

Submission to the Conservative Party Human Rights Commission – by Joshua Wong

I am Joshua Wong, Convenor of Scholarism, a 19-year-old University Student now. It is the actual participations in the social movements, namely Anti-national-education Movement and the Umbrella Movement, which have developed me into a leader in the Student Movement in Hong Kong. I hope that I can share my experience and exposure in these social movements since my age of 14, illustrating how the Central Government of China oppress the future of the next generation in the aspects of political systems and education. I hope my sharing will help to enhance the international concern about Hong Kong's democratic progression.

On July 1st 2003, there were 500 thousand Hong Kong people walking out on the street to protest against the Article 23 of Basic Law which oppressed freedom of speech. In addition, the People also strive for the realization of the Universal Suffrage. The huge participation in that incident did not only cause the stepping down of Tung Chee Hwa who was then the Chief Executive, but also the indefinite blocking of the implementation of Article 23 of Basic Law. Since then, we can observe that the Central Government began to have a strong feel about a need to strengthen the Hong Kong people's identity recognition to China or the Chinese Communist Regime. As a result, pin-pointing at the recognition issue of the young people and students, in 2011, the Education Bureau announced that all Primary and Secondary schools in Hong Kong must launch the subject of National Education in their curriculum. As Hong Kong is a part of China, normally, there should be no big issue to launch the National Education. However, in that National Education subject, there were quite many parts emphasizing the student's need to establish the obedience as well as the pride towards the Chinese Communist Government, with the standards such as students were expected to feel touched and burst into tears before the National Flag during National Flag raising ceremony. That means, the National Education subject was in fact more than education subject, but a brain washing tool.

If the nature of the Education was to develop the young people's independent thinking capability, this National Education subject definitely violated this education principle. This brute force transmission of country-loving sentiment illustrated that the Central Government just viewed Hong Kong as a ruled obedient, without any respect towards the youth and students' right to attain a proper and wholesome citizenship, including the right to criticize the government wherever necessary. Since then, I had a strong conviction that not only should the political parties and the teacher's unions protest against the National Education Subject, therefore, 4 years ago, at the age of 14, I established a student organization, Scholarism, comprising a few hundreds secondary students who supported the core values of democracy and freedom. We walked onto the street, protesting, parading, and promoting our values and expressing our requests, gaining a lot of supports from the Hong Kong People in a very short time. Later, with the exposure of the Government's brain-washing education material to the public, called "The China Mode", which described the Chinese Communist Party as an "advanced, selfless and united ruling organization". With that exposure, the whole city's protest temperature against the National Education was raised to red-hot. With the fasting of some students and 120 thousands people's occupation at the Central Government Office, the Government was forced to shelf the National Education Subject. At that time, I was only 15.

Previously, people thought that political movement can only be lead by political parties and worker's unions. No one could imagine that secondary school students could plan a social movement, not mentioning their planning about how to present their social action before the media. However, after the success of the Anti-National-Education Movement, more people

showed their concerns (and give support) about the social actions from the student organizations. Many people began to discover that it was the students' energy, persistence, determination and courage which had enabled them to stand upon the stage of History for a more equitable political system. This was why after the Anti-National-Education Movement, Scholarism continued to strive for the Universal Suffrage. In 2004, there were various joint activities with Federation of Student, expressing our dissatisfaction against the "National People's Congress 831" decision, including student strike jointed by more than 1000 students and more than 10000 university students and the September 26's action of re-entering of Civil Plaza (a space in front of the Hong Kong Government Office) which triggered the Umbrella Movement.

In the nearly 80 days' Umbrella, movement, there is not yet any achievement, regardless of the participation of 200 thousand Hong Kong People. But through my experience in the participation of social movement, after going thru the days from Anti-National-Education Movement and the days of the Umbrella Movement, the lives of students in Hong Kong is no longer the same. The era of extensive political awareness has already begun. This is the reason why I still have hope even though there is not any concrete achievement from the Umbrella Movement, even though those pro-China people are continuously oppress academic freedom, even though there are continuous political legal prosecutions against the protesters. You may think that in a democratic country, maybe politics should be the professional participations of political parties and politicians. Social movement in the street should only be initiated by a small group of idealistic university students. But from 2011 to 2016, the age of social movement participants are declining in Hong Kong. The phenomenon in the Umbrella Movement is that: Some 13-year-old children would participate in student strike on the street, and some 14 year-old girls would stand firm against tear bomb, equipped with googles, masks and helmets, while some other 15 year-old students would be arrested without hesitation due to civil disobedience.

I understand that there may countless calculations related to international politics, every day you may attend to this kind of hearings as routine and perhaps there won't be much impact on your next election no matter whether you care about issues in Hong Kong or not. But please think in different position, the children participating in the Umbrella Movement, actually are similar in age with your sons and daughters in your houses. Maybe you have difficulty in understand why these students, living in an international financial centre, an economically prosperous city, would rather risk their future to push the social reform, regardless of the risk of being blacklisted from entry into China or leaving offense record which may affect their career.

But the Chinese Communist government promised Universal Suffrage in 2007 and but now turn out to be a fake universal suffrage in 2017. Although the young people understand that the participation of social movement may affect their future career, yet when they also discover that they can't see any future in the current system, changing the current social system should be the only way out! I hope that you can continue to concern about Hong Kong's situation, and exert your influence and pressure to the China Government.