China. On the one hand, demonstrations in China are not permitted by the government. On the other hand, though people may plan on demonstrating, it often turns into an all-out rebellion. They don’t know how to control themselves.

I have heard people say that here in America, they teach kids in school about how to demonstrate. They tell students how to exercise their rights. They have them practice, and teach them what ways are most effective and how to organize. I’ve also noticed that there are a lot of student organizations here, especially at the universities, and in the high schools, too. When I came here in 2006, I gave a lecture for a colleague. He took me around to several different high schools. During these visits, their students performed for us. They welcomed us with singing and dancing. They were all just kids, about 15 or so. I feel that in China and America, the degree of talent may be about the same, but the children in America are much better at performing and showing off that talent and when you watch white and black people dance, you feel like their movements are so precise, and they are so happy to be performing. This is a difference.

Also, if you look at [student] organizations in America, there are so many in their high schools. But there are hardly any in Chinese high schools. Back when I was in school, we had a chess club, a running club, etc. But other than that, once you hit the eighth grade, there weren’t many activities. So in terms of young people’s ability to perform, or express themselves, there is a major difference.

Another difference is that American students are very idealistic. It’s not that all of them are idealistic, but I see, for example, that a lot of them dream of going into medicine. A lot of people dream of going to Africa and working with Doctors Without Borders or going somewhere and being a “Mother Theresa.” We once had a volunteer, she is at Columbia University now as well as Human Rights Watch. She once went to Henan, China, to work with China’s [World Health Organization]. She was speaking with an official there and asking about what had happened. He said that, first of all, they were
an international organization, and that they couldn’t interfere with the Chinese government. And second of all, he personally could not interfere, and so he didn’t care. Later, when my friend was talking to me about it, she was so moved she was crying. She said that she didn’t understand why, and she couldn’t believe that a person could not care about others. Americans think like this. But in China, people think that if something can’t be done, it’s very normal to just give up. If people live or die, it has nothing to do with me. Many people are more realistic when looking at these issues. But Americans are very idealistic.

Another difference is the dormitory situations in universities. It seems that most American universities, like Columbia University and Harvard University, don’t assign dorm rooms to their students. Most students live off-campus. This is an opportunity for them to improve their individual skills and shows that schools trust and respect their students. But in China, it is still the case that students cannot leave the dormitories that have been assigned to them. They can’t live off-campus. It doesn’t matter how expensive or how dirty it is, you still have to live there. That is, unless you secretly live off-campus and sneak back in whenever there is a room inspection. But you can see from this the sort of military management style that schools just don’t trust their students. They are afraid that students might do something, like live together, organize some sort of political activity, or do something else that would make them mad. These are my thoughts on the area of educational differences.

Another difference would be my impressions upon arriving in America. A few things left a rather deep impression on me. One was with regards to social order. A small example would be, when I went to Japan, I was observing the street traffic. If there was a red light, no one would cross the street . . . even if there weren’t any cars! But in America, it’s a little different. At first, nobody crosses, but as soon as one person starts to cross, everyone else follows him. In China, people don’t even look at the lights. Something interesting about America, though, is that if a person is crossing, whether the light is red or green, cars will stop for him. He won’t just rush forward honking his horn. Another thing is that here you can take a right on red. But even still, if you are walking across the street [when they are taking a right on red], the cars will wait for you and let you cross. They won’t battle it out with you. Also when they are merging, they seem to do it in an interlocking fashion. For example, if everyone has to move right, they will do it one by one. But in China, the traffic is so bad. You could probably say that 80% of the problem is that people don’t wait for each other, but instead try to go first. They fight to get ahead, but then end up stuck. I hardly ever see traffic jams in New York. But in Beijing, from morning peak until about 10:00 or 11:00 am, and then again from 2:00–8:00 or even as late as 9:00 pm, the whole city is a big traffic jam. That is a difference, traffic order.

“Here, people are very respectful of minority cultures. In China, I attended a wedding of a fellow professor from Beijing Normal University. All the professors were standing around discussing what should be done about the problem in Tibet. Later everyone decided that the Tibetans should just be “Han-ified,” then it would all be fine.”

— LD, male, 30, AIDS activist

Another thing is general atmosphere. When I first came to America, I noticed it. When I was walking down the streets, it felt so different from being in China. Americans are all so sunny. Even poor people. In San Francisco, I saw a person who was missing his legs. He was in a wheelchair. He was the kind that would be climbing a pile of trash in China. But here, he was sitting in his wheelchair and seemed very happy. He was holding a sign—he didn’t say a word—but he held this sign that said, “Smile $1,” and he was begging. But he seemed very happy, very happy. I have also noticed that beggars here have dignity. They have volunteers help them. And no one throws them aside just because they’re poor. I think this should be something we all do. Both in China and in America, poor people have a hard time taking care of themselves.
免费它，并且是一个伟大的国家，自从革命战争以来。但从美国人来看，历史上有许多令人不愉快的地方，比如越战，对黑人和华人的不公正待遇，甚至种族隔离。他把这些事情写下来，汇编成厚厚的一本书，现在还有政治漫画。如果在你们国家写这种书，政府可能先下手，人们会打死你。这里的人很宽容。人们愿意分析和重新思考。这种重新思考的能力是中国人民所缺乏的。

在今天的会议上，达赖喇嘛说去年他和七个学生一起“做思想工作”。他和他们讨论了诸如“西藏的实际情况是什么？”等问题。经过这次“思想工作”之后，只有两个学生改变了他们的观点，也就是说，只有两个学生同意达赖喇嘛的观点，其他五个学生仿佛从来没有听说过他。他们只是把他的话当作反动的宣传。他们不考虑他是否有逻辑点。中国在重新思考问题方面缺乏是因为在教育体系中，没有教授如何分析问题。

另一个差异在于社会空间。这里每个人都关心公共利益。例如，前几天我在中央公园，看到一张长椅，上面写着某种纪念，比如“这是我们50周年”的之类。而在中国，如果一个尊敬的老人去世，或者有人毕业，他们只会请客吃饭，而不会向社区展示自己的幸福财富。这是一大问题。

另一个差异在于美国税金的透明度。在每次花钱之前，都会讨论政府计划建造什么，什么地点，政府应该如何投资这笔税款。他们会向不同利益集团征求意见。例如，上个月，有个关于二胡的爱好者的聚会。在这里，有真正的艺术家在街头卖艺，而在你们国家，那只是卖艺的人。

还有一个问题是文化多样性。之前也提到过。这里的人非常尊重少数民族文化。在中国，我参加了一场来自北京师范大学教授的婚礼。所有的教授都站在那里讨论如何解决西藏问题。后来大家都决定，西藏人应该“汉化”，这样问题就解决了。人们不尊重不同少数民族的文化。我在北京教满语课程，当时，根据达尔文的“适者生存”理论，人们认为少数民族文化最终会被淘汰。但在这里，他们非常尊重原住民文化，包括美国原住民文化，他们努力保护这种文化。这种尊重是非常重要的。

另一个差异是新闻自由。前两天，我在图书馆读一本书...由霍华德·金撰写，一个著名的左翼人士。他正在重新分析美国历史的黑暗面。我们在中国看美国，如何民主，多么自由，因为从革命以来，尽管有美国人的观点，有许多令人不愉快的地方，比如越战，对黑人和华人的不公正对待，甚至种族隔离。他把这些事情写下来，汇编成厚厚的一本书，现在还有政治漫画。说你是否要在你们的国家写这种书？如果政府先下手，人们会打死你。这里的人很宽容。人们愿意分析和重新思考。这种重新思考的能力是中国人民所缺乏的。

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we were at a lawyers’ group meeting at Housing Works. We were discussing how the government wanted to cut the budget of its AIDS program, and how everyone should travel there and protest and demonstrate. Even though the budget was still cut, there was a channel for us to voice our dissenting opinions to the government. In China, this would be impossible. People are free to talk about issues like taxes here in America.

Another difference is a feeling of freedom. When you are in America, you very rarely feel pressure from the government. You feel entirely autonomous. When I went to Japan, the most you had to say was *sumimasen* (“I’m sorry”). If you even just accidentally brushed up against someone’s shoulder, you had to say this. In America, it wasn’t always necessary to say this, but in Japan you had to. Going from China to Japan, the level of required politeness was *much* higher. When I came to America after that, I lowered it a bit, but it was still higher than in China. I just mean that your behavior is influenced by society, by the larger environment around you—you shouldn’t curse, you shouldn’t spit in public places, you shouldn’t take others’ things. The people around you give you this feeling, that you should control your own behavior. This is different, or perhaps non-existent, in China. There, we are completely reliant on the rules of punishment and government regulations to mandate how you behave. So I think this sort of civil regulation and accountability, this sort of freedom is very good.

CK (23, law student): I’d like to mention a few things. I don’t know much about the education system in America, I have no personal experience with that. Even the education system in China, I’m not really clear on. The experience I can speak from would be elementary, middle, and high school, since I did poorly on college entrance exams and thus got shipped out to Xinjiang. I don’t even know how I got there. They just gave me an announcement letter and I went.

But as for my reaction to my time in America, I might say a few things. I went to Wisconsin recently, and I got the basic impression that Americans have great attitudes about life. This made me feel like I needed to have a better attitude about things. But when I went to Wisconsin, I stayed four days. Those four days were significant in my life. I have been staying with many different families, four days at a time. That particular family lived in a very old house; every item in that house had dozens of years of history. Their vacuum cleaner was 50 years old. Their stove was 65 years old. Their microwave was 35 years old. Their plates and other household items were all very old as well. It was very clean and orderly. The tools used by his grandfather’s grandfather were still in the basement. Almost every day was a holiday for them. Every item in their house had a story behind it. They printed out their ancestors’ history, with pictures. They made their own record of their family’s history. The history of their town, their city, their classmates. Every week they would go visit their friends even if they had to drive four or five hours. I was so surprised, how could this old 66 year-old person be so set on travelling so far away to see another old person? And furthermore, they would only visit for an hour and a half before they had to drive back. All of this made me feel that after I return to China, I really want to take out time to spend with my dad and mom, and talk with my brother and sister. I have not done this enough. Even though I am only 23 years old, I have already been away from home for over ten years. I go home only a few days a year. Since the end of 2002, my time at home every year has been very short. It was only during the Spring Festival in 2008, that I have stayed home longer than 15 days. I have never really thought about what kind of relationship I should have with my family. Even while I was at university, I took my parents’ money and did with it what I wanted. My parents have told me sincerely that they are very happy to support me. Even when some of the things that I do hurt them, they still say they support me. I don’t know why they think they should. I also don’t know why my mother and the rest of them actually do. Even my brother and sister—they are so proud of me, but I don’t understand why. Especially when I give them trouble. Since this [visit with the family in Wisconsin], I’ve felt very guilty. I am even blaming myself [and asking myself], what can I do for my family? This has left a very deep impression on me.

Also, I have been thinking about how I need a normal life; I need to sleep normally, I need to speak frequently with my parents. Even though I have done a little of this before, I flaunted it as some sort of price that I was paying on their behalf. I know my mother really likes it
Now every person has been made to think, “Economic development is in fact the central goal I want to spend my life pursuing. And I want to tell my child this, so that he might tell his children. Our people need to be united on this, and make it the enterprise of our entire country.” The emergence of this slogan has inspired a transformation in society and in peoples’ attitudes. There is an old saying in China that goes, “It takes three generations of wealth to cultivate a generation of nobility.” That is to say, it takes three generations of the accumulation of wealth before you can raise up a generation which possesses the temperament of nobility. China still hasn’t accumulated wealth to the point of producing a generation with this noble mentality. What is a noble mentality? I won’t repeat myself, but it’s the mentality in the kind of person that is close to nature, the kind that naturally does not fear and is not timid. A person who possesses an attitude of responsibility does not pointlessly stir up trouble about things that have nothing to do with him. And with regards to things that are his business, he also does not shirk his responsibility. This kind of disposition has not yet been developed because the accumulation of wealth up to this point has not been enough.

“The guiding principles of China ... are centered on economic development ... It is not to pursue an attitude of moderation, enjoy nature, walk a little slower or visit a museum. Who has this kind of time? Every minute, every second of your life must be used to climb higher, make money.”

— GQ, male, 33, post-doctoral medical researcher

I worked for a period of time in Yunnan for the Clinton Foundation. At the time we were cooperating with a person who had been working for the Yunnan Provincial Center for Disease Control. He was over 40 years old. He had come out of the laboratory to participate in these kind of social, public welfare projects, and after about a year, he had been tormented to the point of no return. He had been in that laboratory for over 20 years. All he had been exposed to was bottles and jars. He was
a natural scientist, but once he re-entered society, he realized, “How could people’s hearts be this way?” He was cheated many times, and found that people were always trying to think of ways to make money, to accumulate their own wealth. He was vexed, and after talking with him for awhile, we all came to the consensus that the guiding principles of this country, one that is centered on economic development, have already objectified every Chinese person. That is, for the entire life of each person, or at least the years of his prime, his highest goal must be to pursue material wealth. It is not to pursue an attitude of moderation, enjoy nature, walk a little slower or visit a museum. Who has this kind of time? Every minute, every second of your life must be used to climb higher, make money, and establish more relationships. This is a major reason the various kinds systems, political, economic, agricultural, and educational, that have emerged under this kind of guiding principle are not the least bit strange. When you have teachers educating their students about this and then the students return home and hear it from their parents as well, it won’t be long before the student thinks, “I need to get into a good university. After that I need to make a lot of money or be an important official,” and so forth. “My children must go to school in America, I will send them over when they’re young. I can’t live in an 80 m² house like my parents, I need to live one that is 280m². I can’t be like my parents and not have a car for my whole life. I need three cars.” This is what they think about all day long. How are they supposed to have time to handle the people around them gently? They feel that any time spent communicating with you is a waste of time. They really don’t have time to stop.

What CK just said about not being able to see his parents, I completely understand. Everyone is thinking, “I have to work myself to death to make money, so that perhaps one day my children can have a good life. Perhaps one day I can go see my parents, one day I will report back to them. But for now, don’t get in the way of me making money.” If the country’s overarching principle is set as this, it would be very difficult for us to try to fix the surface problems resulting from it. What if you were to start classes to address this? What if you were to make all the museums free? Would people have time to go? Would they be interested in going? If they went, would they experience these undertones of humanity? Their hearts are simply not there.

“The guiding principles of [China . . . are] centered on economic development . . . It is not to pursue an attitude of moderation, enjoy nature, walk a little slower or visit a museum. Who has this kind of time? Every minute, every second of your life must be used to climb higher, make money.”

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**XZ (Female, 23, studying English in the U.S.):** I would like to talk a little bit about the issue of education. I feel that China, with regards to my generation, is just brainwashing [its people]. Beginning in kindergarten, every day they play songs extolling Chairman Mao and the Communist Party. They brainwash you from a very young age. Once you are in elementary school, you get those green scarves. Then you join the Young Pioneers, the Communist Youth League, and the Communist Party. By age six, the school has already formed in you a sort of notion: If you did not join them, then you were a bad child.

The educational system in China is like an assembly line that produces children with one kind of personality, one kind of manner. The educational system there fosters a focus on self-development. Due to extended exposure to the Communist Party’s brain washing, many people’s ability to think for themselves has already been dulled. Thus, when it comes to issues like Falun Gong and Tibet, many people just feel that they should believe the Communist Party. And because China’s media is closed, all they can see is a false show of peace and prosperity. They will never see the truth behind it. Even if many people were to learn about things overseas, they would not be willing to believe them. For example, I meet Chinese students [here in America], and they see news about Falun Gong and Tibet, and they still tell me that foreigners are just making it all up, it can’t be believed.

Also, China is always eulogizing the greatness of leaders,
so most Chinese people—even though they are slowly becoming aware of their bad side—think that they are only small citizens, they have no way of standing up to these leaders. They would rather slowly stop caring about politics and only care about their own lives.

I also want to say that in Shanghai, Beijing, and other similar big cities, China is developing very quickly. Chinese people put a high priority on maintaining the outer appearance, so city construction is changing for the better. I think that construction there looks even better than in New York. But, like those old houses in Shanghai, many are only being repaired on the outside. The inside is left in disrepair. It makes you think that in politics, they sometimes make their speeches to people on the outside, but as for those on the inside, they hold to a different standard. I think the problem of integrity is partly due to the fact that China’s income gap is so large. Many people from other cities want to come to Shanghai looking for a different kind of life. But Shanghai natives are very prejudiced against outsiders due to the concept of social status that exists in China. Thus, outsiders have a hard time getting jobs, etc. I feel that this has already led to a sort of moral conflict, because many outsiders have now turned into thieves. They are unable to meet their basic needs for food and clothing, so they cannot even begin to consider the issue of integrity.

“The educational system in China is like an assembly line that produces children with one kind of personality, one kind of manner. ... And because China has a closed media, all they can see is a false show of peace and prosperity.”

— XZ , female, 23, student of English

Also, the Communist Party preaches communism. But now, as they gradually get wealthier and wealthier, they want to safeguard their own property. There is this trend toward privatization, many people are being promoted, and their values are changing. Now they are only looking toward money. Their definition of a “good life” is already changing. They believe that a “good life” is full of wealth: big houses, cars, money, etc. They no longer feel that having a warm and happy home and an ordinary life is already a “good life.” Their definition of a “good life” has already become very materialistic.

After I came here, many of my assumptions were slowly changed. Now I feel that the road to success is not the only road. Society is so real and brutal. Many things may block the road that I originally wanted to take, and I am forced to go in another direction. But no matter what, it’s just that the road is different. In the end it will still lead to success.

LD (Male, 30): I have a slightly different opinion. I feel that even though the pursuit of materialism in China is excessive right now, a similar pursuit of the “good life” and a striving sense of individualism exist in America as well. In America, there is also a movement away from over-emphasizing work and returning to love and family. The question is, once you have earned money, how do you use it? This involves the issue of people’s sense of safety. Why does everyone work so hard to make money? On the one hand, they want to have a good life, a bigger house. On the other hand, they want to find out where their basic bottom line is.

Ordinary people just want to guarantee that they will be able to continue living—not just now, but later when they get old as well. They want their parents to be able to live in ease and comfort, and their children to be able to go to good schools. Now there are people who have calculated the cost of putting a child through school—all the way from elementary school to university—and how many tens of thousands it costs for the elderly to get surgical treatment for their illnesses. The current systems for medical treatment are inadequate. It is a little better in the city, but in rural areas, there is pretty much no medical insurance. How do you expect these people not to worry and, rather, to donate their money to society? After I donate, what happens if I get sick or if my parents get sick and die? Who will take care of us? Society definitely won’t. Nowadays you can see in the newspapers that many people all over China have gone to Beijing to appeal for help, saying that they or their children or parents have a fatal disease. What can they do? They can do nothing. The media can only cover one
or two of these stories, if there are too many, there’s nothing they can do to help. This is a very big problem in China. How do we strengthen the social security system to be like America’s?

**GW (Female, 20):** If I were to say the thing about China that moves me the most and is most worthy of my contemplation and protection, it would be our ancient culture. As long as humanity can recognize the things that are of most value. Take, for example, the Book of Changes, Laozi, Confucius, etc., we still have all these. This is because Chinese people once knew the spirit of their people and had moral principles. But now, no one dares to even mention one word to the government about their traitorous dealings with regards to the oil fields in the East China Sea. Even after the earthquake happened, no one dared to go face it with a normal attitude. What was there to be afraid of? We once had a brilliant past. This is not a pipe dream, the existence of this in our past proves that we have the strength to do this again.

“The thing about China that moves me the most and is most worthy of my thoughts and protection... would be our ancient culture. ... Take, for example, the Book of Changes, Laozi, Confucius, etc., we still have all these. This is because Chinese people once knew the spirit of their people and had moral principles.”

— GW, female, 20, student of Political Science, Psychology, and Economics

What I am relatively disappointed about is that Chinese people now are willing to conduct boycotts so easily. It’s like, “If it was a good thing, I’ll take the credit for it. If it was a bad thing, I’m sorry, I will bring you all down, and it was all your fault, not mine.” Actually, people are always judging others’ feelings based on their own. It is not necessary to make your reputation better than others’.

**YL (Female, 19):** When people ask me, “When was your happiest time in life?” My old home in Beijing has now been torn down for the Olympics. I used to live there with my grandmother and my aunts. My happiest time in life were when we would make dumplings together every year during the Spring Festival. When I was living there, my mother was living here, so I didn’t have a mom or a dad, but those were still the happiest times in my life. I think it was because I had a sense of safety—safety in my family. I’m not saying that I am not happy or do not feel safe in America, but this is what left the deepest impression on me in China. I am not saying that America doesn’t have this, they have Thanksgiving, etc. But it is really very different from China, where you sing, dance, etc. In America, if you were to go out at 3:00 in the morning [during a holiday like this], it would be very dangerous and scary. If you go out at 3:00 in the morning in China, everyone is outside smoking, drinking, chatting, etc. It’s very different from America.

“China will soon slowly move toward the right path, and it will once again present itself as an outstanding country to the world—this I do not doubt. But an outstanding and powerful China in the future does not necessarily mean a warlike China.”

— GQ, male, 33, post-doctoral medical researcher

**GQ (Male, 33):** I said so many negative things before the break, but if I were to talk about the positive, I wouldn’t have the time to say all that’s in my mind. If I were to say what I’m proud of about being Chinese, I would say, the history of China is quite formidable. Whether you look at it from the perspective of its territory, military, culture, or its position in comparison to the rest of the world, this goes without saying. But in the last few decades, the arrangement of things in this world has gone through certain changes. Some of the rules have changed. But China was sleeping when this happened. After it woke up, things had changed, but the curiosity and diligence that had been characteristic of China for so long, and the moral character that had been engraved into its very bones, was not lost. Thus, at
worst, once China awakened, it could just start from the beginning and learn it all over again. Like a child learning new international political systems, new economic rules, and new customs regarding the exchange between humans and nations. Once we have learned it, we will be a great country. The problems we have mentioned today . . . everyone has lost trust. I don’t trust you, you don’t trust him, no one trusts the government, and the government doesn’t trust its people. I feel that in the learning process, these are things that are very hard to avoid. China will soon move slowly toward the right path, and it will once again present itself as an outstanding country to the world—this I do not doubt. But an outstanding and powerful China in the future does not necessarily mean a warlike China. Of course, during a time when it has no confidence, the country is anxious about everything. But once it becomes really powerful, it should become very gentle. Whether you are talking about people’s mindsets and attitudes, or the way power is handled in the government, I anticipate that it will present itself to the world very well. I really believe this, but I don’t know if I will live to see it come to pass.

**WYS (Male, 21):** There are two things I would like to say that I am proud of as a Chinese person. One thing is the importance placed on family in Chinese culture. When I went back to Shanghai two months ago, I was there when they were celebrating several different holidays. They were very good about being together as a family, playing *mahjong* together, etc. In America, this seems a lot less frequent. Americans have Thanksgiving and Christmas that they spend together, but other times they are very independent. In this area, I think the Chinese are much better.

Another thing is that in America, I am called a minority. I am very proud of this. Our people have not been in America very long, maybe only more than a hundred years, but many are doctors and lawyers now. In truth, though, many are doctors and lawyers because their parents forced them to be. Many Chinese people abroad are pressured like this by their parents, they are not allowed to pursue their own dreams.

**STT (Female, 24):** I grew up with a really wonderful aunt. You could say that she was representative of a typical Chinese person. No matter how the times have changed, no matter how authorities, or their policies, or the federal departments have changed, it is the bottom rung, the common people, who are just quietly existing. They are the ones inheriting and passing down our traditions.

No matter what has happened, whether to my grandfather or my grandmother’s health, whether there was conflict amongst the brothers, or some sort of split in the family, my aunt would just continue to diligently press on. She took care of my grandmother no matter what went wrong, if she was in bad health, or if the family was facing rough times.

You might ask, how much has China changed? What kinds of changes have occurred in Chinese thought? What kind of impact has the outside world made on China? I think that some things are just passed down and thus retained. Every family has to have this kind of a person to keep things going.

Oh, may I ask a question? Since I have come here, I have noticed so much change in my mentality. In America you can get more information, and you can see a variety of different voices, but why are so many Chinese students here unwilling to challenge what they had once seen and heard? Why are they so unwilling to accept any other way of thinking? I really don’t understand why. I know that you just mentioned a few reasons, but I am
still not satisfied. You can’t just say that if you were educated for a long enough time in China, you will be brainwashed and you won’t be able to accept anything else. After all, we are all still young! We still have opportunities to be educated! We shouldn’t say that this is too difficult a transformation to make. I’m still confused, I don’t know how things can be this way. Because we are able to see that these things are multi-faceted, we can no longer just say, “that’s traitorous” and be done with it.

**XZ (Female, 23):** One of my friends in Shanghai is the daughter of government officials. On the one hand, officials in the Chinese government are the way they are precisely because they have gone through this kind of an educational system. They are constantly just obeying orders. They don’t think for themselves and they are not willing to believe other views.

For example, I remember that China put out a movie specifically about Falun Gong. They required all elementary through high school students to watch it. It was basically saying that Falun Gong was bad. Also, after watching the movie, students were required to write reflections on it, and they were supposed to criticize Falun Gong. Under this kind of educational system, China trains its people to follow orders. They don’t think for themselves and they are not willing to believe other views.

**LD (Male, 30):** I think an important reason is factual basis. In China, when we look at *The People’s Daily*, everyone knows it is fake. But it’s right before your eyes, so it looks real.

**STT (Female, 24):** Wait a second. Perhaps because you work here in America, you knew those things were fake. But when I was watching the news in China, I really didn’t think it was fake.

**LD (Male, 30):** Right. When we were in school, none of us dared to think it was fake. I guess what I am trying to say is that it is so easy to create fake scenarios nowadays. Falun Gong members claim that a certain number of people were abducted and destroyed. But they can create fake pictures, statistics, and stories. Then, take the Tibet situation, they have never been to Tibet. But here they are saying, “the Dalai Lama and his clique have not returned to Tibet for years so what right do they have to speak about Tibet?” I think we need to strengthen our factual basis. We need to find a way to find 100% accurate evidence that they can’t doubt, and put it in front of them. Then they would have nothing to say.

**Notes**

1. Chen Yun (陈云) was one of the Eight Elders of the Communist Party and a member of the Politburo for many years. The highest official title he held was Vice Chairman of the Communist Party of China Central Committee (1956, reinstated 1975). He was also Chairman of the Central Advisory Committee (1987–1992).
HR (postgraduate student in Political Theory, from Nanjing): I think education has a great role, and each generation may experience changes in social norms. Maybe it takes time for people to collectively realize the problems that result from everyone being selfish toward each other.

Melodie (23, graduate student in Economics, from Guangdong province): I’ve studied in Hong Kong, China, and France. I don’t think the level of compassion or civic consciousness is significantly different in any of these places. I think I saw plenty of people in Paris jaywalk and smoke. I think young people in particular are kind. However, the longer you stay in a place, the more you realize that while people may be polite, they can be just as selfish or problematic. Mainland people are not necessarily more rude. I was quite comfortable in Beijing.

HR: Hong Kong is an interesting place, because while it has plenty of Chinese culture, it also has so much western influence. I think the feeling of civic consciousness in Hong Kong is stronger. I think traditional Chinese society is organized around your family and village, so we can be distrustful of strangers and visitors. Whereas the western influence in Hong Kong has made it much more welcoming of visitors.

Danielle (25, graduate student in Economics, from Jiangsu): Hong Kong people are more polite, and they seem to be very friendly to strangers. However, I wonder about how they really feel and whether they are sincere.

Melodie (23): There are not a lot of differences in everyday life. When I first visited Hong Kong at a young age, I saw a poster that was critical of a government official, and I thought it was a scary thing. But now that I’ve spent more time here, I do appreciate these things. Maybe these kinds of things are possible because of Hong Kong’s smaller size and population.

Lucy (24, graduate student in Economics, from Beijing): I saw a female candidate competing for legislative elections.

Frank (20): I think it is quite rare for my friends to be concerned with rights or reforms. ... Most of the time, you don’t believe that your individual actions might make a difference.”

— Frank, 20, undergraduate student in Information Engineering, from Chongqing

Frank (20, undergraduate student in Information Engineering, from Chongqing): What left a deep impression on me was that the people in Hong Kong are more courteous. When you seek help from someone, even if that person can’t help you, they will refer you to someone who can. I wondered about why there is such a difference. After a couple of years of observing, I realized that people seem to have a better sense of their role in the way society is ordered.

Brandon (26, PhD student in Biochemistry, from Beijing): In Beijing, the government has had such a campaign to get people to queue up, etc., but somehow here in Hong Kong, everyone seems to be taught such courtesies from a young age, without an official government program.

“It is quite rare for my friends to be concerned with rights or reforms. ... Most of the time, you don’t believe that your individual actions might make a difference.”

— Frank, 20, undergraduate student in Information Engineering, from Chongqing
concerned with rights or reforms. I think that most of the time, you don’t believe that your individual actions might be able to make a difference.

Brandon (26): Like now, in Hong Kong, people are debating the preservation of old buildings versus new developments. I think voting on such issues may lead to an effective solution, but in many cases, I think when people oppose such things, they are opposing simply for the sake of opposing.

“I do not have much sympathy for people involved in human rights work.”

— Melodie, 23, graduate student in Economics, from Guangdong Province

Vivien (MBA student, from Luoyang): Take the development of Shanghai, where many old buildings were demolished and people were relocated. The question of whether this was positive development is still open. If more voices can be involved in the decision-making process, there might be a better result. In Zhongda, people were campaigning for low-paid blue-collar workers to have free public transportation. I thought this was good for the workers.

Melodie (23): I do not have much sympathy for people involved in human rights work. But in Beijing, I have an aunt that has friends who were concerned with policy issues in China. Some of them had given up high-paid jobs to join NGOs that work on Chinese issues. I was very impressed with these people.

Danielle (25): I think when you advocate for a particular right, you must be conscious of the rights of others.

Vivien: In Shanghai, my friends were all for demolishing old buildings because it meant greater prosperity, but they did not think about the implications it would have on people who would lose their homes due to inability to afford a similar space and location. When people are comfortable with their house, car, etc., they say that “actually, China is very stable.” But from the perspective of farmers who earn very little and need to become migrant laborers, it is difficult to adapt to a rapidly changing society.

Melodie (23): I am from Guangdong, where we see a lot of migrant workers who are really quite young—the same age as us when we were going to school—this leaves a strong impression. Now these workers seem more vocal and demanding, and my friends are scared of them. My mother has many friends who own factories, and they find these more-vocal workers a big problem, because you either can’t find enough workers or you can’t run your factory.

Ryan (student of Information Engineering, from Beijing): Listening to what has been said, I think the real question we should ask is: Why is democracy good? Why do people continue to push for democracy? Maybe this is part of development, or the next stage of development in a society. I suppose people ask what benefit can come from such changes. If you have a strong ruler who is capable and wise, there is nothing wrong with letting him/her make decisions. I think some people might advocate for democracy because they believe that it is important for China’s long term development. But unless we’ve actually had experience in government, we have no way of knowing whether we personally know better than government officials.

Vivien: I was quite amused by what Melodie said about workers. Is it really enough to pay a worker a minimal wage and to allow them to go home only once a year? Shouldn’t people have the ability to spend time with their families and take holidays?

“We should ask why democracy is good? ... If you had a strong ruler who was capable and wise, there is nothing wrong with letting him/her make decisions.”

— Ryan, student of Information Engineering, from Beijing

Melodie (23): I didn’t say that they have enough. I always felt compassion for these workers. I’m just an
ordinary person and I think I live relatively well. I just don’t think that the workers’ problems are that bad. In Guangzhou, I heard very scary stories about crime in the city. But recently, the crime situation seems to have improved. I think migrant labor has made a great contribution to urban development, and at the same time they get to earn more than they did working back on the farm. The migrant workers in a city may earn less compared to the local residents of that city, but they are still happy. Their expectations are different; when they talk to me, they say they are happy that they are earning more than back on the farm. Now workers are a lot more vocal. If they have one little problem, they can all make demands.

“Is it really enough to pay a worker a minimal wage, to allow them to go home only once a year? Shouldn’t people have the ability to spend time with their families, to take holidays?”

— Vivien, MBA student, from Luoyang

Sharon Hom: In Hong Kong, you see the annual memorial to the Tiananmen Square crackdown in Victoria Park. As young people, what is your impression of June Fourth? Did you hear about this growing up or only in Hong Kong? Or have you, even now, not heard of it?

Brandon (26): I attended the June Fourth event in Victoria Park once in 2003.

Melodie (23): You really attended?

Brandon (26): Yes, I’ve been to the event in Victoria Park. At the time of June Fourth, I was only in primary school. My father brought me to see the people. I remember seeing a sea of people. Later, I remember seeing the government television broadcasts showing an image of the body of a soldier or policeman allegedly killed by protesters being hung with a rope from an overpass. When I came to Hong Kong, I was reminded of these things. For many years, my family did not talk about these things. I have questions about what actually happened, and am still curious to find out more about that event in history.

Ryan: The American coverage at the time may have been irresponsible; for example, take CNN’s coverage of recent events. Some American media outlets may be responsible, others are not.

Melodie (23): I think American media is just as equally manipulated. I was very young at the time, and there was not much news in Guangdong. However, I remember my parents were very worried and afraid based on what they heard about the situation at Tiananmen.

Vivien: I was also very young at the time. In Luoyang we didn’t have much direct contact with anyone involved, so my impressions were not strong. We would hear reports that things were peaceful. I only heard about Tiananmen from a classmate in university. I was shocked. I once talked to an old lady who told me about the events of that night. I later went to find materials about Tiananmen and I was troubled by the actions that the government took against university students.

Lucy (24): I had heard very little about this incident before now. I think the government had to make a difficult decision in the interest of stability. We must also look at things from this perspective.

“The government had to make a difficult decision in the interests of stability [during June 4]. We must also look at things from this perspective.”

— Lucy, 24, graduate student in Economics, from Beijing

Vivien: Before I left China, I never realized how ridiculous some things are there. We arranged a tour from Hong Kong to Shenzhen, and we saw a very wasteful government project. In other societies, people would make noise about the waste, but not in Shenzhen. In preparation for the Olympics, there is a video about how to cheer. But if you were overseas, you would find it odd that a government would prescribe regulations
on how to cheer. The Chinese authorities do not understand how foreigners could find them strange.

“My overseas experience has given me better problem-solving skills. I’ve learned to approach a problem from different angles, different perspectives.”

— Frank, 20, undergraduate student in Information Engineering, from Chongqing

**Frank (20):** I think my overseas experience has given me better problem-solving skills. I’ve learned to approach a problem from different angles, different perspectives. I’ve also learned to take criticism, and to respond to people who disagree with me.

**Melodie (23):** I think the American education system teaches its students to disagree or debate from a young age.

**Vivien:** I think foreign critics are not necessarily opposed to Chinese people, they just don’t agree with Chinese government policies.

**Sharon Hom:** Can we end with a question about the Post-80’s generation? As a student studying overseas from the post-80’s generation, what strengths or advantages does your post-80’s generation have, compared to other generations?

**Danielle (25):** We have more of our own opinions.

**Brandon (26):** We are exposed to more things compared to people who remain only in the mainland.

“I think foreign critics are not necessarily opposed to Chinese people, they just don’t agree with Chinese government policies.”

— Vivien, MBA student, from Luoyang

**Vivien:** I think our generation may have started to recapture some culture or traditions.

**Melodie (23):** I agree. Some people have said that our generation has experienced more traditions compared to people born in the 60s or 70s. Of course, this is something that people tell me, and not something I can evaluate personally.

**Sharon Hom:** Well, I look forward to hearing more about each of your futures, which I’m confident will be very interesting. Thank you very much.
Despite relatively low government expenditure on education (creeping up over the last two decades from around 2.8 percent to 3.8 percent of GDP\(^1\)), China is now managing to deliver nine years of basic, compulsory education to the overwhelming majority of Chinese children.

Coverage is still patchy in some of the most remote rural and typically minority nationality areas, such as vast and sparsely populated stretches of Tibet and Xinjiang. Furthermore, children who accompany their rural migrant parents to urban areas generally face discriminatory fees as well as social prejudice in state schools (although practice varies considerably between localities, with some local governments working much harder than others to integrate migrant children). Most children of migrants therefore attend private (\textit{minban}) “migrant schools” that have much poorer facilities than state-run city schools and that in some cities have had to contend with considerable administrative hostility and interference.

Nevertheless, by the beginning of the 21st century basic education was “basically universalized” across the great majority of the national territory.\(^2\) Policies introduced in 2006 to waive “miscellaneous fees” for poor families seem likely to ensure sustained high attendance overall. Early childhood education (pre-school, kindergarten) is also extensive: basically universal in cities, and developing steadily in the more prosperous rural areas.

The last two decades, and especially the years since 2000, have also seen a steep rise in the number of youngsters completing senior high school and the number entering tertiary education. In 1987, according to Chinese government figures, there were 2.468 million senior high school graduates, tripling to 7.883 million in 2007. Entrance into higher education over the same period rose sixfold, from 0.617 million to 4.186 million students. Some of the growth in numbers is explained by population growth, with a 1990s bulge of teenagers born in the 1970s before birth control was introduced.

In short, the proportion of Chinese youth able to access high school and college education is higher than ever before. Yet this expansion has primarily benefited urban youngsters. From 1999 to 2002, the proportion of urban children entering senior high school rose from 55 percent to 74 percent; whereas in rural areas the proportion rose from 19 percent to 29 percent.\(^3\)

More youngsters than ever before are also studying overseas. Official figures show that in 1987 just 4,700 students went abroad to study at college level; by 2007 this had risen to around 150,000. In addition, some of China’s most prosperous families are now sending their children abroad at a younger age, to attend high school or to learn English. A handful have managed to bypass administrative restrictions and enroll their children in elite, international schools in Beijing and Shanghai—a booming market that big-brand English “public” schools such as Eton, Harrow and Dulwich have entered in anticipation of the day when formal restrictions on accepting Chinese students are lifted.

**MARKET INEQUALITIES**

If China’s education system is now more extensive than ever, it has also become more stratified, with facilities and resources concentrated in urban areas. In the period 1980-2000, although net government funding for education increased substantially, as a proportion of China’s total education expenditure it declined from 75 percent to 54 percent—with the remaining 46 percent coming from steeply rising user fees and charges.\(^4\) (This closely mirrors what has happened in the field of health care; both systems have been quasi-privatised). “Miscellaneous fees” that primary and junior high schools charge (except to the recently exempted, poorest pupils), and the tuition fees now charged by all senior high schools, vocational training schools, colleges and universities, are a major barrier to poorer families. Some evidence even suggests that, although a higher proportion of rural students than ever before are now completing basic education, the proportion who
progress up the system to university is lower (especially in the case of women students) than a decade ago.\textsuperscript{5}

At the same time, state resources remain heavily skewed towards better-off places and institutions that serve better-off people. Most government expenditure on education comes from local governments, and richer cities and provinces are naturally able to invest far more than inland and western provinces. That pattern is replicated at sub-provincial level, with expenditure concentrated on provincial and prefectural capitals, which dispose of far greater resources than county and township governments. Rural governments in western provinces often find it hard even to cover basic wages for their teachers. Moreover, fully 31 percent of state spending goes to higher education, which the central authorities are very keen to expand, but from which only a minority benefits.\textsuperscript{6}

Thus, typically, the kindergarten and primary school attached to a province’s most prestigious Normal University represent the apex of basic educational provision, and charge proportionately high fees. Later, parents will pay up to USD 10,000 in entrance fees (along with yearly tuition fees) to elite, state high schools that have a good university entrance record. Less privileged urban children attend less well-endowed state schools—which still imposes a heavy financial burden on their families—and are more likely to enter the workforce at eighteen or go to second-rank universities and colleges. Many rural children will have trouble progressing beyond junior high school, and most of those who do so will go to vocational schools to learn trades. Most children of migrant workers either stay home with grandparents in a depopulated village or attend the scruffy minban schools that (with very few exceptions) as yet receive no state support.

Finally, it is important to note that primary and middle schools are themselves largely oriented towards preparing students for public examinations and university entrance, with much less emphasis on the educational needs of those who are likely to receive only a few years of schooling. This means that rural students in poorer areas are doubly disadvantaged: they are less likely to be able to afford a university education, and the basic schooling they do receive is not necessarily the most useful preparation for the lives they are going to lead.

Ethnic minority students whose mother tongue is not Chinese are additionally disadvantaged by negligible investment in the bilingual education methods that would be necessary for them to compete with native Chinese speakers on anything like an equal basis.

Thus, rural graduates from nine years of compulsory state education have generally achieved basic literacy and numeracy (and this is more than many of their parents achieved); but they often lack the skills and knowledge of the world that that they will need to thrive—and, quite probably, to migrate—in China’s complicated, changing context.

Notes


5. For example, citing data from *Gender Gap in China: Facts and Figures* (World Bank, ADB, 2005, draft), China Development Brief’s Special Report: *Yunnan Situation Analysis* (2005, can be downloaded from http://www.chinadevelopmentbrief.com), found that: “In 1982 ... 46.8% of young, rural women in Yunnan were illiterate, only 1.6% went to high school, and only 0.06% went to university. By the time of the 2000 census, the illiteracy rate among young (16-24) rural women had declined to 8% but only 1.06% went to high school and the number attending university had been statistically reduced to zero.”

6. Mei Hong and Wang Xiaolin (note 1).
I remember after I graduated from college and started working as a teacher in the early 1990s, older teachers would lament, “You can’t raise your hand against only children anymore.”

Throughout the thousands of years of Chinese tradition, beating and scolding students was almost a teacher’s right. If one was to conduct a survey of Chinese people over the age of 35, one would find that most have personally experienced corporal punishment from their teachers. Without exception, every one of my classmates in primary and junior middle schools was physically beaten, verbally abused, or publicly humiliated by the teacher. I remember how parents would often tell teachers, “If my child is disobedient, give him a good thrashing.” At home, parents adhered to a “spare the rod and spoil the child” philosophy. They believed that corporal punishment was a perfectly natural way to discipline children.

As a result of the rapid development of China’s economy and the successful implementation of the one-child policy, a generation of only children has emerged who not only enjoy more material wealth than their parents’ generation, but more respect as well. Striking children has become a rare occurrence within the household, and even rarer within the school system. If a teacher were to raise a hand against a student, he or she would have to face the outrage of the student’s family. As children are becoming less and less willing to turn the other cheek and suffer insults without question, teachers are warning one another: “Don’t hit an only child.”

I remember that in the school where I used to teach, my colleagues often discussed the fact that students who came from single child households talked back to them, did not look them straight in the eye, and showed no gratitude. One episode made a particularly deep impression on me.

On that occasion, the principal of our junior middle school publicly scolded a first-year student, who was an only child from a relatively well-heeled family: “Your teacher works so hard to teach you, and your parents make so many sacrifices to raise you and provide for you, but you just won’t study. Aren’t you letting down your parents?” By rights, one would have expected the student to lower his head in shame, but to everyone’s surprise the student coolly replied: “Preparing lessons and teaching is a teacher’s job and parents have to raise their children. I don’t owe them anything. Where does ‘letting them down’ come into it?” The teachers who witnessed the event had to catch their breath in astonishment that a student had the audacity to sass the principal. Such brazen public impertinence was unheard of. For years afterwards, teachers who were there would cite this student’s insolence as proof of the lack of respect and scruples characteristic of only children with respect to their teachers.

While I was writing this article, I phoned a teacher who was there that day. To my surprise, he felt that the student who had talked back to the principal had not been excessively brash. In fact, he believed the student had a point. But his last comment still had an air of resignation: “We’ve ended up putting students on pedestals and are afraid that if we’re in some way found wanting as teachers we’ll get in trouble with them and their parents. Being a teacher is getting harder and harder.” I couldn’t help but exclaim, “So, now it’s the students who are molding their teachers instead of the other way around?”

Now that a whole generation of only children is finishing school and entering the job market, the media and the public are taking note of the perceived differences and characteristics attributed to only children. Only
children often lack tact and diplomatic skills. They are not afraid to contradict their superiors and frequently change jobs, a practice that has many parents worried. I found that with a number of parents, whether or not their children were right in contradicting their superiors is of little importance to them; their greatest concern is that their children are unable to compromise in order to protect themselves. They think that their children are, in plain Chinese, “immature” and “foolish.”

One of my former students (let’s call her Xiao Gao) was a case in point. Xiao Gao came from a wealthy family; both her parents were doctors, and she was the only child. After graduating from college, she began working for a government tax agency. She soon realized that her boss had a flawed interpretation of certain tax laws and government tax policies and expected his subordinates to implement those policies according to his understanding. Though her coworkers were content to do as they were told, Xiao Gao decided to speak with her boss about which tax policies he had misunderstood. Her concerns were ignored, and she held her tongue. As time passed, she slowly realized that her boss had not misunderstood the tax legislation and policy at all, but had intentionally interpreted certain policies so that they worked in his favor, especially with respect to certain businesses in which he had invested. She was shocked to discover that her coworkers, all well known about his illicit activities but had tacitly agreed to turn a blind eye. When Xiao Gao told her parents, they urged her not to stand out from her coworkers, to stay on her boss’s good side, and to count her blessings for having such a coveted job.

“Whatever your boss says, you do. Don’t stick your nose where it doesn’t belong, or you’ll live to regret it.” Once again, Xiao Gao resolved to keep her misgivings to herself. Her boss, though, acted hostile and continued to ostracize her due to their first conversation. Provoked by his behavior, Xiao Gao erupted. She confronted her boss in a loud argument and wrote a report to his superiors about his misconduct. But Xiao Gao’s report did not result in any official action. In the end, she felt completely disillusioned and handed in her resignation. Xiao Gao’s parents later helped her find a job at a state-owned enterprise, but after six months she quit because she felt that the manager of her department was ignorant and made arbitrary decisions. She felt that there was nothing she could learn from him and quit. Xiao Gao is now working at a travel agency, a job she found herself, but again is very dissatisfied with her boss.

Stories of only children like Xiao Gao have become very common due largely to the environment in which they are growing up and their families’ economic circumstances. Because they are treated over-affectionately at home and leniently at school, many children from single child households develop more assertive personalities. Most of them benefit from a proper education, and exposure to the outside world allows them to express their own opinions. Furthermore, only children usually come from relatively well-off families, so that if they are out of work, their parents can support them. Consequently, they are not afraid to offend their boss, challenge authority, or quit their job.

In the not-so-distant past, Chinese children were subjected from a young age to physical and verbal discipline from their parents at home and lived in fear of their teachers’ authority at school. By the time they became adults, the contours of their personality had been whittled down to fit a certain mold and they had been programmed to work according to their boss’s dictum, regardless of right or wrong. At that time, most Chinese families had no savings to speak of, people had few job choices, and there was no sense of financial security. If someone lost their job, they faced destitution; if they had a family, that person risked the destitution of their whole family as well. Ordinary Chinese people simply could not afford to contradict their
supervisors or challenge authority. They had no choice but to make the best of a bad bargain and endure unfair treatment with extraordinary forbearance. Learning to cultivate good relations with authority figures became an essential survival skill.

However, I feel that some of the “defects” the Xiao Gaos of this world manifest are positive qualities that were sorely missing in previous generations of Chinese people. Aren’t parents inculcating a servile mentality by expecting their children to put up with bosses who “shoot the bird who takes the lead,” and place diplomacy over fairness in order to protect themselves? Isn’t a value system that insists on patient resignation and this particular kind of maturity the chief culprit and the breeding grounds of bureaucratese, a woeful lack of civility in the service sector, and all manners of social injustices?

Chinese people who have lived in a developed Western democracy may aver, with a sigh, that in the West it is government officials who fear the wrath of ordinary citizens, not the other way around, political leaders are genuine public servants, and even corporate executives treat their subordinates with respect. Whereas in China, so-called public servants are known and treated as “old masters” (lao taiye 老大爷). There are surely institutional factors at work, but in my opinion, the main reason our public servants have become “old masters” is that for far too long Chinese people have cultivated maturity in the form of tolerance and wisdom in the form of silence as protection mechanisms in an unfair society. The “immaturity” and “foolishness” exhibited by so many only children nowadays are precisely the laudable qualities that were most conspicuously lacking in their parents’ and grandparents’ generations.

At school, only children made it clear that their teachers could not hit them, and soon afterwards, talked back to teachers, which in some sense means that the students enjoy equal rights to speak their mind. Fearing that if they do a poor job they will get into trouble with students and their parents, teachers now realize that “being a teacher is getting harder and harder.”

As more and more only children enter every possible trade and profession, they are challenging authority and a variety of social ills. Government officials and managers at all levels are warning one another: “You had better think twice before you censure an employee who grew up as an only child.” If we ever see the day when government officials and managers are afraid that if they do a poor job they will get into trouble with ordinary citizens and start complaining that “being a government official is getting harder and harder,” Chinese society will have taken a huge step forward.

While it is true enough that this generation of only children who would not submit to corporal punishment will continue to pay dearly for their “immaturity” and inability to suffer in silence, there is little doubt that they will be a major driving force for social progress and the advancement of democracy in China.

Translated by Paul Frank

Notes
1. According to Xiao Gao, her former employer was later demoted because of her reports.
2. The decrease of corporal punishment in schools is no doubt due to stronger policies and laws, but I firmly believe that resistance from only children in the home has also played an important role in this as well.
HRIC: Some people have asked, why is this young girl so passionate about human rights? Why does she care about Tibetans?

CC: In March after the Chinese crackdown in Tibet, I thought we should do something. I was looking up things online and saw Students for a Free Tibet, but there’s no branch in Hong Kong. So I printed out all these posters with a brief description of what is going on in Tibet and how the Chinese government is being really violent in the crackdown. We had this Tibetan flag on the posters and we stuck them up all around the university. The first day it was about 50, the second maybe 30, 40. They were all ripped down within hours.

[Later,] when we saw all these protests that were going on all around the world during the torch relay, we thought: [If] all these people in the West that live so far away actually care about what’s going on in China and in Tibet, then why shouldn’t we? They’re our neighbors.

I don’t know if it is politically correct to say this. Of course I am really Han Chinese, and Hong Kong is a de facto part of China, and China is a political entity so we are Chinese. But sometimes I feel like we’re still a colony. Because when we were with the British, we couldn’t elect our own governor. Now, we’re back to our own people, the motherland, but we still can’t even pick the guy that makes the decisions in Hong Kong. We have a Chief Executive that isn’t elected by us. He’ll never answer to us. He will only answer to the people that elected him, which are the 800 people appointed by the central government. All these problems … it is because we don’t have a say in our own future.

I feel like Hong Kong is ruled by the CPC government in a similar way that Tibetans are, of course their situation is much, much, much worse. So I really feel for these people, to have your own language and culture suppressed.

HRIC: What were you trying to achieve with the May 2 protest?

CC: We were planning to disrupt the torch relay. We didn’t want all these happy people waving the Chinese flag around and cheering when all these people had suffered because of the Olympics or despite the Olympic promise. It was just a little bit of anarchy that we wanted to put on. Then the police started calling me and insisting that we met up. We sent an email to Apple Daily explaining what had happened; then they actually came for an interview. The rest is history.

HRIC: What were people’s reactions?

CC: Of course, in the end we were carried away before the torch went by, but we also got all these international media groups that reported it straight after. I had people calling me from the States. But it doesn’t necessarily mean our message is getting across effectively. I think they were just looking for an icon to sell papers. In the end people just started attacking this icon instead of the cause behind the whole thing. People [said things] like, if people go hiking in the mountains they wear more clothes to protect yourself, so if you want to do something like a protest you should protect yourself, you should have worn more.

That is the attitude … that is why Hong Kong is the way it is, because people expect to get hurt by the police
when they go out to protest. They see protest as troublemaking because it’s anti-establishment, you deserve to be hurt violently and physically.

We used to talk about how best should we get our message across with our protests, but now we just talk about how we can protest; can we actually get a chance to protest at all. That’s what Hong Kong has turned into.

HRIC: Do you think what you are doing is having an impact on the people of Hong Kong?

CC: Everybody seeks influence in society. If you can’t do that through politics then you want to do it in some other way. I think that what we do is something that might raise awareness. Maybe it will just become something that people might talk about at dinner. But if they talk about that kind of thing, then maybe they will see that there is something wrong. I certainly don’t expect to change the world by doing interviews with local newspapers every now and again.

Protests have gone on for all this time. I don’t know whether it has changed anything, but I certainly know that if there weren’t these protests, then Hong Kong would not change, because then there would be no voices like these. I can’t imagine Hong Kong being like that, but that is what the government wants.

I don’t want to imagine what Hong Kong would be like without activists, people that say to the rest of Hong Kong-ers, “Something is wrong here, do something, at least don’t forget about it.”

It’s like June 4 candlelight vigils in Causeway Bay every year. Does that change anything? Maybe not, but because it’s still going on we show China that people have not forgotten. That’s pressure.

I thought about “Long Hair” (長毛) [Leung Kwok-hung, a member of the Legislative Council of Hong Kong since 2004, and a democratic political activist]. Sometimes he’s in a protest and there are all these cops in front of him, and he’s still trying to get forward. All these journalists say: “Are you just putting on a show, why do you try to get forward when you know you can’t?” He said: “I’m not going to give up the right to walk forward.”

HRIC: Is there a question that no one else had asked that you’d wished they’d asked?

CC: I wish they asked me why I’m doing philosophy.

HRIC: Because you want to change the world?

CC: That is actually why. I want to change the world and I want to know what I should change it into, how it should be. Actually, no one asks me what I want to be when I grow up.

HRIC: You’re grown up now, so what do you want to be?

CC: I guess I just want to be a bum. I look at the world, and ask, do I want to be in this rat race? I was pretty desperate for money last summer, so I got a job in Times Square folding and selling clothes. I changed jobs. I became an “editor” in a publishing company. I basically just had to correct mistakes in stories that were already written. In all of them, the stories were really sexist, very stereotyped. So I switched all the names around so that Mum came back from work and Dad was cooking. They got angry. I told them I was supposed to be an editor and I thought there was something wrong with the story. They told me that it is not up to me to change the world, and that was when I quit. Because it is up to me to change the world!

Notes
The powerful earthquake that struck Sichuan province in southwest China on May 12 killed an estimated 80,000 people and left some five million homeless. The initial devastation, followed by hundreds of aftershocks, the latest of which occurred on September 19, has prompted a great outpouring of concern and charity from people throughout China. An estimated 150,000 people, young and old from near and far, defied the risk of danger to rush to the quake zones to offer their help—in a country where many people had never heard of the word “volunteer.” Many lined up to donate blood; others contributed relief supplies and money that would total more than $6.3 billion. Their courage was spontaneous, their sacrifices awe-inspiring.

In a society in which expression has long been under the strict control of the Communist Party, many people have published a large number of earthquake-related pictures, reports, and commentaries, revealing untold stories, asking questions, and confronting societal issues previously suppressed by the authorities.

Many poems were also published on the Internet, expressing grief and searching for answers. Shanghai poet and artist Yan Li selected the following poems by Chinese poets in Tianjin, Xi’an, and Sweden, along with one of his own, that reflect popular opinions and sentiments about the earthquake.

THE NECESSITY
OF POETRY

Duo Yu

Tonight, writing poetry is frivolous

—written during the aftershocks of the May 12 earthquake

tonight, the earth shakes, the rocks
leaving open wounds in the grassy hillsides
half of Asia is woozy, half
finds no reason for grief and indignation
think about it, it’s too frivolous, all of this
in front of a map of the west, Shanghai
is frivolous compared with the grand wasteland
generals handing out medals
are frivolous, the choked-up county leader too
machinery is frivolous, opposite those little hands
protruding from their graves; cement, cement is frivolous
naked cement covers her lovely face
ah, frivolous . . . please don’t move the dirt from his head
please don’t drive nails in her bones
don’t use his school bag to collect debris! don’t
cut off her lovely ankles!!
please give him back his severed arm, give him back his parents,
please give her back her child, and
her bashfulness, too . . . please bail the rainwater out of her ears
let her go peacefully . . .
discarded organs are frivolous, and the flies on the earth, and
crying at the graveside is frivolous, including
good intentions aroused by sorrow, just think
when rooms become a peaceful cemetery, how worthless is
the sound of sobbing!

TV sentiments are frivolous, with a corpse,
ten thousand corpses on the screen
my tears and your faults are frivolous,
the TV anchor is frivolous, the publicity department is frivolous
the officials, turning bad events into good
are frivolous! Ah, frivolous, frivolous hospitals
frivolous grandmothers, frivolous
the women in the throes of childbirth, frivolous
the flowers in the hands of the young nurses
a thirty-floor building, frivolous as a wispy cloud
good people grieving, frivolous as Du Fu*
tonight, I too am surely
frivolous, when I write about
grief, tears, corpses, blood, but am not able to express the
boulders, earth, solidarity and fury!
I write down language, but cannot express the profound silence.
tonight, humanity's extreme anguish
holds frivolous tears, its grief holds a frivolous sweetness
tonight, those writing poems around the world are frivolous
frivolous as executioners
frivolous as lowly legal scribes.

*(712–770 CE), considered by many to be China's greatest poet, active during the Tang dynasty. He resigned from an official post in 759, and built his thatched cottage in a western suburb of Chengdu, Sichuan.
Li Li

Day Four After the Earthquake

Scenes of the Premier soothing a child
Made an opiate of my tears—Oh, the Savior has come
And I—almost—forgot to ask:
If the child he soothed
Saw himself
Still sobbing under the dirt
Why were the well-equipped foreign rescue workers not allowed in
If a child’s life
Is truly as precious as the Premier’s?

Watching children’s corpses glistening with blood
I—almost—forgot to ask:
Why were the buildings that collapsed
All recently built schools?
What shall the surviving parents do?
What will be done about the burst dams?

I—almost—forgot that Wenchuan
Was Tangshan thirty-two years ago
Why when the frogs warned humanity
By leaving their homes
Was the earthquake authority still chasing down “rumors” of a coming quake?
They didn’t want to know that
The earth
Has its own laws of motion
They only wanted to shore up stability for the Beijing “Olympics”

When donating money, I—almost—
Forgot those corrupt officials who gamble, drink and whore with public funds

李笠

震后第四天

差点，我的泪
被总理抚摸孩子的镜头
化为鸦片——嘿，救世主来了
而忘了问：
被抚摸的孩子
是否看见自己
仍在地底下啜泣
为什么不让国外装备精良的救灾人员进来
如果一个孩子的生命
真的和总理的一样贵重?

差点，看着一个个血粼粼的孩子的尸体
我忘了问：
为什么不塌的
都是刚盖的教学楼?
那些活着的父母怎么办?
裂开的大坝怎么办?

差点，忘了汶川我忘了汶川
就是三十二年前的唐山
为什么当蛤蟆
用背井离乡警告人类的时候
地震局还在追查将发生地震的“谣言”
他们不想知道
地球
有自己的运行规律
他们只想给北京的“奥运”增添社会稳定

差点，捐钱时
忘了那些挪用公款吃喝嫖赌的贪官
Yan Li

Our Intangible Cultural Heritage

It has erupted again

As if the human gene for poetry
Were specially primed for disaster and great emotion
The last time
And the time before that
Seem so distant
But this time the spirit of poetry
Shaken by Nature's outburst
Shook our spiritual numbness
Born of the accumulation of things
In the midst of our consumerist society
Shook open a fissure money can't begin to fill
Shook apart our road paved
Toward stocks and real estate
Shook awake consciences lost in the depths of greed

It has erupted again

We had almost forgotten that
Poetry, the most powerful form of expression
Truly, in this land of ours
Is the intangible cultural heritage which is most worthy of our pride
I don't want to predict what sort of big event will bring it forth
Next time
Or the time after that
Or
Like natural disasters, it's unpredictable
But the spirit of poetry
Is always an inner harbinger for those who love freedom
In this land beset with disaster and suffering

May 21, 2008

Yan Li

Our Intangible Cultural Heritage

It has erupted again

As if the human gene for poetry
Were specially primed for disaster and great emotion
The last time
And the time before that
Seem so distant
But this time the spirit of poetry
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May 21, 2008
A Moment of Silence, for Children Killed in the Earthquake

A moment of silence, for buds destroyed by Spring
Before they could burst into flower

A moment of silence, not for great men who did good
Not for the Buddhas smashed in the temples
But for those small frail lives, the grass and the snails

A moment of silence, for the paradise of voices
reciting
Which when sweeping over the fields of hope
Becomes a hell of mournful wailing
For the cave-ins mysteriously shaped like the
character “prison”

A moment of silence, for the vanishing cries of
“Daddy!” and “Mama!”
For phrases like “going on an outing,” “going to
school,” “going home”
For the unclaimed cell phones

A moment of silence, for the earth, blindly turning
And for hearts, blindly beating
And for the reinforced concrete and the stones,
not knowing to escape after killing people. They
were for killing people

A moment of silence, for the classroom doorframe
Suddenly transformed into a knife in the back
And for the child who wanted to be Ultraman*
But in the end flickered into candlelight lines of poetry

A moment of silence, for the capricious tremors
For fear
And for the life-mocking sudden death sentence
without favor of trial

A moment of silence, for the sound of that last sigh
For that last unheard prayer in the darkness, a child’s
prayer

A moment of silence, for ruins as tranquil as the blue
sky
For the philosophy of life in a book in the ruins
For small hands that will no longer turn textbook pages
For weeping eyes fixed on the stars, and like stars,
now unable to close

A moment of silence, for cruel memorial rites
For the cruel forgetting that follows
For forgetting

*Ultraman is a cartoon superhero who starred in the 1960s Japanese television series Ultraman.
李笙

默哀，为死于地震的孩子

默哀，为了没有绽开
就被春天毁灭的花朵

默哀，不为功德显赫的伟人
不为庙里打碎的佛祖
而是为了那些弱小的生命，草和蜗牛

默哀，为了读书声里的天堂
在掠过希望的田野时
变成哀嚎的地狱
为了呈现“佛”这个象形字奥秘的坍塌

默哀，为了那些消失的“爸爸！”“妈妈！”的喊声
为了“郊游”“上学”“回家”的字眼
为了无人认领的手机

默哀，为了盲目运转的地球
也为心脏盲目的悸动
也为杀人后不知道逃离现场的钢筋水泥和石头。为了杀人

默哀，为了教室的门框
忽然变成插入背部的刀子
为了想当奥特曼
但最后酿成烛光的诗行

默哀，为了随时出现的震晃
为了恐惧
也为了嘲弄生命，没有审判书的突然的死刑

默哀，为了最后的那声叹息
为了没人听到的黑暗中最后的祈求，孩子的祈求

默哀，为了蓝天一样平静的废墟
为了废墟里书上的人生哲理
为了不再翻弄课本的小手
为了凝望星空但变成像星星一样不会闭合的泪眼

默哀，为了残忍的祭献仪式
为了祭献后的残忍的遗忘
为了遗忘
Yi Sha

Answering My Own Questions

“So just because of an earthquake that caused you no harm at all You become reconciled with the country you’ve confronted for so long? You reconcile so easily …”

“Beyond talking of reconciliation—in fact I’ve never turned my back on the country that is in my heart (the noble are not qualified to do this) And I’ve always longed to love China the way the Orthodox poet Ached with love for Russia Tsvetaeva wrote, “The snows of Russia are on fire I’m so ashamed! I’ve not yet offered My own country such a white-hot line of poetry”

“Then can I understand it this way: from now on You’ll be reduced to a reconciled, harmonious, cooperative poet Taking the flower-strewn path like the common herd?”

“No! No! No! I’m lowly too Too bad my poetry is not lowly like theirs It’s neither reconciling nor harmonious I trust in it more than in myself A pure poet should be completely attuned to poetry’s leading Moreover those who stand between me and my country Cannot represent the country that is in my heart A murderous level eight earthquake can make me give up on heaven and earth and Buddha But it is powerless to change my most basic principles—and my faith!”

May 25, 2008
In response to public outcry in the aftermath of the May 12 earthquake, local governments across Sichuan Province initiated a coordinated campaign to appease angry parents of children killed in collapsed schools during the earthquake. Officials visited parents’ homes, sometimes even in the middle of the night, with a written agreement in hand, and warned that if the parents did not sign this agreement, they would receive no special assistance from the government. While many parents have in fact received varying sums from the government as compensation for their losses, the agreement making them eligible for this compensation includes no specific terms regarding the total compensation they should expect. Versions of this agreement varied by locality—the version pictured below was distributed in Hanwang, China.


### Families of Students Killed in the May 12th Earthquake Application for Social Security Assistance and Special Aid

We are the parents of __________, a student in the __________ class, __________ grade, at __________ school. The father’s name is __________, the mother’s name is __________.

The sudden earthquake on May 12th caused our children’s school to collapse, and the children that were inside the school building that collapsed as a result of the earthquake were unfortunately killed. We are extremely sad and in great pain. While the natural disaster was merciless, amongst our people there was love. The Communist Party Committee and the government promptly reached out their powerful and loving hands and mobilized all parts of society to provide guidance, bring aid, help us to step out of this place of suffering, and resolve the problems caused by the earthquake. For this, we express thanks from the bottom of our hearts to the Party Committee and the government for their genuine concern and vigorous aid, and to society for their concern as well.

However, due to the loss of our children, as well as the damage done to our homes and our family’s financial situation, our lives hereafter will be beset with difficulties, and the pressure of future worries will be great. Because of this, we are specifically applying to the government to organize and coordinate various parts of society to help us obtain social security assistance and special aid.

Henceforth, under the leadership of the Communist Party and the government, we will abide by the law and be conscious to safeguard social order during post-earthquake reconstruction. We will absolutely not participate in any activity that may influence this reconstruction. We will reconstruct through our own efforts, undertake the arduous task of starting over, actively participate in earthquake precautions and disaster relief, and concentrate our energy on rebuilding a beautiful and prosperous homeland!

We request your approval!

Applicant: (Father) (Mother)
____ (month) ____ (day), 2008
In the immediate aftermath of the Sichuan earthquake, joining government rescue and relief efforts were private firms and the rapidly growing number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in China. According to official statistics, there were 354,000 NGOs in China at the end of 2006. The rise of China’s NGO sector reflects a heightening awareness that concerted efforts by individuals can make a difference in Chinese society. Although HRIC does not recommend any particular organization, the following are organizations to consider if you are interested in contributing to the ongoing relief efforts in Sichuan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>WHAT YOU CAN DO</strong></th>
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| **Red Cross Society of China** [中国红十字会]  
http://www.redcross.org.cn (Chinese and English) |
| **Care for Children**  
http://www.careforchildren.com (Chinese and English) |
| **The Red Cross Society of China**, founded in 1904, is China’s only Red Cross Society. In the wake of the May 2008 Sichuan Earthquake, the Red Cross Society organized collection of relief donations throughout the country. In addition to distributing funds, the Red Cross Society has sent water, food, and supplies, and is participating in reconstruction projects in the affected area. |
| **Care for Children** is an international non-profit organization based in Beijing that works with local governments and organizations across China to promote foster care and train orphanage staff. Its official partner in China is the China Social Work Association. Care for Children led a post-earthquake fundraiser for the children and families affected by the quake. |
| **China Foundation for Poverty Alleviation** [中国扶贫基金会]  
http://www.fupin.org.cn (Chinese and English) |
| **Half the Sky Foundation** [半边天基金会]  
http://www.halfthesky.org (Chinese and English) |
| Beijing-based **China Foundation for Poverty Alleviation** (CFPA) is a non-profit organization managed under the State Council Leading Group Office of Poverty Alleviation and Development. CFPA provides direct assistance to the poor and supports public facilities and social services in impoverished communities by providing funds and personnel. CFPA has played an active role in relief aid following the May 2008 Sichuan Earthquake, soliciting aid and donating supplies to two impoverished counties in Chongqing. |
| **Half the Sky** runs programs at 36 welfare institutions throughout China and provides homes for orphaned or special-needs children. It has offices in Beijing, Hong Kong, and the United States. Following the May 2008 Sichuan Earthquake, Half the Sky formed the HTS Children’s Earthquake Fund to provide emergency shelter, food, and medical care for children orphaned or separated from their families, as well as temporary or long-term foster or institutional care. Half the Sky also accepted a number of earthquake orphans. |


For a directory of international NGOs working in China on disaster prevention and relief, see: http://www.chinadevelopmentbrief.com/dingo/Sector/Disaster-Prevention-and-Relief/2-10-0.html.
## Unrest, Riots, and Crackdowns

### Unrest in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR)

Xinjiang, an oil-rich region in western China with a largely Muslim Uyghur population under strict Chinese control, has been rocked by violent protests since the beginning of this year.

- **Plane hijack attempt.** On March 9, three Uyghurs attempted to hijack a plane en route to Beijing from Urumqi, the capital of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR).¹

- **Protests.** As many as 1,000 Uyghurs demonstrated in Hetian City, on March 23–24, to protest the torture of Uyghur detainees, imprisonment of political prisoners, and lack of religious freedom. A large number of participants were quickly arrested by security forces.²

- **Tightened security.** In mid-June, in anticipation of the Xinjiang leg of the Olympic torch relay (June 17–19), Chinese authorities increased security measures, including detaining thousands in the Xinjiang region and forcing Muslim religious officials to undergo “political education” on “protecting” the Olympics.³

- **Olympic torch relay passed through Urumqi.** On June 17, residents along the torch relay route were told to stay inside, keep away from windows, and watch the relay on television instead. The majority of spectators on the street were Han Chinese.⁴ Authorities also banned reporters from speaking with people along the relay route and reporters were only allowed to attend the opening and closing ceremonies for that leg of the torch relay.⁵

- **Sixteen policemen killed in bombing on eve of Beijing Olympics.** On August 4, two Uyghur men rammed their truck into a group of 70 policemen and threw homemade bombs at them, killing 16 policemen and injuring 16 more in Kashgar City.⁶

- **Series of attacks.** On August 10, fifteen men led a series of attacks, including bombings, in Kuqa County, killing one security guard and injuring five other people. Police killed eight of the attackers and arrested two. An additional two committed suicide at the scene and three others ran away.⁷

- **Three policemen fatally stabbed.** On August 12, three police officers were killed and another injured when a group of men stabbed the officers at a security checkpoint in Yamanya Town, Shule County.⁸

- **Two policemen killed in knife fight.** On August 27, two Uyghur policemen were killed and another two severely injured in Peyzawat County in a knife fight during a police search for a woman suspected of aiding the assailants in the August 12 attack.⁹

### Unrest in Tibet

- **Demonstration.** On March 10, hundreds of Tibetan monks near Lhasa marched peacefully to commemorate the 49th anniversary of a failed 1959 uprising against Chinese rule and in support of previously detained monks. Some were arrested and others were reportedly beaten, which triggered several other protest marches that week.
Clashes. On March 14, clashes broke out between Tibetans and Chinese authorities in Lhasa. The protests and riots spread to Tibetan areas in the neighboring provinces of Gansu, Sichuan, and Qinghai over the following two weeks.11

Arrests and killings. The number of arrests resulting from the subsequent crackdown on Tibetan unrest could not be confirmed. The International Campaign for Tibet estimated at least 600 people were arrested in Lhasa on March 15, and at least 300 on March 16.12 Xinhua stated that by March 19, 170 Tibetans had handed themselves in.13 Chinese authorities reported on March 31 that 19 individuals had been killed on March 14 in Lhasa. Tibet’s government-in-exile placed the estimate at 140 Tibetans killed.14

Olympic torch passed through Tibet. On the eve of the shortened two-hour Tibetan leg of the Olympic torch relay,15 Chinese authorities announced the release of 1,157 people previously detained for minor offenses in connection with the March unrest in Tibet. Reports suggested that more than 1,000 monks were still held in detention centers ahead of the Olympics, and that nuns were being expelled from their nunneries for refusing to participate in “patriotic education” campaigns.16

LARGE SCALE RIOTS

Guizhou. On June 28, an estimated 30,000 people took to the streets of Weng’an County, Guizhou, due to dissatisfaction with police investigation into a teenage girl’s death. Rioters set fire to the local Communist Party headquarters and police headquarters after the girl’s uncle was allegedly beaten by police for protesting the handling of the case. Authorities arrested nearly 200 people, and over 1,500 paramilitary and riot police were dispatched to the county.17

Zhejiang. On July 10–12, migrant workers in Kanmen, Zhejiang, rioted after one worker was allegedly beaten by police over a quarrel about his application for a temporary residence permit. Hundreds burned police cars and motorcycles, demanding the release of the detained worker. According to a Hong Kong-based NGO, 300 anti-riot police were deployed to restore control. Government officials report 23 people were “dealt with according to the law” after authorities regained control.18

Sichuan. On July 15, one thousand people in Wushan County, Sichuan, surrounded a government office in support of petitioners whose wrists were cut after petitioning over land lost to the Three Gorges dam project. Earlier that day, local officials had rejected the requests of six petitioners and allegedly hired gangsters to attack them with razor blades.19

Yunnan. On July 19, in Kunming, Yunnan, 500 rubber farmers with knives, steel tubes, and bars clashed with Yunnan police when officials attempted to arrest five people involved in violent disputes between farmers and representatives of a rubber factory. Forty-one policemen and 13 farmers were injured, with two farmers shot dead by police.20

Sichuan Earthquake

Earthquake. An 8.0 magnitude earthquake struck Sichuan province in southwestern China on May 12, the worst quake to hit the country in 30 years. The earthquake’s epicenter was in Wenchuan County, 50 miles northwest of Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan. Other hardest hit areas include: Mianyang City, Beichuan County, and Dujiangyan City.

Death and destruction. As of September 2, the Chinese authorities report that over 80,000 were killed, with other estimates topping 87,000.21 Nearly 1.5 million people were forced to relocate, five
million were left homeless, and over 30 million people lost most of their assets.\textsuperscript{22} 7,000 classrooms collapsed in the quake, killing about 10,000 children.\textsuperscript{23} According to official statistics, over 11 million houses were either seriously damaged or collapsed.\textsuperscript{24} Aftershocks, landslides, and damage to dams added further risks to safety, property, and food supplies.\textsuperscript{25} A government official estimated that the total direct financial loss from the earthquake reached $123 billion.\textsuperscript{26} 

- **Government response.** In an unprecedented move—and in sharp contrast to its delayed response to the 1976 Tangshan earthquake—the Chinese government immediately reported the earthquake and accepted international relief efforts.\textsuperscript{27} According to official figures, the Chinese government deployed around 130,000 army and paramilitary troops to the quake-hit areas to carry out rescue and aid operations.

- **Official mourning.** The State Council ordered a three-day national period of mourning in remembrance of those who died, starting with a moment of silence at 2:28 p.m. on May 19, exactly one week after the quake hit. Flags were lowered to half-mast, and entertainment-related news and entertainment activities were suspended.

- **Civil society response.** Despite warnings from the authorities to stay out of the earthquake zone, over 150,000 volunteers offered to help rescue, relief, and rebuilding efforts.\textsuperscript{28} In the weeks following the tragedy, people from throughout the country donated money and relief supplies worth over $6.3 billion (44 billion yuan).\textsuperscript{29}

- **School collapse.** Soon after the quake destruction became clear, many people began raising questions about extensive school collapses, placing intense pressure on authorities to investigate inadequate enforcement of building codes and local corruption.

- **Protests by grieving parents.** Relatives of school children killed in collapsed schools began demonstrating in May. On June 3, police in Dujiangyan forcibly removed over 100 grieving parents protesting in front of the town courthouse.\textsuperscript{30} Authorities stifled similar protests and tightened security throughout the worst-hit areas, in some cases intimidating, detaining, and interrogating demonstrators.\textsuperscript{31} In an effort to silence protestors, local government officials pressured many parents into signing contracts that offered compensation in exchange for praising the government’s response and foregoing legal proceedings.\textsuperscript{32}

- **Media restricted.** Immediately after the quake, the Central Propaganda Department ordered media to stay away from the disaster zone. Two days later, so many reporters had ignored the directive, in a rare display of defiance, that the department rescinded it.\textsuperscript{33} After a brief period of relative media freedom, however, the central government tightened press controls—including forbidding coverage of sensitive topics such as collapsed schools—and on June 24 issued new “propaganda resources” as guidance for local media.\textsuperscript{34}

- **Citizen reporters arrested.** The Chinese authorities detained people who continued to investigate official corruption relating to collapsed schools. Huang Qi (黄琦), founder of the website, 64tianwang.com, was detained on June 10 and later arrested on state secrets-related charges for visiting the disaster zone and publishing news about the plight of parents who lost children in the disaster.\textsuperscript{3} On June 25, Liu Shaokun (刘招坤), a Sichuan school employee, was detained and later sentenced to one year of Reeducation-Through-Labor (RTL) for taking photographs of collapsed schools and posting them on the Internet.\textsuperscript{3}

- **Lawyers warned.** In early July, the Beijing Municipal Bureau of Justice ordered lawyers in Beijing not to represent Sichuan earthquake victims seeking compensation for concerns such as not receiving proper medical treatment in the aftermath of the disaster.\textsuperscript{37}
• **Investigations and punishment.** Growing domestic pressure and aggrieved parents have led to the public censure of local government officials. In June, official media reported that 28 Communist Party officials were disciplined while 50 were promoted as a result of their performance during the rescue phase of the earthquake. The highest-ranking official to be fired was a deputy director of Dujiangyan’s Civil Affairs Bureau for vastly overestimating casualty estimates and wasting emergency response resources. Despite these punishments, many parents of dead children and earthquake survivors are still awaiting a comprehensive investigation.\(^{38}\)

• **Official acknowledgement of poor construction.** On September 4, for the first time, a representative of the Chinese government acknowledged that poor school construction may have lead to the devastating collapses that resulted in the deaths of thousands of students.\(^{39}\)
## Official Promises

### Improvement of social and human rights conditions.

- **July 2001.** Liu Jingmin, vice-president of the Beijing Olympic Bid Committee, told the International Olympic Committee (IOC) before its vote that “by allowing Beijing to host the games you will help the development of human rights.”¹

- **July 2001.** Wang Wei, secretary general of the Beijing Olympic Bid Committee, said during the bidding process that “we are confident that the games coming to China not only promote our economy but also enhance all social conditions, including education, health and human rights. We will give the media complete freedom to report when they come to China.”²

- **October 2007.** Liu Jingmin, executive vice president of the Beijing Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games (BOCOG), said that “the Olympic preparatory work is progressing concurrently with China’s development, and in the process, the democracy and human rights of the people will be vigorously enhanced and safeguarded.”³

### Press freedom.

Wang Wei, July 12, 2001: “Certainly we will give the media complete freedom to report on anything when they come to China.”⁴

### Air quality.

From China’s official bid document, known as the Candidature File, Volume 1, Theme 4: “... air quality during the period of the Games in 2008 will be of a high quality . . .”⁵

## IOC Statements

- **November 2004.** IOC President Jacques Rogge expressed confidence that Beijing will host a successful Games and that BOCOG “will fulfill these requirements and obligations of the Host City Contract.”⁶ The Host City Contract between the IOC and BOCOG has still not been made public.

- **August 2007.** Rogge stated that the “Games can only be a catalyst for change, not a panacea.”⁷

- **July 2008.** Hein Verbruggen, head of the IOC Coordination Commission, hailed Beijing’s preparations as “a gold standard for the future.”⁸

## Environmental Challenges

- **Costs and plans.** China spent $10.44 billion (71.3 billion yuan) on environmental clean-up efforts,⁹ including pulling half of Beijing’s 3.3 million vehicles from the road for a two-month period, and shutting down polluting factories.¹⁰

- **Air pollution hurdles.** Despite drastic pollution-cutting measures, Beijing’s air remained smoggy days before the Olympics, even exceeding the national standards for the pollution index, according to the China Daily. Greenpeace reported that the average level of PM10—a key measure of pollution—in Beijing’s air, was twice what the World Health Organization considers safe.¹¹

- **Air quality improvements.** Emergency measures taken to reduce air pollution appeared to have
worked throughout the Olympics, aided in large part by favorable weather conditions, including heavy rain on a couple of days. Beijing enjoyed mostly clear skies and a reduction in the levels in particulate matter for much of the Games and any lingering pollution did not appear to impede athletes.\textsuperscript{12}

- **Measures ended.** As the Olympics came to a close, a lively debate sprang up in Internet forums, on the radio, and in newspapers over whether or not to extend the measures. Three days after the Paralympics concluded, however, most measures were ended—except for an effort to keep many government vehicles off the roads—and once again private cars flooded the roads and polluting factories resumed work.\textsuperscript{13}

- **Increasing water demands.** In May 2007, a top water official announced plans to divert up to 400 million cubic meters of water from nearby Hebei Province to meet demand in Beijing for the Games,\textsuperscript{14} despite a severe drought in the region that threatens the livelihoods of millions of people.\textsuperscript{15}

- **Water transfer project and its effects.** Officials planned 309 kilometers of channels and pipes in Hebei province to pump 300 million cubic meters of water to Beijing for the Olympics. In the rural area around Baoding city alone, the water transfer project caused 31,000 residents to lose land and their homes.\textsuperscript{16}

- **Consequence.** Despite the pre-planning, much of the infrastructure intended for the water diversion scheme was left half-constructed or unused when Beijing officials realized they had overestimated water demand. Nevertheless, water in the Hebei area had already been diverted to fill a number of large reservoirs, leading to local resentment and agricultural losses.\textsuperscript{17} After the Olympics, the story changed yet again, and Beijing said it was facing “grim” shortfalls and started pumping additional water from Hebei.\textsuperscript{18}

### Displacement from Olympics Construction

- **Residents displaced.** In June 2007, the Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE) reported that some 1.5 million Beijing residents would have been displaced by Olympics construction by the time the Games began, many of them evicted against their will.\textsuperscript{19}

- **Migrant workers “encouraged” to leave Beijing.** Many of Beijing’s estimated four million migrant workers helped build the 31 Olympic competition venues that went up since Beijing won the 2001 bid.\textsuperscript{20} On July 20, all construction was banned in the city, and as journalists and tourists started arriving over the next couple of weeks, migrants responded to an unwritten government policy encouraging them to leave the city.\textsuperscript{21}

- **Deepening poverty.** COHRE estimates that as many as 33,000 people each year have been pushed into poverty, or deeper poverty, because their homes were demolished due to Olympic Games preparations.\textsuperscript{22}

### New Regulations for Foreign Journalists

- **New regulations.** In January 2007, a set of new regulations covering reporting activities by foreign journalists during the Olympics went into effect. They do not cover domestic journalists and are set to expire on October 17, 2008.\textsuperscript{23} The regulations allow foreign journalists to interview organizations or individuals in China without official permission but “need only to obtain their prior consent.” An accompanying service guide indicated that foreign journalists are permitted to travel freely within China, provided they have a valid visa or certificate and only travel to places open to foreigners, as
designated by the Chinese government, and that this provision applies not only to those journalists covering the Games but also those covering “political, economic, social and cultural matters of China.” 24

- **Improvement and continuing problems.** During the Games, foreign reporters highlighted both improvements in the reporting environment and continuing problems despite the new regulations. The Foreign Correspondents Club of China said that the Chinese government did not live up to its Olympic promise regarding press freedom and confirmed more than 30 cases of reporting interference since the formal opening of the Olympic media center. 25

### Internet Censorship

- **Rogge: “No censorship on the Internet.”** In mid-July, IOC president Jacques Rogge told Agence France-Presse: “For the first time, foreign media will be able to report freely and publish their work freely in China. There will be no censorship on the Internet.” 26

- **IOC allowed China to block websites.** On July 30, Kevin Gosper, Chairperson of the IOC Press Commission, admitted, “Some IOC officials negotiated with the Chinese that some sensitive sites would be blocked on the basis they were not considered Games related.” Gosper apologized: “I regret that it now appears BOCOG has announced that there will be limitations on website access during Games time.” 27

- **China announced Internet restrictions.** In response to this revelation, BOCOG spokesman Sun Weide said on July 31 that the government would not allow the spread of any information on the Internet that is forbidden by law or harms national interests. 28

- **IOC denial.** In an August 1 statement on its website, the IOC denied that there had ever been such a deal regarding censorship. 29

- **Rogge denial.** On August 2, Rogge said, “I am not going to make an apology for something that the IOC is not responsible for. We are not running the Internet in China.” 30

- **Websites blocked, unblocked.** In response to the resulting controversy over censorship, some websites that were blocked when the Games began suddenly became accessible, including Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and the Chinese BBC. Human Rights in China’s website, and many websites related to Falun Gong and Tibet, remained blocked, as did some professional blogging platforms and news portals like the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and the *Huffington Post.* 3

### Crackdown on Civil Society Groups

- **Beijing AIZHIXING Institute of Health Education** (北京爱知行信息咨询中心). Due to harassment of its clients, the organization was forced to stop the majority of its services in April. 32

- **Tiananmen Mothers.** The organization of family members of the victims of the violent 1989 crackdown launched a new website on May 28. It was blocked within a few hours. 33

- **“In the Hepatitis B Camp”** (肝胆相照论坛). The world’s largest online forum offering counseling and support to Hepatitis B sufferers was shut down in May. The webmaster Lu Jun (陆军) was harassed and questioned by police as he returned home to China on July 3 from a trip to Hong Kong and the U.S. 34

- **Crackdown on June Fourth commemoration.** On June 3-4, activists, lawyers, and other mourners, who sought to commemorate the 19th anniversary of the Tiananmen Square Crackdown, were detained, escorted home, and closely monitored. 35
## Intensified Crackdown on Activists

In the final lead up to the Games, many activists, petitioners, bloggers, concerned citizens, and lawyers were harassed, monitored, detained, or forced to leave Beijing by security forces, in the name of ensuring a “peaceful” Olympics. For a list of those targeted, see sidebar, “Timeline: Human Rights Defenders.”

### Security Buildup

- **Security threats.** The authorities stepped up security measures in Beijing and other Olympic cities before the Games. The Chinese Community Party says China’s main security concerns regarding the Olympics are Tibetan “separatists,” Falun Gong religious practitioners, and criminals.36

- **Costs.** In a 2007 official estimate, Beijing organizers stated that $300 million USD would be budgeted for security work. As of September 2008, an updated figure had not been released. However, the Washington, D.C.-based Security Industry Association estimated that China would spend $6.5 billion on security improvements throughout Beijing, more than four times the amount spent on security for the 2004 Games in Athens.38

- **Police force.** Officials announced that 100,000 commandos, police, and army troops would be placed on high alert during the Games in Beijing.39

- **Military personnel and machinery.** The Chinese authorities deployed more than 34,000 military personnel with 74 planes, 47 helicopters, and 33 naval ships. Reports also indicated that surface-to-air missiles, radar, and anti-chemical equipment were also deployed.

- **Volunteers.** The 440,000 Chinese volunteers at the Olympics included local residents and security agents, watching for any trouble from protesters or dissidents.41

- **Dissidents warned.** The Shanghai Public Security Bureau barred political dissidents from leaving the city or speaking with foreign reporters during the Olympics. Under the rules, dissidents must voluntarily report to police every week about their activities.42

- **Beijing security intensified.** Before the Olympics, authorities introduced new visa rules for foreigners, including restrictions limiting visitors to 30-day stays, replacing more flexible, multiple-entry visas. Some subway stations installed X-ray machines to screen the bags of subway passengers. Many restaurants and bars near the Olympic venues were ordered to close for two months. Police raided the Sanlitun bar district several times before the Olympics, detaining dozens of people, some for drug offences and others for not carrying passports. The Olympic Green, encircling the stadiums, was surrounded by fences and checkpoints and limited to event ticketholders.45

### Protests

- **Official protest zones.** On July 23, officials designated three parks in Beijing where protests and petitions would be allowed, including World Park, Ritan Park, and Purple Bamboo Park, none of which are near the Olympic Green.46

- **Total number of applications for permit:** 77.

- **Total number of permits granted:** 0.

- **Harassment and abuse of applicants.** Many applicants reported harassment by authorities.
Following are a few examples:

- **Late July. Sang Jun** (桑军), who lost his 11-year-old child in the Sichuan earthquake, was looking for compensation and applied to protest in late July. His plane ticket was torn up by Sichuan authorities.\(^4\)

- **August 1. Ge Yi Fei** (葛亦菲), a doctor of Chinese traditional medicine from Suzhou Province, was involved with 140 others in a forced relocation case. She applied for a permit in Beijing and was physically carried away by four Suzhou officials to bring her back to Suzhou.\(^4\)

- **August 5. Hunan petitioner Tang Xue Cheng** (唐学成) went to Beijing and applied according to regulations. Authorities in Beijing contacted security police in Hunan to take him away.\(^4\)

- **August 6. Zhang Wei** (张薇), a housing activist protesting the demolition of traditional homes in downtown Beijing, was detained shortly after applying for a permit.\(^5\)

- **August 7. Shan Chun** (单春), a representative of retired military and police, officially applied to protest and was threatened by officials that she would be locked up. She and hundreds of others were planning to engage in activities on August 12.\(^5\)

- **August 18.** Two elderly petitioners, **Wu Dianyuan** (吴殿元), 79, and **Wang Xiuying** (王秀英), 77, were sentenced to one year of Reeducation-Through-Labor after applying several times to demonstrate in the official protest zones. The women were protesting insufficient compensation after being forcibly evicted and relocated from their Beijing homes in 2001 to make way for Olympics construction. Their sentence, first reported by Human Rights in China in an August 19 press release,\(^52\) gained widespread press attention in the West.\(^53\) On August 29, the Chinese authorities rescinded the sentence.\(^54\)

### Opening Ceremony

- **Spectacle.** The opening ceremony, which cost at least $100 million,\(^55\) was directed by one of China’s most prominent film directors, Zhang Yimou.\(^56\) 91,000 spectators and 4.7 billion television viewers around the world watched the four-hour long ceremony showcasing stunning images of China’s history and culture. Eighty heads of state joined President Hu Jintao in the stands for a show that featured 14,000 performers, including 9,000 from the People’s Liberation Army.\(^57\)

- **Criticism.** Some criticized the integrity of the ceremony when it was revealed that the children in the parade dressed to represent China’s 56 ethnic minority groups were, in fact, all Han Chinese; the nine-year-old girl singing “Ode to the Motherland” was made to lip synch to the voice of a little girl deemed “not cute enough”; and the televised scenes of fireworks were digitally enhanced.\(^58\)

### Top Four Medal-Winning Countries\(^59\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank/Country</th>
<th>Gold</th>
<th>Silver</th>
<th>Bronze</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<td>1. China</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>28</td>
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<td>2. USA</td>
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<td>3. Russian Federation</td>
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<td>28</td>
<td>72</td>
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<td>4. Great Britain</td>
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<td>47</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Cost</td>
<td>Praise for Beijing Olympics</td>
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<td>The Chinese government spent an estimated $42 billion (297 billion yuan) on the Olympic Games. This includes mammoth construction projects such as the $500 million Bird’s Nest stadium and the $3 billion airport terminal.</td>
<td>IOC President Jacques Rogge said, “The world learned more about China, and China learned more about the rest of the world. And together, we shared the excitement and drama of the Games.”</td>
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NOTES TO ROUNDUP


Human Rights in China’s Incorporating Responsibility 2008 Take Action Campaign (IR2008) highlights individuals in detention and systemic human rights challenges. Each month, the Take Action Campaign provides detailed background on a selected case. The May focus is on labor activist Yao Fuxin and the Olympics and labor rights, the July focus is on Tibetan monk Tenzin Delek Rinpoche and the issue of religious education for ethnic minorities, and the September focus is on rights defender Guo Feixiong and torture. You can find more information on the campaign website about the human rights actions that the Chinese government and the international community can take for positive change. For additional updates and background, visit the IR2008 Take Action Campaign at http://www.ir2008.org.
While the Chinese government touts its goal of creating a “harmonious society,” it has failed to protect internationally recognized workers’ rights, both in law and in practice, and continues to allow gross violations of workers’ human rights. Several recent high-profile incidents have underscored inhumane conditions and weak protections for workers in certain sectors of the economy in China. In June 2007, an extensive network of illegal brick kilns in Shanxi and Henan provinces was found to employ kidnapped slave labor. Although progress has been made on paper in enacting more legal protections for workers, the government continues to deny fundamental rights such as the right to organize independent unions and the right to strike. Abuses range from forced labor and child labor to violations of health and safety standards and the non-payment of back wages and unemployment benefits.

TAKE ACTION FOR YAO FUXIN
Write a direct appeal to the Prison Director and Chinese authorities, and publish or blog for Yao Fuxin. Visit http://www.ir2008.com/05/action.php for more information.

ABOUT THE ISSUE: THE OLYMPICS AND LABOR RIGHTS

While the Chinese government touts its goal of creating a “harmonious society,” it has failed to protect internationally recognized workers’ rights, both in law and in practice, and continues to allow gross violations of workers’ human rights. Several recent high-profile incidents have underscored inhumane conditions and weak protections for workers in certain sectors of the economy in China. In June 2007, an extensive network of illegal brick kilns in Shanxi and Henan provinces was found to employ kidnapped slave labor. Although progress has been made on paper in enacting more legal protections for workers, the government continues to deny fundamental rights such as the right to organize independent unions and the right to strike. Abuses range from forced labor and child labor to violations of health and safety standards and the non-payment of back wages and unemployment benefits.

TAKE A STAND FOR WORKERS IN CHINA
Tenzin Delek Rinpoche is a Tibetan monk and spiritual leader who has been in prison since 2002, and is serving a life sentence for “crimes of terror” and “incitement of separatism.” He continues to assert his innocence.

Before his arrest, Tenzin Delek Rinpoche sought to strengthen the Tibetan community, including by working to build schools, monasteries, and medical facilities, and by reaching out to the poor. Tenzin Delek Rinpoche supported the Dalai Lama, developed Tibetan cultural and religious institutions, and was also active in the local environmental movement, speaking out against deforestation practices that were harmful to the local community.

Tenzin Delek’s activism on this range of issues made him a target of the Chinese authorities, who for ten years attempted to limit his work and influence. He was detained and then arrested on April 7, 2002, accused of involvement in a series of bombings in Sichuan Province between 1998 and 2002. Another Tibetan, Lobsang Dondrup, had been arrested for an April 3, 2002, bombing in Chengdu, and the authorities stated that he linked Tenzin Delek Rinpoche to the bombings in his confession, though no record of the confession exists.

Following his arrest, Tenzin Delek was held incommunicado for eight months. On November 29, 2002, his trial with Lobsang Dondrup opened at the Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture Intermediate People’s Court. During the trial, no evidence other than the confession of Lobsang Dondrup was offered to link Tenzin Delek Rinpoche to the bombings, and Tenzin Delek Rinpoche maintained his innocence throughout. Moreover, he had no access to the lawyer his family had appointed for him, and despite his final conviction, no court documents have since been released by the court, shrouding the proceedings in secrecy.

On December 2, 2002, Tenzin Delek Rinpoche was convicted of “causing explosions [and] inciting the separation of the state” and was sentenced to death with a two-year reprieve. Tenzin Delek Rinpoche appealed the conviction, but his appeal was denied by the Sichuan Higher People’s Court, which subsequently commuted his sentence to life imprisonment in January 2005.

Lobsang Dondrup was sentenced to death on the basis of his confession on November 29, 2002; he refused to appeal and was executed on January 26, 2003.

**TAKE ACTION FOR TENZIN DELEK RINPOCHE**


**ABOUT THE ISSUE: RELIGIOUS EDUCATION FOR ETHNIC MINORITIES IN CHINA**

Despite formal protections set forth in many domestic laws, regulations, and policies, ethnic minorities in China continue to face numerous barriers in their access to religious education.
The authorities have established both legal and practical obstacles to religious education. Religious practitioners face official interference in religious training, restrictions on entry into religious buildings, and limitations on the observance of religious customs in public places. At the same time, authorities have implemented an aggressive campaign of Chinese nationalist-themed patriotic education programs, which are instituted in primary and secondary schools, as well as in centers of religious learning such as monasteries and mosques.

**TAKE ACTION TO SUPPORT RELIGIOUS EDUCATION FOR CHINA’S ETHNIC MINORITIES**


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Guo Feixiong (郭飞雄), also known as Yang Maodong (杨茂东), is a Guangzhou-based activist and writer. He also worked as a legal adviser at the Beijing-based Shengzhi Law Office and provided legal assistance on a number of controversial rights defense cases, including helping the villagers of Taishi, Guangdong Province, to remove their corrupt village chief in 2005. Immediately following his activities in Taishi, he was detained for three months on “suspicion of disturbing the public order.” Guo went on a hunger strike for 59 days during detention.

In November 2005, the Shengzhi Law Office was shut down because its founder, prominent human rights lawyer Gao Zhisheng, represented Falun Gong practitioners and posted three letters on the Internet criticizing the Chinese government for its repression of the Falun Gong. In February 2006, Guo participated in a hunger strike organized by Gao to protest the government’s crackdown on human rights activists. When Gao was detained in August 2006, Guo also provided legal assistance to Gao. Guo was formally arrested in September 2006 on the charge of “illegal business activity” in connection with the 2001 publication of *Shenyang Political Earthquake* (沈阳政坛地震), a book he edited about a political scandal in Shenyang, Liaoning Province. In November 2007, he was sentenced to five years in prison and fined 40,000 yuan.

According to Guo’s wife, Zhang Qing, during his 15-month detention in Guangzhou and Shenyang, Guo was tortured numerous times, including the following episodes:

- He was interrogated for 13 consecutive days and nights right after his initial detention.
- He was tied down to a wooden bed for 42 days with his arms and legs shackled.
- He was hung from the ceiling by his arms and legs while the police electrocuted his genitals with a high voltage baton. Guo attempted suicide the following day.

According to Zhang, Guo’s conviction was based on the confession he gave during the torture with electric baton. In December 2007, a month after his conviction, Guo was trans-
Torture is prohibited by international law, and by China’s own Constitution and domestic laws. But despite these prohibitions, there is ample evidence from first-hand accounts by detainees and prison inmates that the use of torture by police, state security, and prison officials is prevalent in China. In addition, the use of torture as a tool of political repression is frequently reported by victims, domestic activists, international media, civil society groups such as social service and church groups, and non-governmental organizations.

In recent years, following the revelation of wrongful convictions in several murder cases, the Chinese government has acknowledged that the use of torture to extract confessions from criminal suspects remains a serious problem in China’s criminal justice process and a major cause of miscarriage of justice.

**TAKE ACTION TO END TORTURE IN CHINA**

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**ABOUT THE ISSUE: TORTURE**

Torture is prohibited by international law, and by China’s own Constitution and domestic laws. But despite these prohibitions, there is ample evidence from first-hand accounts by detainees and prison inmates that the use of torture by police, state security, and prison officials is prevalent in China. In addition, the use of torture as a tool of political repression is frequently reported by victims, domestic activists, international media, civil society groups such as social service and church groups, and non-governmental organizations.

Guo is married and has two children. Because of his activities, Guo’s family has also become a target of the authorities. Guo’s wife, Zhang Qing, lost her job. Guo’s son Yang Tiance (杨天策) was denied admission to the local public school, Hua Kang primary school (华康小学), for one year and was finally permitted to enroll in 2008. Guo’s daughter, Yang Tianjiao (杨天娇), is still barred from enrolling in the local public middle school, Tianhe No. 47 middle school (天河区47中学).

**TAKE ACTION FOR GUO FEIXIONG**

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ferred to the Meizhou Prison, Guangdong Province, to serve his sentence. Upon arrival at the prison, Guo began a hunger strike to protest his treatment. A few days later, he was severely beaten by a fellow inmate while 200 other inmates watched. The prison authority also threatened to send him to a mental institution. At Meizhou Prison, he went on hunger strike several times. During one of these strikes, in February 2008, he was force-fed a liquid that made him vomit for more than a week and turned his urine red.
TIMELINE: HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Human rights defenders and their families continued to be harassed, detained, and arrested throughout the year. For more information on the cases noted in the timeline, see HRIC’s Monthly Briefs, available at http://www.hrichina.org.

FEBRUARY

4 Journalist Ching Cheong (程翔) released on parole
5 Writer Lü Gengsong (吕耿松) sentenced
8 Southern Metropolitan Daily editor Yu Huafeng (杨华峰) released
19 Land rights defender and Olympic critic Yang Chunlin (杨春林) tried
16–22 Rights defense lawyer Zheng Enchong (郑恩宠) repeatedly beaten, subpoenaed
20 Jailed petitioner Liu Jie (刘杰) Reeducation-Through-Labor (RTL) decision upheld
21 Yuan Weijing (袁世静) barred from monthly family visit to her husband, jailed barefoot lawyer Chen Guangcheng (陈光诚)
25 Family informed that jailed democracy activist Zhu Yufu (朱虞夫) to be retried
26 Jailed petitioner Liu Jie (刘杰) begins hunger strike
29 Rights defender Zheng Mingfang (郑明芳) taken from home

MARCH

1–5 Tiananmen Mothers member Zhang Xianling (张先玲) monitored
2 Jailed petitioner Liu Jie (刘杰) ends hunger strike
4 Jailed petitioner Liu Jie (刘杰) files administrative suit on RTL decision, suit not accepted
4 Land rights defender Yu Jianli (于建利) tried
5 Rights defense lawyer Teng Biao (滕彪) detained
7 Rights defender Hu Jia (胡佳) indicted
10 Tibetan writer Woesser and husband Wang Lixiong (王力雄) under house arrest
18 Rights defender Hu Jia (胡佳) tried
20 Uyghur Christian Alimujiang Yimiti (阿力木江·亚木提) arrested
21 Yuan Weijing (袁世静) barred from monthly family visit to Chen Guangcheng (陈光诚)
24 Land rights defender and Olympic critic Yang Chunlin (杨春林) sentenced
27 Jailed dissident He Depu (何德普) denied visit with medical specialist
28 Jailed democracy activist Zhu Yufu (朱虞夫) retried

APRIL

1 Writer Hu Di (胡迪) summoned
3 Rights defender Hu Jia (胡佳) sentenced
8 Husband of rights defender Zheng Mingfang (郑明芳) informed of Zheng’s two-year RTL sentence
9 Jailed democracy activist Zhu Yufu’s (朱虞夫) sentence increased to include deprivation of political rights
14 Appeal of writer Lü Gengsong (吕耿松) dismissed
15 Yuan Weijing (袁世静) barred from monthly family visit to Chen Guangcheng (陈光诚)
15 Rights activist Ni Yulan (倪玉兰) beaten, taken into police custody
17 Dissident Tao Jun (陶君) detained and interrogated
17 Writer Lü Gengsong (吕耿松) transferred to prison
17 Rights defense lawyer Zheng Enchong (郑恩宠) blocked from attending hearing for former Shanghai mayor Chen Liangyu, phone line cut
26 Veteran dissident He Depu (何德普), serving an eight year prison sentence, writes letter to International Olympic Committee President Jacques Rogge about worsening prison conditions
27 Imprisoned rights defender Hada (哈达) mistreated
29 Yuan Weijing (袁世静) barred from monthly family visit to Chen Guangcheng (陈光诚)
29 Rights activist Ni Yulan (倪玉兰) arrested
29 Rights defender Hu Jia (胡佳) barred from family visit
29 Yuan Weijing (袁世静) barred from attending Beijing hearing in administrative case Yuan brought against the government for prohibiting her from traveling outside of China in 2007

MAY

3 Freelance writer Zhou Yuanzhi (周远志) taken away, monitored, and interrogated
5 Yuan Weijing (袁世静) barred from attending hearing in her administrative case
6 Wife learns that imprisoned rights defender Guo Qizhen (郭起真) beaten in prison
7 Rights defender Hu Jia (胡佳) transferred to Chaobai Prison in Tianjin
14 Yuan Weijing (袁伟静) barred from attending hearing in her administrative case, court upholds decision prohibiting her from travelling outside of China in 2007
15 Yuan Weijing (袁伟静) barred from monthly family visit to Chen Guangcheng (陈光诚)
15 Freelance writer Zhou Yuanzhi (周远志) released
17 Democracy activist Guo Quan (郭泉) taken away, home searched, computer confiscated
17–22 Jailed petitioner Liu Jie (刘杰) tortured
23 Land rights defender Yu Jianli (于建利) retried
27 Uyghur Christian Alimujiang Yimiti (阿里木江.依米提) tried
28 Democracy activist Guo Quan (郭泉) released
28 Heilongjiang barefoot lawyer Yuan Xianchen (袁显臣) taken back from Beijing
31 Rights defense lawyers Teng Biao (滕彪) and Jiang Tianyong (江天勇) unable to renew licenses

**JUNE**

3 Rights defense lawyers Li Xiongbing (黎雄兵) and Cheng Hai (程海) barred from meeting clients
4 Rights defense lawyer Pu Zhiqiang (浦志强) prevented from visiting Tiananmen Square to pay tribute to those killed in June Fourth massacre
7 Activist blogger Zeng Jinyan (曾杰) threatened, wife beaten
9 Retired teacher Zeng Hongling (曾宏玲) detained after posting three Sichuan earthquake-related articles
10 Rights activist Huang Qi (黄琦) taken away by police
11 Rights activist Huang Qi (黄琦) criminally detained
16 Mother of rights activist Huang Qi (黄琦) receives notice of his detention
16 Rights defense website manager Ren Shangyan (任尚燕) detained
17 Rights activist Hua Huiqi (华惠棋) harassed
17 Mongolian dissident Jaranbayarin Soyolt (苏义图) released
19 AIDS activist Wan Yanhai (万延海) monitored
25 Daughter of imprisoned rights defender Guo Feixiong (郭飞雄) denied admission to local public school
25 Changsha dissident Xie Changfa (谢长发) and younger brother detained
25 Sichuan schoolteacher Liu Shaokun (刘绍坤) detained
27 Democracy activist Zha Jiangguo (查建国) released
28 Shanxi rights activist Liu Jianjun (刘建军) taken away by Beijing police
30 Elder brother of Chen Guangcheng (陈光诚) under close surveillance, number of guards monitoring

**JULY**

1 Activist Hua Huiqi (华惠棋) threatened, wife beaten
2 U.S. Citizen Jude Shao (邵意德) released on parole
4 Shanxi rights activist Liu Jianjun (刘建军) taken back to Shanxi, criminally detained
7 Guizhou dissident Chen Xi (陈西) under 24-hour surveillance by the Guiyang municipal police to prevent him from traveling to Beijing
9 Tianjin-based dissident Lü Hongtai (吕洪来) detained
17 Rights defender Yu Jianli (于建利) sentenced
18 Rights activist Huang Qi (黄琦) formally arrested
20 Rights defense lawyer Zheng Enchong (郑恩宠) interrogated
20 Dissident Zhang Shuanguang (张善光) released from prison
21 Internet dissident writer Du Daobin (杜导斌) detained
23 Family informed of Sichuan schoolteacher Liu Shaokun's (刘绍坤) one-year RTL sentence
23 Rights defense lawyer Zheng Enchong (郑恩宠) summoned, home searched
24 Beijing house church member Xu Yonghai (徐永海) notified by the Deshengmenwai Police that he will be under 24-hour surveillance until end of September
24 Jia Jianying (贾建英), wife of imprisoned Beijing dissident He Depu (何德甫), notified by the Zhanlan Road Police that 24-hour surveillance will last until September 24
25 Sichuan rights activist and Pan-Blue Alliance member Huang Xiaomin (黄晓敏) detained
25 Zhejiang rights activist and Pan-Blue Alliance member Wei Zenhong (魏振洪) detained
25 Detained rights activist Huang Qi's (黄琦) family denied permission to bring him medicine or submit an application for his release on bail
26 Imprisoned activist Ye Guozhu (叶国柱) not released after serving full term
28 Shanghai Petitioners Zhang Culpings (张翠平), Zhang Zhiying (张智英), Wang Shanbao (王山葆), Wang Shuzhen (王永玲), and Zhu Libin (朱黎斌) detained by authorities to prevent them from going to Beijing during the Olympics
29 Family of Sichuan schoolteacher Liu Shaokun (刘绍坤) denied a visit after being told they could see him
31. Chaoyang District state security police notified Beijing-based intellectual Yu Jie (余杰) that he would be under 24-hour surveillance until conclusion of the Paralympics.

AUGUST
1. Zhejiang dissident Wang Rongqing (王荣清) arrested on suspicion of “subversion of state power”
4. Guizhou petitioner Chen Hong (陈红) dragged from her home by local officials demanding a “confession”
10. Beijing house church activist Hua Huiqi (华惠棋) abducted by state security police on his way to a church service attended by U.S. President Bush, managed to escape
17. Beijing petitioners Wu Dianyuan (吴殿元), 79, and Wang Xiuying (王秀英), 77, sentenced to a one-year term of RTL after applying for protest zone permits
26. Long-term political prisoner Hu Shigen (胡石根) released after serving 16 years of a 20-year sentence
29. RTL sentence of petitioners Wu Dianyuan (吴殿元) and Wang Xiuying (王秀英) rescinded
CHINESE PUBLICATION HIGHLIGHTS

From the Pages of *Huaxia Dianzi Bao* and *Ren Yu Ren Quan*

*Huaxia Dianzi Bao* and *Ren Yu Ren Quan* are HRIC’s online Chinese-language publications. *Huaxia Dianzi Bao* is a weekly online newsletter sent to 250,000 subscribers in mainland China, which provides uncensored and underreported news on a number of pressing issues. *Ren Yu Ren Quan* is a monthly online journal that publishes analysis, research, and commentary by independent scholars, writers, and activists.

As part of its editorial commitment to introduce English readers to diverse independent Chinese voices, *China Rights Forum* translates and publishes works by Chinese contributors. Additional translations can be found online at HRIC’s website, http://www.hrichina.org.

*Huaxia Dianzi Bao* [http://www.huaxiabao.org](http://www.huaxiabao.org)

Each issue of HRIC’s weekly e-newsletter, *Huaxia Dianzi Bao*, includes several short articles and a series of news briefs. New installments, published each Thursday, and archived issues are available on the *Huaxia Dianzi Bao* website. The diagram below presents an overview of the topics covered in the 422 articles published in *Huaxia Dianzi Bao* between the months of February and August of 2008.
**Ren Yu Ren Quan** focused on a wide variety of topics in the last seven months, including ideological liberation, Tibet, nationalism, June Fourth, the Sichuan earthquake, and the Olympics. New issues of this monthly HRIC online journal are available at the *Ren Yu Ren Quan* website on the first of every month. Archived issues are also available on the website. A summary of selected articles is provided below.

<table>
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<th>From the May 2008 issue on</th>
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<tr>
<td>“Tibet, the Olympics, and Nationalism”</td>
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<td><strong>Another Voice Besides Nationalism</strong></td>
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<td>[不同于爱国猖狂的另一种民意]</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>By Liu Xiaobo</strong></td>
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<td>Beijing writer Liu Xiaobo provides insight into a less prominent strain of popular sentiment in China today, a sentiment much different from recent displays of fervent nationalism. Through specific examples of recent dissent and an analysis of online websites, he challenges the portrayal of the Chinese people as a unified body that proudly supports the Communist Party, suggesting that this may be only a façade orchestrated by state-controlled media. Liu reveals that in reality, it is likely there are just as many people who are dissatisfied with the status quo as there are people who subscribe to the more publicized nationalistic mentality.</td>
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<th>From the June 2008 issue on</th>
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<td>“The Nineteenth Anniversary of June Fourth”</td>
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<td><strong>Disaster and Politics</strong></td>
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<td>[灾害与政治]</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>By Yang Guang</strong></td>
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<td>Beijing writer Yang Guang suggests in this article that, while the central government’s response to the May 12 earthquake was far better than its previous responses to natural disasters, it could have been improved. Yang describes how emperors in China’s ancient history dealt with natural disasters, recalling that they responded humbly—without self-congratulation or self-aggrandizement—providing tax cuts and other benefits to the people. Yang concludes that if the government had been transparent and willing to openly cooperate with its people and the international community in the aftermath of the Sichuan earthquake, its response would have been even more effective.</td>
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<td>“The Olympics and the Earthquake”</td>
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<td><strong>Memorial: Forty Days After the Quake</strong></td>
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<td>[四川大地震四十日祭]</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>By Wang Kang</strong></td>
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<td>Sichuan writer Wang Kang provides a composed, yet passionate look into the effects of the May 12 Sichuan earthquake on China thus far, as well as into the possible future that the country faces. In discussing the implications and importance of the location of the disaster, Wang highlights the historical and geographical significance of Sichuan province, and goes on to discuss the impact of the quake on the whole of China. He concludes that the effects of this tragedy were exacerbated by human negligence and greed, the realization of which has prompted the people to rise out of a state of complacency with a renewed yearning for moral responsibility.</td>
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<td>“Post-Olympics Assessment”</td>
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<td><strong>Two Competing Post-Olympic Paths</strong></td>
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<td>[北京奥运后的两条路线之争]</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>By Chen Ziming</strong></td>
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<td>Beijing author Chen Ziming recalls two Olympic host cities of the past, Berlin (1936) and Seoul (1988), and the markedly different post-Olympic paths upon which the two countries embarked. He reminds the reader that while one ventured toward freedom and democracy, the other sank into a state of intolerance and fascism. Chen explains in detail the difference between the two and concludes that China must be careful in its own journey, not allowing power and greed to override reason and morality.</td>
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Summaries by Hannah Zhao
Comrades: The Chinese LGBT Film Festival

When Beijing University students tried to launch a gay film festival on campus in 2001, representatives of the Ministry of Public Security showed up in plain clothes and shut down the event. The organizers tried again in 2005, but despite careful efforts to limit publicity for the event, the film festival was exposed and banned from the campus. This summer, several Chinese Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) films were successfully screened with no hassles—this time in New York City. Asia Catalyst, an NGO that supports grassroots human rights advocacy throughout the region, hosted “Comrades: The Chinese LGBT Film Festival” in solidarity with these intrepid festival organizers.

The weekend-long showcase featured four films from the festivals banned in Beijing. These compelling stories reveal glimpses of the lesbian, gay, and transgender experience in contemporary China. East Palace, West Palace (《东宫西宫》，1996) may be the first Chinese film to explicitly explore homosexuality in China. Tantang (《唐唐》，2004) uses documentary and fictional filmmaking techniques to tell the story of a transvestite performer’s cross-gender love affair. In Butterfly (《蝴蝶》，2004), a schoolteacher’s chance encounter with a seductive singer reawakens memories of an adolescent lesbian fling and sparks a journey of rediscovery. Blending realism and fantasy, Welcome to Destination Shanghai (《目的地上海》，2003) features a collection of vignettes that examine the underground sex trade and those living on the fringe in glittery Shanghai.

Letters written to Asia Catalyst by one of the organizers of the original Chinese LGBT film festivals describe the poignant—and often vexing—story of their repeated attempts to screen these films in Beijing. The organizers used a variety of strategies, including cell phone text messaging and underground publicity, but were blocked at every turn. True to its title, “Banned in Beijing, Out in New York,” the film festival was finally brought to fruition on September 5–7, 2008, at the LGBT Community Center in New York City.

For the full text of the aforementioned letters, see: http://www.asiacatalyst.org/comrades/history.

(In)Human Scale

Up the Yangtze opens with the otherworldly noise of a luxury cruise ship scraping through a lock in the massive Three Gorges Dam, setting the mood for this documentary’s elegiac look at a handful of the two million people to be displaced by the imminent and inexorable rise of the Yangtze’s waters.

Up the Yangtze (2007)
Directed by Yung Chang
Running Time: 93 minutes
Mandarin with English subtitles

Canadian director Yung Chang focuses mainly on the lives of two young people as they go to work on a “farewell cruise” catering to Western tourists taking in the spectral Yangtze River landscape before it is immersed under a colossal man-made lake. Yu Shui, nicknamed Cindy by the ship’s managers, comes from a family of illiterate
subsistence farmers and is sent to work despite her desire to continue schooling. Her parents’ struggle against their grim economic situation and their desire to give their studious children a chance to make it in the new China touchingly illustrates the challenges facing multitudes of poor families.

In contrast, Chen Boy, nicknamed Jerry, is a brash “little emperor” who, because he speaks some English, is put to work where he can interact with the tourists, all the while chasing eagerly after their generous tips. Yung Chang makes an excellent choice in following both of these engrossing young people, and viewers are rewarded with the pair’s openness as they deal with the frustrations and shocks of adolescence and first jobs.

The film interweaves shots of luxuriating tourists with those of workers toiling to support that leisure, and pits the spin spouted by tour guides against the cruel realities that displaced residents face. Together, these juxtapositions neatly illustrate the ironies and contradictions caused by the enormous environmental and economic changes in the Yangtze River basin. Thankfully, Yung Chang never dwells too ponderously on the metaphors his film creates; rather, he employs only minimal narration and allows the landscape and people he films to evoke the human and environmental costs of China’s unbridled development.

Although the Three Gorges Dam is a monumental project, the human scale of this well-crafted and moving film—echoing recent offerings like Manufactured Landscapes and Still Life (reviewed in China Rights Forum No. 1, 2008)—challenges the inhuman scale of the dam itself.

China’s Rich Scientific Past

The book’s title refers to Joseph Needham (1900–1995), whose multi-volume magnum opus, Science and Civilization in China, continued beyond his death under the direction of the Needham Research Institute at the University of Cambridge. After 60 years the work now stretches across 24 books, organized into seven volumes, presenting the history of Chinese science and civilization to non-Chinese readers.

For decades, Needham, whose Cambridge academic career began in biochemistry, was the intellectual and administrative driving force behind this vast undertaking. He conceived the idea for the project, wrote most of the early volumes, and edited later ones.

In 1984, Lynn White Jr., Professor Emeritus of History at UCLA and a past president of the American History of Science Society, called Needham “the world’s greatest scholar in the comparative study of civilizations . . . unique in the grandeur of his vision, and his epic ambitions.” According to White, Needham was prolific in his publications while driven by one clear vision.

Needham was inspired to undertake his ground-breaking work during World War II while he was in China directing the British government’s program of assistance to Chinese scientists. He discovered that, contrary to the view almost universally held in the West at that time, China had been the world’s most technologically-advanced society from about 500 BC to 1500 CE. He set out to research the history of this phenomenon and make it known to the Western world. In addition, he questioned why “modern science” did not continue to develop in China after the sixteenth century?

According to scholars like White, while
Needham brilliantly succeeded in researching and presenting Chinese scientific achievements, he never answered this final question to the satisfaction of himself or others. Indeed, White argued that Needham posed the wrong question. He would have done better to ask why "modern science" developed in Europe, rather than address the negative question of why it did not in China.

Winchester is the first person to publish a book-length biography of Needham. He is not a scientist, an historian, or a China specialist, but rather a talented and enterprising freelance writer who once served as a foreign correspondent in Asia for various publications. He is also a gifted raconteur, bringing to life Needham’s adventures in China during World War II, his relationships with both his fellow academics at Cambridge and his wives, and his disastrous foray into world politics. Winchester does justice to Needham as an exciting, intensely passionate, and highly adventurous man with great intellectual ambition. In addition, he usefully reproduces Needham’s impressive list of Chinese inventions and discoveries with dates of first mention. However, Winchester ultimately fails to convey the brilliance and excitement of Needham’s deep and scholarly exploration of a vast range of topics.

The core of this book should have been in Chapter 5, *The Making of a Masterpiece*, but in the meager 30 pages accorded to Needham’s monumental work Winchester does not adequately examine the intellectual challenges that Needham addressed. He could have allowed passages of Needham’s own elegant prose to speak for themselves and included assessments of other writers, such as Professor White; Maurice Cowling, the Cambridge historian whose excellent biographical essay for *The New Criterion* in 1993 captures—in just over a dozen pages—something of the greatness of the man; or the brilliant Cambridge polymath (and authority on early Chinese music) Laurence Picken, who called an early volume of Needham’s *magnum opus* “perhaps the greatest single act of historical synthesis and intercultural communication ever attempted by one man.”

It is distasteful that a biography of a man who possessed great intellect and noble spirit—of whom the literary critic George Steiner once wrote, “Proust and Needham have made of remembrance both an act of moral justice and of high art”—should be given a title as vulgar as this one. The book is marred by slapdash writing that a good editor would have corrected. There are glaring repetitions and inconsistencies. Furthermore, the dust-jacket description of this reviewer’s edition is seriously misleading: it states, quite wrongly, that the work “tells the sweeping history of China . . . through the story of one man,” when in fact the book does nothing of the sort. It also asserts that Needham solved “one of the great unanswered questions of history.” We have already seen that in the opinion of highly qualified scholars Needham did not succeed in answering the great question he posed.

In the prologue, Winchester claims that Needham’s *Science and Civilization in China* “stands today alongside the greatest of the world’s great encyclopedias and dictionaries as a monument to the power of human understanding.” In the epilogue, however, he acknowledges that Needham never fully worked out the answer to his own question, commenting that he was perhaps too close to his subject, “seeing many trees but not enough forest,” and then concludes that “the great strength of his books lay in their ability to catalog the early promise of Chinese science.”

A monument to the power of human understanding or a great catalog? Winchester does not seem to have a clear answer in his own mind.

Winchester also asserts that Needham was “unarguably the foremost student of China in the entire world.” How could he make this claim without considering Professor John King Fairbank of Harvard, a close contemporary of Needham’s, doyen of China scholars in America and joint initiator of the sixteen-volume *The Cambridge History of China*?

Those who would like to read a book that sets Needham’s intellectual achievements in the context of his life and times will find Winchester disappointing. One hopes that a biographer will soon come forward who will give the educated layman who has neither access nor time to read the many volumes of *Science and Civilization in China* an assessment and presentation of his work that does justice not only to the ambition and the cataloguing, but also to the true greatness of the man.
Keepers of the Big Life

BY LI MIAO LOVETT

One of the first dramatic scenes in *Wolf Totem* depicts a thorough, seemingly ruthless massacre of Chinese warhorses by Mongolian wolves. In the midst of a blinding “white-haired” blizzard, every last horse groomed for Mao’s Red Army is driven to death by wolves who dominate the grasslands not only through sheer strength and cunning, but also through the willingness of pack members to sacrifice their own lives.

Taken out of context, these depictions of the wolf as king of the savage steppes have fueled the cult-like status that Jiang Rong’s novel has attained in China. Military generals and entrepreneurs are some of *Wolf Totem*’s biggest fans. The novel sold more than a million copies in China in its first year, and some six million copies on the black market.

Yet the larger message delivered by its author has apparently been lost on the masses. Jiang Rong is the pseudonym for a Beijing professor who spent 11 years living amidst the Mongols in the 1960s, during the early years of the People’s Republic. Tucked between the cinematic moments where humans and wolves take their turns in conquest are explicit statements such as these: “Grass is the big life, yet it is the most fragile, the most miserable life. . . . For us Mongols, there’s nothing more deserving of pity than grass.” That’s Bilgee talking, the wise old Mongol who serves as the voice of conscience just as a growing population of Han Chinese infiltrate the grasslands. His words are foreboding: “When you kill off the big life of the grassland, all the little lives are doomed.”

*Wolf Totem* pays homage to the land as much as it does to its charismatic wolves, whom nomadic Mongols both fear and revere. Wolves kill sheep and horses, but they also eat marmots and field mice. Without predators, these critters would run rampant on the grasslands, denude the landscape and transform it into barren desert.

The encroaching Gobi desert is a real threat to the Mongol way of life, and the novel’s protagonist, Chen Zhen, can only watch as his countrymen take charge and order the decimation of wolves without awareness of the ensuing disaster. Their attitude is portrayed by a middle school student who has assumed leadership as a Communist Red Guard, and declares that, “Wolves are the true class enemies. Reactionaries throughout the world are all ambitious wolves.” It is ironic that, forty years later, Chinese CEOs have adopted *Wolf Totem* as a symbol of can-do capitalism.

Jiang Rong’s depiction of wolves goes far beyond the dominance of predator over prey and the competitive spirit that today’s upwardly mobile Chinese are touting. The wolves may seem merciless in killing, but they are in fact the keepers of the “big life.” Little goes to waste on the grasslands. After a pack of wolves drive an entire flock of gazelles into a frozen lake, the Mongols enjoy their share of the meat, and the wolves also have enough food into the next season stored in nature’s icebox.

The novel abounds with passages that convey the Beijing professor’s deep understanding of the complex web of life on the grasslands. At times this detracts from the narrative flow of *Wolf Totem*, which lacks the seamlessness of allegorical novels by the contemporary writer Mo Yan. Yet there are a number of poignant scenes that use a spare means to portray the Mongols’ respect for wolves. When the Han Chinese declare open hunting season on the wolves, Batu, the herder held responsible for the warhorse massacre, manages to corner a wily alpha male wolf at the edge of a dirt road. Having chewed off its injured leg, the wolf is unable to leap onto the raised surface. But instead of finishing it off, Batu quietly smokes his cigarette until the wolf claws away at the topsoil and sand. When it succeeds in getting away, he buries the cigarette butts in the earth, noting that “the grassland cannot tolerate carelessness.”
Chen Zhen’s insistence on adopting a wolf cub raises many ethical issues in the latter half of the story. After he and a fellow Chinese student raid a wolf den, five of the seven cubs are destroyed, mostly females, but he keeps the spunkiest male in a warren dug into the ground. When the cub outgrows his pen, he keeps the animal tethered on a leash, yet remains unable to control its wild instincts. Chen Zhen is utterly fascinated with the young wolf’s display of strength and intelligence. His devotion is both scholarly and mystical, but ultimately, Chen exhibits a fatal blind spot. The virgin grassland, “a green carpet manicured by Tengger,” the god of the Mongols, is fast disappearing under the yoke of his fellow Chinese.

With the influx of Han Chinese, housing developments spring up and the military overtake the grasslands in an all-out showdown with the wolves, who are merely seen as a threat to the agrarian way of life. The Mongols, who think of themselves as kindred spirits to the wolves, show contempt for the sheep-like mentality of the Chinese. But in the end these nomads succumb, like their wild compatriots, to the relentless onslaught of men and machines from Maoist China.

Years later, when Chen Zhen returns to visit his host family, the Mongol way of life has been destroyed, and dust storms engulf the landscape all the way to Beijing. It is a telling prophecy, as the Communist government today is unable to put more than a dent in the city’s air pollution problems in time for the Olympics. With the accelerated destruction of farmland and the natural environment, much more is at stake for the Chinese than their pride. The Mongolian tale bears a lesson for the rest of us, as even the least mystically inclined could heed the message borne by the keepers of the wolf totem.
ADVANCING HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES

MARCH 10–15
United Nations Human Rights Council | GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

HRIC Law Program Director Elisabeth Wickeri and Program Officer Carol Wang met with and briefed UN special mechanisms staff who work on the mandates of:

- the independence of judges and lawyers,
- the rights of minorities,
- violence against women,
- arbitrary detention, and
- religious freedom.

Ms. Wickeri and Ms. Wang also collaborated with other non-governmental organizations attending the session.

MARCH 12
European Parliament Tibet Intergroup | STRASBOURG, FRANCE

Program Officer Carol Wang presented “Countdown to the Olympics: Treatment of Tibetans in the Context of Increasing Repression.” Ms. Wang contrasted the Chinese repression of Tibetans over the past year with China’s Olympic promises of improving human rights and highlighted incidents of harassment, detention, and censorship of groups such as petitioners, environmentalists, journalists, and human rights activists. HRIC provided the Intergroup with recommendations on how to help make the impact of the Olympic Games a positive one.

In Tibet the consequences [of official information control] are often more serious because of the increased level of sensitivity regarding nationalism and state unity. This is exacerbated by the Party’s tendency to label all peaceful expression of cultural or religious identity or concerns as political issues of ‘separatism.’ As a result, this creates a culture of fear, where Tibetans live under conditions of heightened repression and sharp restrictions which further undermine their ability to participate in the political arena.

—HRIC, March 12, 2008

APRIL 6–9
World Movement for Democracy: “Making Democracy Work: From Principles to Performance” | KYIV, UKRAINE

Executive Director Sharon Hom attended the five-day event that included more than 500 democracy and human rights activists from around the world. Ms. Hom participated in a number of sessions that focused on new strategies for the promotion of democracy, and the practical needs of civil society actors working on democracy and human rights issues. She also served as a rapporteur for the session “Securing Civil Society Space: How to Respond to Violations of Conventions, Treaties, and Declarations?”
APRIL 11
Tällberg Conversation: “In Search of Common Sense—Leadership Beyond the Conflicts of Interest” | NEW YORK CITY

Executive Director Sharon Hom participated in this discussion at the Scandinavia House to help develop the themes of the annual Tällberg Forum in Sweden, at which leaders and thinkers from around the world gather to explore the opportunities and challenges of global interdependence. She spoke as part of a panel discussion titled, “Responsibilities that leadership must assume,” along with James Hansen, the director of the NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies, Nayan Chanda, the author and editor of Yale Global Online, Yale Center for the Study of Globalization, and Franziska Seel, the executive director of the Global Youth Action Network.

APRIL 18–19

Program Associate Charlie McAteer and Executive Director Sharon Hom attended the event, which was co-sponsored by HRIC and a coalition of press freedom organizations. Ms. Hom spoke on and moderated the panel “Trading with China: What risks, responsibilities, opportunities?” The panel focused in particular on Internet censorship and surveillance in China. HRIC also submitted a white paper, “Beijing’s Legal Obligations as Olympics Host: A Human Rights in China Briefing Paper.”

From the beginning of its Olympics bid, China set high expectations. Promises made by government officials and Olympics organizers were influential in Beijing’s successful bid. . . . These promises represent a range of commitments to the IOC, the Chinese people, and the international community, including commitments on human rights, social and economic development, and press freedom. Yet, since then, the Chinese authorities have changed their tune, stressing “sovereignty” and that the “Games are only about competition and athletes.” . . . Reflecting irresponsible historical amnesia, the IOC, corporate sponsors, and even foreign governments are echoing this official Chinese line. With the billions of dollars already invested in or expected as profit from the Games, it is clear that changing the rules mid-game has become rhetorically—and politically—acceptable.

—Beijing’s Legal Obligations as Olympics Host: A Human Rights in China Briefing Paper

MAY 27
European Parliament Subcommittee on Human Rights Hearing | BRUSSELS, BELGIUM

Executive Director Sharon Hom participated via teleconference in a hearing of the Subcommittee regarding the outcomes of the EU-China Summit and EU-China Dialogue. She noted in particular the problematic message sent to the Chinese authorities when the EU, under pressure from the Chinese government, did not invite civil society organizations focusing on human rights issues in China to the EU-China Human Rights Seminar.
SUPPORTING INDIVIDUALS

JUNE 4
Nineteenth Anniversary of the June Fourth Tiananmen Crackdown | HONG KONG

The HRIC team distributed its June Fourth special resource packet at a candlelight vigil in Victoria Park that gathered approximately 48,000 people, commemorating the sacrifices of the Tiananmen Square protesters nineteen years earlier.

MONTH OF JUNE
United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention | NEW YORK CITY

HRIC submitted two cases to this independent international body of human rights experts, to bring attention to the arbitrary detention of these individuals in violation of their human rights. HRIC builds on decisions by the Working Group to push for the release of individuals and raises their cases with governments that participate in human rights dialogues with China, including the European Union (EU), EU member state governments, and the United States (U.S.) government.

JUNE 17
National Endowment for Democracy (NED) 2008 Democracy Award | WASHINGTON, D.C.

Executive Director Sharon Hom participated in a roundtable discussion with leading rights defenders and activists on “Laws, Rights and Democracy in China: Perspectives of Leading Advocates.” She also attended the NED 2008 Democracy Award Ceremony that recognized Chinese human rights activists imprisoned in China, including Chen Guangcheng, Zhang Jianhong, Yao Fuxin, and Hu Shigen.

REACHING OUT TO EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS

APRIL 9
NYU Law School Panel: “Behind the ‘Great Firewall’: Internet Restrictions & Chinese Law and Society” | NEW YORK CITY

HRIC Law Program Director Elisabeth Wickeri participated in this panel with Professor Jonathan Zittrain and Ms. Stephanie Wang of the Berkman Center for Internet & Society, and Chinese law professor Donald Clarke. Ms. Wickeri focused on HRIC’s E-Advocacy Project as one example of how to promote freedom of expression through technology.

APRIL 25

Executive Director Sharon Hom spoke on contemporary developments in China on the “Regulating Economy and Society” panel. HRIC distributed copies of the “Human Rights in 2008: China’s Olympic Year”
calendar, HRIC’s State Secrets report, and copies of China Rights Forum to an engaged student and faculty audience of about 400.

One point that could really be a tipping point [in China] for advancing into the future is to begin, as a society and as a government, to address the massive past abuses. And that include: the Anti-Rightist campaign, Cultural Revolution, and June 4, ’89 (liusi). When we can look back in time and address those abuses and have the healing that needs to happen, the truth-telling and the investigation to come out from that, then I think that’s a major tipping point about accountability and protection of rights. Because you can’t protect rights in the present if massive past abuses have not been accounted for.

—Sharon Hom, April 25, 2008

APRIL 30
American Federation of Teachers President’s Seminar on International Affairs
| WASHINGTON, D.C.

Executive Director Sharon Hom participated in a panel entitled “China: The 800-Pound Gorilla,” which examined labor rights in China and related issues before an audience of approximately 30 educators and union members.

COUNTING DOWN TO THE OLYMPICS

JUNE 19, JULY 2

Executive Director Sharon Hom participated in two panel discussions. Ms. Hom contributed the chapter, “The Promise of a ‘People’s Olympics’,” which examines the role of the International Olympic Committee and Beijing’s obligations as host city. Ms. Hom discussed the themes of the book at a panel organized by the National Endowment for Democracy in June, along with Minky Worden, Sophie Richardson (Asia Advocacy Director, Human Rights Watch), and Han Dongfang (HRIC board member and founding director of China Labor Bulletin); and at Barnes and Noble in New York in July, with Ms. Worden and R. Scott Greathead (HRIC board member and CEO of World Monitors Inc.).
JULY 24
New York City Bar Association Panel: “‘One World, One Dream’ and Many Opinions: Freedom of Expression at the Beijing Olympics” | NEW YORK CITY

Executive Director Sharon Hom spoke as a panelist, along with Paul Steiger (chairman of the Committee to Protect Journalists) and R. Scott Greathead, to an audience of attorneys and law school students regarding freedom of expression—particularly media freedom—in China in the run-up to the Olympic Games.

SPECIAL EVENTS

JUNE 24
Discussion and Book Signing: The Corpse Walker: Real Life Stories, China From the Bottom Up by Liao Yiwu | NEW YORK CITY

Executive Director Sharon Hom and translator Wen Huang discussed the contents of Corpse Walker, which contains the stories of people who live and work at the margins of Chinese society. The event was co-sponsored by Pantheon, the publisher, with opening remarks from Philip Gourevitch, editor of The Paris Review. Approximately 75 people attended the event held at the National Arts Club in New York.

JULY 22
HRIC Talk: “Media Censorship and the Sichuan Earthquake” | NEW YORK CITY

Dr. Peter Kwong—Professor of Asian American Studies and Urban Affairs and Planning at Hunter College, Professor of Sociology at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, and author of many books and articles on Chinese Americans and modern Chinese politics—presented a lunch talk at the HRIC New York office on his experiences filming a documentary in Sichuan province in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake. He spoke about the impact of the earthquake, the obstacles—official restrictions—faced by journalists reporting in the region, and the actions taken by local authorities against Dr. Kwong and his team for filming in the province.

I have never seen that many domestic news sources [reporting events], ... There was an extremely aggressive, dynamic reporting going on [in Sichuan]. Even though [the reporters] knew they couldn’t go very far, ... They were pushing the envelope from the very beginning. Right after the earthquake, the Central Propaganda Ministry basically ordered no reporters to go to Sichuan, but most agencies ignored the order and sent people in anyway. Once they sent back the story, and when the public read it, there was an overwhelming response, and by that time, the government could not stop it. So in a sense, the government was a reluctant player.

But the initial stories were not damaging to [the government]: the initial stories about the tragedy, about the rescue, about the heroic stuff ... were really ... good PR [for the government.] But you could see
very clearly [that] by the second week, the news became more homogenized . . . [and focused] more and more [on] positive things, so [the authorities were] controlling in that sense.

When the parents of those kids who were killed came out, that [was] the first most threatening news that [brought] negative press, and that’s when they cracked down. . . .

The freedom of the press in China at this point is very limited. They could map out parameters [where] you could go, but beyond certain parameters there is no freedom of the press possible. That is because freedom of the press exposes all of those problems that [the authorities] don’t want to be exposed. You can’t just [say], “let’s deal with why this thing collapsed,” [because] then you’d get into all kinds of corruption issues. Who is dealing with [the issue]? Why this thing happens? Who is responsible? That’s just not an issue that the Chinese [Communist] Party would want to deal with. So, as soon as you hit that, that’s the end.

—Dr. Peter Kwong, July 22, 2008

POST-OLYMPICS ASSESSMENTS

This fall, HRIC will organize or participate in a number of events and briefings, including the following, to assess the human rights impact of the Beijing Olympic Games:

**OCTOBER 21**

“China: Post-Olympics Reflections,” New York City
Presentation by Executive Director Sharon Hom, hosted by the New York City Bar Association Foreign and Comparative Law Committee.

**OCTOBER 27**

“Promoting human rights in China: Post-Olympics Legacy and Opportunities,” HRIC Brussels office
Panel discussions on environmental, security, media, and social development issues. Co-sponsored by Human Rights in China (HRIC), International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), and International Campaign for Tibet (ICT).
In the period before the Beijing Olympics through the close of the event, HRIC actively engaged the media by:

- Issuing press releases and statements about human rights issues related to the Olympics, breaking stories, and updates on individual cases; and
- Speaking with the print and broadcast media on many Olympics-related topics.

**PRESS RELEASES, STATEMENTS, CASE UPDATES: JULY AND AUGUST 2008**

**July 1, 2008: Rights Lawyers Prevented from Meeting U.S. Congressmen**
Beijing authorities prevented prominent rights defense lawyers Li Baiguang (李柏光), Teng Biao (滕彪), and Jiang Tianyong (江天勇) from attending a dinner with U.S. Congressmen Chris H. Smith and Frank R. Wolf.

**July 1, 2008: Activist Hua Huiqi and Family Beaten**
Beijing public security and state security police, accompanied by more than 30 additional people, broke into the home of Beijing-based house church activist Hua Huiqi (华惠棋), threatened him, and beat his family members.

**July 8, 2008: Rights Crackdown Intensifies a Month before the Games**
The Chinese authorities significantly escalated and broadened their systematic crackdown on rights defense activities, religious and cultural expression, and critical voices. Their efforts to maintain control included targeting health care activists, religious practitioners, and parents grieving for their dead children.

**July 9, 2008: HRIC July Take Action: Support Religious Freedom and Cultural Rights for Ethnic Minorities**
HRIC highlighted Tenzin Delek Rinpoche, a renowned and popular Tibetan Buddhist leader, who is serving a life sentence for “crimes of terror and incitement of separatism.”

**July 18, 2008: Detained Rights Activist Huang Qi Formally Arrested**
Huang Qi (黄琦) was formally arrested by Sichuan police on Friday, July 18 (detained since June 10). Huang had travelled to the Sichuan earthquake zone and published news about the plight of parents who lost children in the disaster.

**July 22, 2008: Crackdown Worsens on Eve of Beijing Games**
Just over two weeks before the Olympic Games opened in Beijing, Chinese authorities continued to intensify their efforts, under the banner of a “peaceful Olympics” (平安奥运), to suppress rights activists and other individuals speaking out against repression, including:

- Changsha dissident Xie Changfa (谢长发): detained, June 25.
- Tianjin-based dissident Li Hongtai (吕洪涛): detained, June 25.
- tianwang64.com founder Huang Qi (黄琦): arrested, July 18.
- Shanghai-based rights defense lawyer Zheng Enchong (郑恩宠): questioned by police for eight hours, July 20, 2008.

**July 23, 2008: Wife of Jailed “Barefoot Lawyer” Chen Guangcheng Addresses Open Letter to President Hu Jintao**
Yuan Weijing (袁伟静) wrote an open letter to President Hu Jintao—released to Human Rights in China—calling on him to remember the plight of her husband, Chen Guangcheng (陈光诚), who is serving a four-year-and-three-month sentence for representing rural peasants to protect their rights.
July 25, 2008: Security Forces Detain Rights Activists Huang Xiaomin and Wei Zhenling
State security forces detained Huang Xiaomin (黄晓敏) and Wei Zhenling (魏桢凌) on July 25, 2008. Huang and Wei are the heads of the Sichuan and Zhejiang branches, respectively, of the Pan-Blue Alliance (泛蓝联盟), an online group of political and rights activists.

Jailed housing activist Ye Guozhu (叶国柱), due to be released on July 26, 2008, was put under criminal detention for suspicion of gathering a crowd to disturb public social order.

July 28, 2008: Authorities Denied Bail and Medicines for Detained Activist Huang Qi
Authorities denied permission to detained rights activist Huang Qi’s (黄琦) wife, Zeng Li (曾丽), and mother, Pu Wenqing (浦文清), to bring Huang medicine or submit an application for his release on bail.

July 29, 2008: Press Release: Family Visits Still Denied to Sichuan School Teacher Punished after Quake-Zone Visit
Liu Shaokun (刘绍坤), a Sichuan school teacher who photographed collapsed school buildings in quake-affected areas and posted his pictures online, was ordered to serve one year of Reeducation-Through-Labor (RTL).

August 1, 2008: In Name of “Petitioners Relief Campaign” Local Authorities in Guizhou Deceive Petitioners in Death Case
Under the banner of the nationwide “Petitioners Relief Campaign,” authorities in Liupanshui City, Guizhou Province, tricked petitioning couple Ding Fayou (丁发有) and Chen Hong (陈红), who were seeking redress for Chen’s brother who was shot dead by a policeman in May 2006.

August 1, 2008: HRIC August Take Action: Support the Right to Housing in China and Say “No” to Forced Evictions
HRIC highlighted the case of 76-year old Shuang Shuying (双淑英), an evictions petitioner, house church activist, and outspoken opponent of the RTL system who is currently serving a two-year term as the oldest inmate in Beijing Women’s Prison for “intentional damage of public and private property.”

August 6, 2008: Political Prisoner He Depu Writes to IOC President Jacques Rogge
He Depu (何德普), a veteran dissident serving an eight-year prison sentence, appealed to International Olympic Committee (IOC) President Jacques Rogge in a letter released to Human Rights in China by his family. In his letter, He Depu told President Rogge that prison conditions in China had worsened as a result of the Olympic Games, especially for political prisoners.

August 7, 2008: Human Rights Situation in China Worsens as Bush Calls for a More Open Society
The Chinese authorities continue to detain, harass, coerce, and monitor rights defenders and dissidents in different parts of China.

August 11, 2008: In Hiding, Beijing House Church Activist Hua Huiqi Appeals for Help
In an open letter to Human Rights in China, Beijing house church activist Hua Huiqi (华惠棋) detailed his abduction on Sunday, August 10, by state security police and appealed for help. Hua was seized on his way to a church service also attended by U.S. President Bush but managed to escape from his captors.

August 19, 2008: Two Beijing Residents Sentenced to Reeducation-Through-Labor After Applying for Permits to Demonstrate in Olympics “Protest Zones”
Beijing petitioners Wu Dianyuan (吴殿元), 79, and Wang Xiuying (王秀英), 77, were ordered to serve a one-year term of RTL after repeatedly applying for permits to hold demonstrations in the Beijing “protest zones” during the Olympics.
HRIC examined the social and environmental costs and individual sacrifices resulting from the Beijing Olympics.

August 26, 2008: Imprisoned Democracy Activist Hu Shigen Released
Chinese authorities released long-term political prisoner and veteran democracy advocate Hu Shigen (胡石根), who served sixteen years of a twenty-year sentence.

August 29, 2008: Authorities Relent on Reeducation-Through-Labor Sentence for Elderly Women who Applied for Protest Permit
The Beijing Municipal Reeducation-Through-Labor Decision Committee rescinded its decision to sentence two elderly women, Wu Dianyuan (吴殿元), 79, and Wang Xiuying (王秀英), 77, to a year of RTL for applying for permits to demonstrate in the officially designated “protest zones” during the Beijing Olympics.

HRIC SELECT INTERVIEW QUOTES | JUNE–AUGUST 2008

On Huang Qi’s arrest
“This is another illustration of how a person who is only trying to help might find himself snared by China’s state secrets laws. . . . This use of the law as a sword hanging over rights activists, such as Huang Qi, contradicts the reported ‘new media openness’ in China following the Sichuan earthquake.”


On increasing crackdown on the eve of the Olympics
“In June, what you saw was an intensification of detentions, of threats, of crackdowns, and of shutdowns of websites. That should be of great concern to [Nicolas] Sarkozy as both the president of France and as sitting president of the European Union, and I would imagine to anyone who cares about a stable, open, prosperous China.”


On Chinese authorities denying visas to former Olympians
“By denying visas and entrance into China, the government is choosing to lose face in a small way . . . If these people do protest [in Beijing] and garner international attention, [China] would lose face in a big way. There’s a lot of anxiety about that.”


On pressing Beijing to fulfill its Olympic promises
“First of all, what the Olympic Committee should do is release the host city contract so there would be some transparency of Beijing in hosting the Olympics. And secondly, the IOC should ensure that the host city complies with the public promises that Beijing made when it was awarded the Olympics.”


“It was the Chinese government and authorities who made promises pre-2001. And they made promises to the International Olympic Committee, to the international community, and to its own people that it would be a green Olympics, a high-tech Olympics, a free and open Olympics, and a People’s Olympics. And they meant that it should improve democracy and human rights, and not only for the 15.8 million people in Beijing, but for all of the billion people in China.”

On the legacy of the Beijing Olympics
“Part of the story is not finished. So that in October it will depend on whether the foreign media rights, for example, are extended. Will they be extended to domestic journalists? Secondly, we will have a legacy of the infrastructure of the venues. It might be a white elephant that they can’t continue to support. And finally, what I think the biggest legacy will be, is that the security infrastructure that has been built will leave a state-of-the-art surveillance capacity.”


On the sentencing of two elderly petitioners to one year of Reeducation-Through-Labor
“Punishing Wu [Dianyuan] and Wang [Xiuying] after they applied for protest permits and actively petitioned the government demonstrates that the official statements touting the new Olympics ‘protest zones,’ as well as the permit application process, were no more than a show.”

HRIC ORGANIZATIONAL NOTES

HRIC welcomed several new staff members over the course of this year:

Mi Ling Tsui joined HRIC as Communications and Media Director. Mi Ling brings to HRIC a journalist’s passion for getting the story out and a deep concern about China’s human rights situation and its future. Prior to joining HRIC, Mi Ling was a producer and writer of television documentaries with 20 years of experience in U.S. network and public television. Many of her projects were China—or Asia—related. Most recently, from late 2006 to early 2008, she was a specialist researcher on a documentary on China’s judicial system for the BBC. She has an MS degree in journalism and MA degree in English literature from Columbia University.

Chen Yu-Jie is HRIC’s New York University School of Law 2008 Robert L. Bernstein Fellow in International Human Rights. Yu-Jie received an LL.M. from the NYU School of Law, where she participated in a corporate accountability project with Human Rights Watch and the NYU Law International Human Rights Clinic. Prior to enrolling at NYU, she worked as an attorney for 18 months at Lee and Li, the largest law firm in Taiwan, where she specialized in civil law, construction disputes, and transnational disputes. She was awarded a Master of Law for Civil Law Studies from National Chengchi University in Taiwan, and an LL.B. with honors from the same school in 2000.

Erynn Sarno joined the team as Grants Manager. She earned her B.A. in art history and Asian studies from SUNY New Paltz, and an A.M. from Harvard University’s Regional Studies-East Asia program. She also studied at Middlebury College’s Chinese School. She spent three years teaching English in China and interned at a modern art gallery in Beijing. She was a teaching fellow at Harvard University and an adjunct professor in the history department at SUNY New Paltz. Prior to joining HRIC, Erynn worked with several non-profits in New York and the Netherlands.

Hannah Zhao, a Publications and Marketing Associate, obtained her degree from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI) in Management with a minor in Literature. While in college, she was a columnist for and the editor-in-chief of the campus magazine, and worked for CITY Magazine in New York City.

HRIC hosted seven interns over the summer in its New York and Hong Kong offices:

Tiffany Wang is pursuing a J.D. at the University of Michigan Law School. She is a board member of the Student Network for Asylum and Refugee Law and worked in the Cambodian Women’s Crisis Center in Phnom Penh last summer as a Cambodian Law Fellow. She received her B.A. in History and Politics at New York University. While at NYU, she studied abroad in London and Prague.

Jane Zhang is pursuing a J.D. at Syracuse University College of Law. She is a Vice-Chair of the International Law Society and a member of the International Law Firm Program. She has worked as a corporate paralegal at Weil, Gotshal & Manges LLP and interned at Human Rights Watch. She received her B.A. in Political Science from Barnard College.

Carlton Forbes is a rising senior at Harvard University. He spent the spring of 2008 studying in Shanghai, and has previously interned at the Virginia Supreme Court and at the Legal Aid Justice Center in Richmond, Virginia.

Vincent Hsia is a candidate for a dual master’s degree at American University and Korea University, focusing on Asian Studies and International Security. Before graduate school, Vincent taught English to migrant workers in Guangdong and assisted development in rural Anhui. A former freelance journalist, Vincent was a regular commentator at National Public Radio. He holds a B.A. in literature from the University of California at San Diego, and has studied economics at Fudan University in Shanghai.

N.Q. recently earned her B.A. in Chinese and International Relations from Leeds University in the United Kingdom. She has worked as an English tutor in Hong Kong and served as a translator for various companies visiting or operating in China. In the summer of 2007, N.Q. taught English to children aged 3–18 years old in Binzhou, Shandong Province.

E.Y. graduated in 2005 from the College of the Holy Cross with a B.A. in Economics and Chinese Language and Civilization, and is currently a student at Suffolk University Law School in Boston. As an undergraduate, he studied abroad at the Harbin Institute of Technology in Harbin, China, and in 2006 was awarded a fellowship by the Taiwan Ministry of Education to participate in the International Chi-
nese Language Program at the National Taiwan University. E.Y. has interned for a law firm in Hong Kong and for an asset management corporation in Beijing.

**P. H. H.** graduated in 2007 from the University of Amsterdam with a LL.M. in International and European Law. He then returned home to Taiwan, where he worked as a research assistant and interned with the Taiwanese Association for Human Rights. He will begin an LL.M. in International Human Rights and International Justice at Utrecht University in the Netherlands in Fall 2008.
Human Rights in China’s Incorporating Responsibility 2008 Take Action Campaign highlights individuals in detention and systemic human rights challenges. Each month, the Take Action Campaign will focus on a selected case and identify human rights actions that the Chinese government and the international community can take.

**OCTOBER**
Huang Jinqiu (黄秋泉)

Veteran journalist, who in January 2003 stated his intention to found the China Patriotic Democracy Party. In 2004, he was convicted of incitement to subvert state power and sentenced to 12 years’ imprisonment, followed by four years’ deprivation of political rights. He is currently held at Pukou Prison in Jiangsu Province and is due for release in 2015.

**NOVEMBER**
Li Chang (李昌)

Former deputy director at the Ministry of Public Security, who was detained in 1999 for holding a leadership position in the Falun Gong and organizing a demonstration outside Zhongnanhai, the Beijing headquarters for senior Party officials. He was sentenced in 1999 to 18 years’ imprisonment, followed by five years’ deprivation of political rights for illegally obtaining state secrets and for crimes related to organizing and participating in a cult. Li is currently held at Qianjin Prison in Chadian, Tianjin, and is due for release in 2017. The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention determined that Li’s detention was arbitrary in 2000.

**DECEMBER**
Nurmemet Yasin

Freelance Uyghur journalist and poet who was arrested in Kashgar in 2004 for publishing his short story, “Wild Pigeon.” Although the story was carried by a state-run literary journal in late 2004, the pigeon in the narrative that committed suicide when faced with life in a cage was interpreted by Chinese authorities as an allegory for the Uyghur people’s situation and deemed a threat to the state. Yasin was tried in 2005, and sentenced to ten years’ imprisonment for inciting separatism. He is currently held at Urumqi No. 1 Prison and is due for release in 2014.

Join us at http://www.ir2008.org to take action for Huang Jinqiu, Li Chang, Nurmemet Yasin, and other individuals.
ABOUT THE COVER PAINTING

On July 3, 2008, Chinese customs officers seized a painting by noted China-born, New York-based artist Zhang Hongtu, which depicts the National Stadium in Beijing, popularly referred to as the Bird’s Nest. Titled “Bird’s Nest, in the Style of Cubism,” the painting incorporates images of the stadium design, and the Chinese characters for the “Sacred Olympic Torch,” “One world, One dream” (the Olympic slogan) and “Family, Joy, Happiness.”

“I feel that the Olympic Games are a good opportunity to make this world a global village. It is a big party for all the people to get together without regard to national boundaries. ‘Bird’s Nest’ was created with that thought in mind,” Zhang told Human Rights in China.

Customs officials told Zhang that the painting could not enter China because it contains “unacceptable” wording, the depiction of the stadium “isn’t good enough,” and the colors are “too dark and dull.”

“Bird’s Nest” was also dropped from the August issue of Vogue China, which had planned to run an article about Zhang. The editor informed Zhang that the article was nixed by China Pictorial, a state-owned journal with editorial oversight of the magazine. “The reason your painting could not be reprinted is that it has political overtones, particularly during the Olympics,” the editor said. “Bird’s Nest” is on view at the Queens Museum of Art in New York from September 28 to December 7, 2008.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Zhang Hongtu (张宏图) was born in Gansu Province. He immigrated to the United States in 1982, and has lived and worked in New York since that time. Many of his earlier works made use of the iconic image of Chairman Mao. In recent years, the theme of crossing national boundaries dominates Zhang’s works, such as a rendering of a traditional Chinese painting in the unmistakable Van Gogh style and a Ming vase in the shape of a Coke bottle. Zhang’s works have been exhibited worldwide.