

Freedom for Hong Kong Begins with Ourselves

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Coming to Japan in 2015 to attend Graduate School at the University of Tokyo, Lee worked as an architect for three years. During his short-term project, he visited Hong Kong in 2019 during the heat of the protests there. Observing that the Hong Kong Freedom movement needed a visual identity of its own, he designed a sculpture with a friend. This was also the beginning of the group that Lee then founded, Lady Liberty Hong Kong. It was also his turning point to fully focus his life on activism while doing freelance architectural work.



Founding Lady Liberty Hong Kong

Right from its inception, the sculpture was no one-man job. “I posted this idea in an online forum, and a lot of people responded to the idea and offered help. It was the beginning of the whole Lady Liberty Hong Kong group.” There were a lot of designers and engineers who didn’t see a way they could help the movement even though they wanted to contribute, because they could not participate in the movement openly. “This project

was a joint movement that created new opportunities for people from different fields. It began with 10 people in the first week and expanded by organizing activities of a different nature, for example an online campaign, a publishing company, a photographer, and writers also joined us later.”

As the project gained attention among both the local and the international media, there were also a lot of supporters who felt that the approach for efficacy with arts and design was quite meaningful. “With my expertise in design and engineering, from then onward we started housing programs like art exhibitions, charity sales also online media campaigns to sustain the movement both locally and overseas.” As the government was limiting the space for such activism, shops displaying the mini sculptures in Hong Kong got in trouble because it was felt to be an open display of dissent, even though this was not direct pressure from the government. During an exhibition, an inspector would arrive saying the event did not meet fire safety regulations, or did not fit the land purpose of the shop, so there was a lot of administrative harassment.

He himself also experienced suppression: his bank account was frozen, his family members were harassed by the police even though his family’s business was completely unrelated to his activities. For this reason, the advocacy group divided its base between Hong Kong and Japan. There was a gradual transition for the Sculpture of Lady Liberty of Hong Kong as it was displayed for exhibition, equipment and also materials. These were shipped piece by piece to Japan and other overseas locations.

Responding to the New Law in Hong Kong

Article 23 of the new National Security Law in Hong Kong, directed at



“Foreign Hostile Propaganda,” is not only affecting Hongkongers and foreigners in Hong Kong, but also overseas. As we know, the Chinese government was of the opinion that the 2019 protest was caused by foreign interference. They thought Hongkongers were being brainwashed by foreign media transmitting foreign opinions that Hong Kong should not be part of China. In doing so, they neglected the fundamental cause of Hong Kong not wanting to be subject to Chinese rule. “It was the usual tactics of the Chinese

government to redirect this hostility by diverting Hong Kong people's attention to foreign governments and foreign countries. Whatever problem there exists inside China, they blame it on the foreigners. The faults were never their own, and they try to make citizens hate foreign countries, which is very subjective. So that kind of tactic is being implemented in Hong Kong as well."

In his previous writing, Alric Lee expressed the view that the sense of community among Hong Kong people was somewhat disintegrating or evolving into a different form across the region and across time. Many Hongkongers moved overseas after 2019, experiencing different places and adopting different ways of life. There has been much discussion among Hong Kong diaspora groups on how to continue the Hong Kong identity or how to sustain the democratic movement from overseas. Some favor integrating into the local society while others want to maintain their traditional way of living and insist on their Hong Kong identity. There are different tactics and opinions on how this should be done. "But I think the end goal is the same for all of us, which is to make Hong Kong free at the end."

Success for Hong Kong will come when it gets its power back, so that people get to live freely without fear. "To achieve that, I think we have to focus on little things, begin with ourselves and what we can do right now at this moment. That will get us our power back." The separation of generations influences their sense of responsibility as they do not know what actually happened in their own country. But parents also have the responsibility of telling their kids what is going on in Hong Kong. Thus, they can put more importance on communications and education rather than living a life like in the past. "We should change our way of living to consider what is the most important goal of life."

This is especially important because this communist tactic is to create



a barrier between individuals destroying trust among people, even among family members. Challenging distrust, even within the smallest unit in society, is a reminder of a shared sense of responsibility among all, rather than relying on other NGOs or other human rights

groups. “We have to help ourselves by first realizing that we have to do this on our own. That is how we start.”

Alric Lee Profile

Although Alric Lee is originally from Hong Kong, he has an educational background that spans continents. He completed his undergraduate studies in the United Kingdom and earned a master’s degree in engineering from the University of Tokyo in 2017. In 2019, Alric founded the Lady Liberty Hong Kong group during the height of pro-democracy protests. The group, recognized for creating the iconic Lady Liberty Hong Kong statue, played a notable role in shaping the identity of the Hongkongers who supported the movement. Under his direction, the group raised over 6 million HKD, contributing to various humanitarian initiatives. Further extending his efforts, Alric took on the role of Executive Director for the Japan Hong Kong Democracy Alliance in 2023. This organization focuses on amplifying Hongkonger voices in Japan and strengthening ties among pro-democracy groups in East Asia.