

A Response

I am writing in response to the comments that were recently published on Douglas Todd's blog in the Vancouver Sun (found [here](#).) The comments were made by five Asian-Canadians who also identified themselves as Christian. First, I would like to thank them for responding to Douglas' article entitled "[Will Hong Kong Crackdown Lead to New Influx to Canada](#)". As a big fan of Hegel, I always believe that honest knowledge can only be obtained through a humble dialect between two or more contrary views and perspectives. So, because they have shown their desire to dialogue with me, I will do my best in responding to their concerns of my statements. I also want to take this opportunity to apologize for my choice of words in my statements. I definitely came across as dismissal, complacent and somewhat abating the issue in HK. All world issues are serious and therefore, any methodology to address the issues should be taken seriously and scrutinized which I was intending to purvey but failed to do so.

Let's begin with my position:

Although I am critical of the protest entitled "Umbrella Revolution," this does not mean I'm against Canadian democracy. In fact, I am also critical on the PRC for its history of lethargy in fulfilling their promises made in 1997 and the current leaders in HK for using "Ferguson-like" tactics to end the protest. Therefore to be clear, I am critical on the apparatuses that are currently used. Critical on the students using western apparatuses such as protests to convey their two-fold message of freedom and economic progress and critical on the PRC and the HK leaders for not providing a creative solution for dialogue.

Now to the quotes and how I got there:

Quote 1: "paranoia"

In 2013, 9,340,000 people born in China were living in other countries

< 1000 1k-10k 10k-90k 100k-240k 250k-490k 500k-990k 1m and greater

Select a country. Then view the number of immigrants moving into or out of that country.

OUT OF INTO 1990 2000 2010 2013

China

The figures in this interactive feature refer to the total number (or cumulative "stocks") of migrants living around the world as of 1990, 2000, 2010 or 2013 rather than to the annual rate of migration (or current "flows") in a given year. Since migrants have both an origin and a destination, international migrants can be viewed from two directions - as an emigrant (leaving an origin country) or as an

Destination	Migrants
Hong Kong	2,280,000
United States	2,250,000
South Korea	660,000
Japan	660,000
Canada	640,000
Australia	450,000

In 2013, 2,280,000 people born in China moved to Hong Kong compared to 640,000 Chinese moved to Canada. Statistic taken from Pew Research ([pewglobal.org](#))

“Mainland businesspeople and party elites have bought real estate, driving up prices that were already among the highest in the world. That has made housing unaffordable for many in the middle class, especially for recent high school and college graduates. Mainlanders also take other coveted resources, like slots in elite schools and hospital beds in maternity wards, as women arrive to give birth so that their children can have Hong Kong residency and the related economic benefits. Even the huge presence of [Mandarin-speaking mainland tourists](#) — derisively called locusts by some — reinforces the feeling among many Hong Kongers that the tide of another culture threatens to drown all that they say makes this city unique.” Quote from NY Times article [“Seeking Identity: Hong Kong People Look to City Not State.”](#)

I admit paranoia was not the wisest choice to use to summarize the various motives of the protest. Therefore, I would like to replace the word with fear. As a Vancouverite, one cannot help but hear the similar concerns mentioned above happening in Vancouver with regards to the correlation between the number of Mainland Chinese and HK immigrants coming into Vancouver and our fears of [increasing real estate prices](#), unemployment for locals, limited university entrances, the loss of western-Canadian identity etc. However, do these fears provide justifiable grounds to embark on contentious activity for the purpose of not only freedom but the betterment of economic prospects and self-sustenance? Would propagating western-democracy that promises free speech, liberty, universal suffrage etc. stop the continuing rise of real estate prices, reduce unemployment, loosen the GPA criteria for university entrances, enforce wage equality, narrow the gap between the rich and the poor, promote gender equality etc.? Seeing that these issues are evident throughout the world regardless whether they are democratic or not, I mentioned “paranoia” because their fear is not just the fear of the possible outcomes under the current political system but the fear of economic uncertainty for each student (made mentioned again in this article in [The Economist](#) under the heading “Not just the Ballot.”) Yes, democracy is a wonderful pursuit and there are many benefits that come with it as I am currently reaping some of what Canada’s forefathers have sown. But if the students’ motive for democracy also include a) for the betterment of economic prospects b) out of fear of losing western-HK identity and c) for a more predictable future of employment, then protesting for democracy may not be the right message to convey.

A point to add:

Now that we’ve experienced the teacher’s situation and other labour injustice, is democracy working? Maybe these students need to hear from us and not only us but everyone in North America, India’s women and the poor, South Africa in light of the ANC, Nigeria, Ukraine, Egypt etc. of the realities of western democracy. In an essay in [The Economist](#) entitled [“What’s Gone Wrong with Democracy?”](#) it makes mention the notable failures of the countries’ attempt at westernized-democracies such as The Arab spring and of course the failures of current democratic countries such as the U.S., India and African countries. Therefore, if you were Mr. Xi, who knows full well that you are leading a country of 2+ billion people all wanting the American lifestyle (based on stats found at [pewglobal.org](#)), vehemently opposes corruption (recall the generals he removed unceremoniously) and has been quite observant of all the challenges that Obama has been having within his democratic system e.g. 2008 and

Obamacare; would Mr. Xi be open to allow westernized democracy in his country or cities? Are the students aware of the realities and challenges that will come if democracy was implemented and its potential to fail in giving them a free voice and a better economic prospect?

Quote 2: “he said most middle-class and affluent Hong Kong residents, including his relatives, don’t really care about the protests, with many finding it annoying.”

This is a quote provided by some of my relatives. I cannot respond to my commentators reaction to their quotes because any words I say would be to take an ill-informed guess as to why my relatives would have said these statements. Regardless, I will provide my own reason for why might they have said the above. Here’s a quote [from the essay on democracy found in the Economist](#):

“Many Chinese are prepared to put up with their system if it delivers growth. The 2013 Pew Survey of Global Attitudes showed that 85% of Chinese were “very satisfied” with their country’s direction, compared with 31% of Americans.”

I think it’s safe to assume that China’s overall economy has been growing though recently it has been slowing just a tad. However, if we analyze the economic prosperity of each city, it is obvious that some are doing better than others. That is why some HK citizens work across the river on the mainland during the workweek but live in Hong Kong during the weekend. It is the same reason why some of my Vancouverite colleagues move to Calgary for better employment prospects. Therefore, the possible reasons why my relatives would make the statement above to address Douglas’ question of whether they see the protest’s outcome would influence them to uproot and move is probably because they align themselves with the rest of the 85% and are resourceful and astute to go beyond their borders and work elsewhere within China just like my Vancouverite colleagues working in Calgary.

Quote 3: “If the Hong Kong student protesters were his children, Chan said, “I’d tell them to go home and study hard for school and find a different way to make the world a better place.”

Amy Chua, the author of a well-known book, [“The Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother”](#) would quickly identify me as a tiger dad if she heard this quote. In fact, if you are not the same skin colour as me, you would probably have the preconception that all Asians are tiger parents who predestine their children to some musical instrument. I don’t blame you! Some of us are pretty good at fulfilling those stereotypes. In the quote, I spoke on my own behalf but I’m sure many can relate to my parenting style and the way I see how my daughter should conduct herself in society and contribute to it. Like Amy, I’m the product of tiger parents, and similar to her, I took that parenting style along with me. Mind you, like Amy, I didn’t take all of it. I remanufactured it to my own personality and abilities but the overall trajectory is the same. That is why Douglas felt comfortable to quote me as an Asian- Canadian parent. I’m the first born in my family, first grandchild and grandson in my dad’s side and first grandson and second grandchild in my mother’s side. As the book entitled [“The Birth Order”](#) mentioned, I value and treasure my

Chinese traditions and culture even though I was born and raised here in Vancouver. I want my daughter to be raised the same way I was raised: with the same strict values, work ethic and contributor to society and of course, the ability to play the piano. That's my Chinese-ness.

Quote 4: Even though Chan said there is a range of opinions among ethnic Chinese people in Canada about the escalating protests, he compared the confrontations to last year's Quebec student demonstrations over tuition fee hikes. "Outside of Quebec's students," Chan said, "nobody else really cared."

One of the commentators mentioned about the 400 Chinese Vancouverites praying and showing their support in front of the Chinese consulate and qualified that as being significant. 400 seems large but when we take 400 and relate that to the total number of Chinese living in Vancouver ([43% of Metro Vancouver's population is of Asian heritage](#)), that's not as significant as one would think. And across Canada, the support gatherings at each major city are in similar proportion to the overall Asian population living in each city. Therefore, because of my familiarity with the Quebec protests and its sparse support from students across Canada ([see this article for reference](#)), I drew a comparison between the HK protests and the Quebec protests since there were 2 common denominators: 1) it involves students 2) it involves the issues that concerns the students' economic future and prospects

Quote 5: Most Chinese-Canadians don't expect China to do anything more than move slowly toward granting additional freedoms to those under its authority, Chan said. He praised Chinese President Xi Jinping for at least rooting out corrupt officials in the government.

For only having a little less than 2 years under his belt, Mr. Xi has made a lot of progress in moving a big elephant towards social change. The rise of the middle class and the rags to riches story of Jack Ma (owner of Alibaba) are a couple of examples of his forward thinking. Granted, I do not condone his actions toward the people of Xinjiang nor his recent ruling on Ilham Tohti. I'm sure there's more to this but Xinjiang has had many toe to toe confrontations with Beijing for quite some time including violent actions such as the stabbings at various train junctures.

But Xingjiang is not Hong Kong. Here's a quote from the Economist's recent article "[No Exit](#)": "Xi Jinping, China's president, is constrained by a desire to keep Hong Kong stable and prosperous: a botched response could badly damage one of the world's wealthiest economies and China's image."

Mr. Xi would not be foolish enough to compromise Hong Kong's stability and economic success. As the Chinese ambassador implied in a recent article in the [Globe and Mail](#), China has invested a lot of interest in economic success as opposed to the Mao Zedong years. Therefore, it is wrong to equate Mao with Xi; two entirely different leaders with two entirely different focuses. In my quote above I assumed that "most Chinese Canadians" were somewhat aware of the Chinese government's' current activities and the commitments that were made during

the 18th National Congress and therefore, I assumed that they knew that Mr. Xi does appear to be willing to break with the past even if it's slower than what some would like. Although it's slow, I said that I "praised" Mr. Xi for his efforts because moving a country of 2+ billion people is somewhat equivalent to moving an African elephant; it takes a lot of patience, endurance and persuasion.

In conclusion, I would again like to thank my interlocutors, Justin Tse for collecting their comments and Douglas Todd of the Vancouver Sun for allowing us to use this platform for dialogue. I hope that from what I've said above have provided sufficient information as to how I came to my conclusions which resulted in the crass statements I made to Douglas Todd's initial article. I would also like to thank you, the reader, for your endurance in reaching to this point. Criticism does not necessarily equate to dismissal or opposition, it means that the matter is taken seriously and rest assured to all of you, I do take this seriously and hence I'm open to discuss alternative methods in addressing HK's issues.