

Hong Kong Protests: “Democracy and Tyranny”



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When senior Alex Liu, who grew up in Nanjing, China, was in Hong Kong this past May, he remembered the weather being “humid, cloudy and dark.”

“I went on my own, walked all over the city, the skyscrapers just everywhere,” he said. “Interesting enough, the day I went the weather wasn’t that good. It was pre-storm weather in summer. Very humid, cloudy, dark. I thought it was kind of strange with the connection [to the protests] ... the extradition bill had already passed during that time.”

Political tension was brewing like the weather that day. Protests in Hong Kong broke out in June, just a few weeks after Liu was there. Within these past six months, over two million people — out of the country’s total population of seven million — have participated in pro-democracy, anti-government protests.

Political science professor Dr. Jaeyoon Kim, who specializes in Chinese history and did research in Beijing, said these protests are part of a “revolution to fight against China’s ... betrayal of

their promise allowing Hong Kong people to keep their democracy.”

The protests began after Hong Kong’s president, Carrie Lam, issued an extradition bill allowing for criminals to be brought to mainland China. Many people in Hong Kong believe this bill could be used for political protestors and democratic movement leaders to be imprisoned in China, Kim said.

Hong Kong’s relationship with China is based on a “one country, two system” idea which means Hong Kong is part of China but is also a semi-autonomous city with its own legal and political system.

Hong Kong was Chinese territory until 1841, when the British empire took occupation of the land. The Hong Kong territory was leased to the British government for 99 years, which ended in 1997. Great Britain had an agreement with China that Hong Kong would be “guaranteed to have a capitalist economy and democracy,” Kim said. “So it’s Chinese territory, however Hong Kong is kind of autonomous in keeping its democracy.”

According to Kim, there are three issues that people should

keep in mind regarding these protests: democracy, economy and the global politics of the Pacific region. These are all intertwined to make this protest movement about much more than an extradition bill.

“Hong Kong’s economy is separating, young people are losing their jobs,” Kim said. “These young people are not satisfied with China’s dominance ... their lifestyle is worse than previous generations, so they are not happy.”

Liu’s friend from high school is going to college in Hong Kong. Liu said he gets a lot of his information about what’s going on with the protests from him, American news media and Chinese news media.

“[The protests] are talked about very badly in Chinese media, where news platforms [are] saying people are trying to create chaos, it’s not good for the unity of the whole country, people are harming innocent citizens,” Liu said. “But here, it’s almost like a move seeking more human rights and freedom. Since I’m here [in America], I guess I’m being influenced by that view a little

more. Still I find myself conflicted about the whole situation and where to take a stand. I love peace, and I just wish that there can be a neutral way to resolve conflicts without having to hurt or harm anyone. Just seeing the news and how people suffer is heavy on my heart.”

There have been over three deaths linked to the protests. City strikes, campus strikes and police action, such as throwing tear gas, have bred a political climate of deep unrest and distrust among citizens, the police and political leaders.

“Conflicts like this give rise to people taking the opportunities to learn about the differences of other places in the world,” said Gordon Wong, PLNU Mission Valley campus chaplain whose family migrated from Hong Kong to Hawaii and has some family in Hong Kong. “To know that liberty and freedom is something all people desire to have for themselves, and maybe looking at what tyranny really looks like when it is handed down in extreme measures.”

There are also protests going on in Iraq, Lebanon, Chile and

Photo of Protest in Hong Kong. From Al Jazeera

Bolivia in which multiple people have died. What these protests have in common with each other and with Hong Kong, according to the Washington Post, is they are based on a rising anger against political and economic elites and regimes.

To Liu, it is important to remember that these are real human beings involved in all of these places.

“China is the country that raised me and that I love deeply, and it’s also raised some of my most loved ones, like my family. But at the same time, things like this make me sad,” Liu said. “It’s complicated, a mix of emotions. I hope the people who are in the government, they have a heart for [benefitting] the majority of the people they are serving. I think because [I know] someone from Hong Kong, that made the hurt that I’m experiencing for [Hong Kong] even deeper and stronger ... I do hope there could be a better way to solve that without harming this many people.”

Registration Causes Confusion For New Students

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At PLNU, parking spaces are not the only things that fill up quickly. During registration, it is not uncommon for classes to fill up quicker than some students would like. Freshman especially are impacted by their lack of priority on the registration food chain.

According to Holly Irwin, Vice Provost for Academic Administration, the university

works hard to ensure they have the proper course offerings for students and their respective majors. The courses offered each semester are decided by the dean and academic unit leader within their respective academic department and typically “align with both the enrollment and the pattern for progressing toward a degree,” Irwin stated.

In other words, courses are offered only if there is a demand

from students who may need them for a certain degree path. The class size is likewise determined by the dean and academic unit leader for specific departments. Different courses have different educational standards, which results in some classes filling up at 15 students, where others might be considered full at 40.

For those with low priority registration, such as freshman, Irwin suggests speaking to their advisor and the Office of Records

in order to help students choose strategic courses.

“Since PLNU employs priority registration and freshman register at the end of that sequence, having a strategy will help,” said Irwin.

Irwin also suggested that freshman enroll in classes for their major before registering for GEs.

While some freshman may have had a difficult time registering for courses, freshman Andrea Jensen, a double major in

applied health and psychology, said she is thankful she took community college classes in high school, as they prepared for registration at PLNU.

“Most freshmen have never registered for classes or emailed professors to allow them to register when a class is full, so it makes sense they would be confused in the process,” Jensen said. “I had experience doing it before, so I was less concerned than most.”



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FEATURES, PAGE 3



A&E, PAGE 5



SPORTS, PAGE 6



OPINION, PAGE 8