



# I AM A HONGKONGER!

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The [2019 social movement](#) in Hong Kong has amazed me in many ways. For one, it has evolved quickly and fluidly into a series of leader-less, internet-empowered campaigns.

Many have dubbed it, the "[Be Water Movement](#)" – for it is fluid as water, in that protesters are flexible in their response to the police in front of them. The movement is hard as ice, in that protesters have vowed to resist injustice and defend their good cause by all means. And the movement is like steam, in that it remains shrewdly elusive in order to avoid arrest by authorities, and then later re-emerge.

This strategy has allowed the protesters to stay resilient for an extended period of time. But why did these protests happen? Prior to [the handover](#), in 1997, China offered the people of Hong Kong a new idea, which has now become a hollow promise, of "[one country, two systems](#)." Many had doubts, some decided to leave, but more chose to stay because they loved Hong Kong and thus wanted to believe in the promise.

Since the handover, the Chinese have been [aggressively asserting](#) their influence – politically, socially, economically, demographically and ideologically. And it appears that this interference has only accelerated since President Xi took power.

In fact, the [ruling elite](#) of Hong Kong have been completely transformed by two decades of such interference. Government leaders, appointed officials and legislators readily kowtow to the commands of the Chinese, with no concern for the wishes of the local people. For example, the [latest survey](#) saw [Carrie Lam](#), the Chief Executive, fall to merely 15 percent of public support.

But despite overwhelming public dissatisfaction, those in authority seem to care even less about the people, because they were not chosen by the people but were handpicked by the Chinese. As such, Hong Kong functions under a fundamentally flawed system of governance that is bound to fail – because it no longer reflects the will of the people.

As a result, China has been [piling up layers](#) of oppressive policies, one after the other, policies which are implemented by the Hong Kong government. The purpose of these policies is restriction of freedoms and the undermining of autonomy. Thus, the [education system is now pro-China; unjustified](#)

and needless infrastructures projects are hastily approved; pro-democracy legislators and candidates are disqualified; and all social activists are given overly harsh sentences.

The younger generation, in particular, feel helpless and are therefore desperate. They realize that "one country, two systems" is a big fat lie. There will be no freedom of speech. There will be no freedom of the press. There will be no freedom of assembly and association. There will be no true democratic elections. There will be no independent judiciary. The "rule of law" has quietly been replaced by the "rule by law."

As the saying goes, bad money drives out the good. Simply put, Hong Kong will not be Hong Kong any more. It is losing its vigor; it is dying, and it is going to succumb to being a second-class Chinese city.

This protest movement is in many ways a war, a war between democracy and authoritarianism. It is a war of dignity and values. Pragmatically speaking, protesters also know that they will be defeated in the end. But they have no other option than to fight. If a woman is about to be raped does she simply beg for mercy? What option is left her? She still will cry out and resist with her last bit of dignity.

The protesters fight and resist, not because they know they will win. They fight because of their dignity. They fight because they believe in freedom and democracy. That essentially sums up their spirit.

The Japanese writer, Haruki Murakami, once said, "If there is a hard, high wall and an egg that breaks against it, no matter how right the wall or how wrong the egg, I will stand on the side of the egg."

So, who really stands with these "eggs," these protesters, who now smash themselves against the Chinese wall? And, for how long will support for their cause last? As we know, it was the extradition bill that sparked the protests. This bill would force anyone in Hong Kong, who did anything politically inappropriate in the eyes of the communist regime, could be extradited to China, to face dire consequences.

Fear of such a law is legitimate, as there have already been notable cases of mysterious disappearances, forced extraditions, unlawful detainment, torture, as well as coerced confessions.

Some people still choose to turn a blind eye, wishfully thinking that they are going to be safe, as long as they do not rock the boat. These people are tagged as "[Blue-Ribbons](#)" – those who side with the establishment.

However, the protests have "politically awakened" large segments of the population, who now question the system and the government. And these questions are quickly uncovering the many lies and the propaganda. They do not want to live in a "police state," and many of these people are now coming out to express their outrage. They are tagged as "[Yellow-Ribbons](#)" – those who side with the protesters.

Typical protests now range from 1 to 2 million; and they are mostly the Yellow-Ribbons. To put this in perspective, Hong Kong has a population of 7 million.

If it were not for the young protesters fighting against all odds, the extradition bill would have easily passed. Nevertheless, the government remains adamant and continues to dismiss all legitimate and reasonable requests of its own people.

The police also [continue to mistreat protesters](#) each and every day. Their use of excessive force is now common-place. For example, on [July 21, 2019, hundreds of mafia gangsters marched on the streets of Yuen Long](#) (a northern suburban district), chasing innocent people, beating them, and intimidating them. It is likely that they were collaborating with the police, for while the mafia was on the street, there was no police to be found anywhere. And the emergency hotlines were jammed.

This terrorist attack, for that was what it was, was inflicted on the people to instill fear and to silence the public. None of the mafia members, of course, were caught, let alone prosecuted, despite wide-spread video evidence.

Nevertheless, Hong Kong is still freer than Mainland China, at least for the time being. It has not yet put up the so-called Chinese "[Internet Great Wall](#)," which means that there is still free access to international, online information.

However, [Chinese propaganda has long penetrated all mainstream media](#) as well as various online communities in Hong Kong. Biased reportage, fake news and malicious assaults are endemic. Protesters try their best to filter the disinformation, by "fact-checking" news and rumors received.

But it is hard to “fact-check” everything. Truth and judgment will inevitably be clouded, given the constant bombardment of disinformation. It is harder to trust any information at hand. This also makes it harder to trust any people. Everyone becomes wary of each other, lest they be betrayed. There is fear of retribution, since China is always watching. Freedom from fear has been the first victim of communist propaganda.

Even at this moment, as I write this article, I am fearful of what might happen, of what the consequences might be of what I am now writing. Telling the truth often demands a fearful price.

What lies ahead for Hong Kong is also fearful – which lends greater poignancy to the protesters – for all [Hongkongers](#) what comes next is Cultural Revolution 2.0.

The Chinese Communist Party has never changed. It never respected human rights, and never allowed liberty to its own people. [Tibet is the perfect example](#) of what happens when China comes in and takes control.

And the Cultural Revolution 2.0 has already begun – all protesters have been labelled as violent terrorists and subversives; Hong Kong culture is being dismantled and destroyed. This what China does to [minorities who refuse to kowtow](#). Just look at what is being done to the [Uyghurs](#).

What is most disturbing is that the world itself is silent, except for rare expressions of disapproval, such as, the [Human Rights and Democracy Act for Hong Kong](#), which seems more politics than actual, real help for Hong Kong. In fact, as China grows stronger, Hong Kong will grow weaker, despite the fact that Hong Kong is extremely important as a major financial hub for China, through which it can access unrestricted capital flow.

Because of the financial importance of Hong Kong, the more radical protesters favor a so-called “scorched earth policy.” They want to smash everything that China holds dear in Hong Kong. “If we burn, you burn with us.” This sounds desperate – but we need to ask what has made these otherwise decent young people so very desperate that they will happily destroy what makes Hong Kong great – so it does not fall into Chinese hands.

This desperation has also split apart Hong Kong society. People are hesitant about sharing news with

family and friends. Everyone is more guarded and careful about what they say. Relationships are torn apart – friends have become foes, couples are breaking up, children are running away from families.

Now, everyone has to take a side – whether it be as a “Yellow-Ribbon,” or as a “Blue-Ribbon.” Even companies, consumer brands and outlets are being categorized as, “Yellow-Camps” or “Blue-Camps.” Of course, the Yellows boycott anything Blue, and vice-versa. This has transformed society into opposing “tribes” – those that protest China and those that agree and want to go along with it. But both sides are disgusted with the Hong Kong government, for its apathy, inaction and incompetence.

All the while, there is massive emigration, both among the Yellows and the Blues. Even the “[Returnees](#)” (who emigrated overseas prior to handover and then returned) are leaving for a second time. Others, who have no overseas passport, are frantically seeking alternative ways to get out and find a better future for themselves and their children.

Actually, China is perfectly fine with emigration. It seems that China wants to take over Hong Kong, but it does not want the people that come with it (the Hongkongers).

This is because there has been an uninterrupted influx of new immigrants, the rich and the elite, from Mainland China. Within a decade, the locally-born Hongkongers will be completely outnumbered in the next decade. Exactly what [happened in Tibet](#).

Of course, this is a deliberate strategy, which will entirely delegitimize the local population. Hongkongers understand this well. Time is against them. What is now the majority voice, protesting for democracy and liberty will soon be stifled.

There is thus a sense of great urgency, which prompted a record high 71 percent turnout in the municipal council elections, in November 2019. The usual turnout for such election is 47 percent. The results of this [election were encouraging](#), as it saw the pro-democracy camp successfully take control of 17 (out of 18) municipal district seats.

This was, in fact, a referendum, a reflection of public opinion. But despite this election, nothing really was won. The Chief Executive still will not budge. Large-scale arrests still take place every day (to-date, [over 6,000 protesters have been arrested](#), many brutally beaten). We have no idea how many have

been sexually assaulted, how many have been "disappeared," or how many have officially "committed suicide" for the sake of this movement. They are indeed brothers and sisters in arms. They are the "martyrs" of this movement.

And in this dark time, I also see another Hong Kong, which shines with courage and righteousness. In the past, the typical young Hong Kong person used to be focused on money and success – and nothing else.

But now I see another kind of a young Hong Kong person – one who shows solidarity, perseverance and creativity. These young people can only bring admiration for what they have accomplished. I stand in admiration of their determination to do what they believe is right and to move forward without regret. Their love for Hong Kong is unconditional and sacrificial. Suffering builds up character; sacrifice builds a new world. Through their suffering and sacrifice, a new Hongkonger is being born! And I am proud to be one of them!

So, what is the endgame? We do not know what the future holds for

Hong Kong and its native people. As a realist, the future may be doomed. The fighting spirit of Hongkongers may be crushed.

But, as a Christian, however, I remember that Jesus vouched for the oppressed, the vulnerable, the marginalized and the persecuted. I believe He will vouch for Hongkongers: "Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven."

Perhaps this protest movement is a blessing in disguise. Perhaps we do not need to keep analyzing possible scenarios or calculating risks and returns. Rather exasperation, let us be proud, rejoice and move forward together as Hongkongers. We are writing history.

*E. Lee is a Hong Kong-born Christian preacher, who is passionate about missions in the world, and who still loves and cares for his homeland enough to write the inconvenient truth.*

*The image is from From Tien Yu's Facebook, 2019.*





