

Protesters in Hong Kong Fight for Democracy

Carmen Chu

BEFORE YOU READ: What is a protester? Share a time you participated in (or witnessed) a protest.

"Speak the truth, even if your voice shakes." This quote means a lot to me. I am a U.S. citizen, but recently, I have become proud of the citizens of my home country, Hong Kong. In the past, I didn't care about the political issues of any country. I always thought political issues were too complicated. Nowadays, that has changed. In June 2019, people in Hong Kong started protesting to make the country more democratic.

The protests started because many people opposed a new bill that would make it easier for

people from Hong Kong to be extradited to China. The protestors were so powerful, they convinced the government to withdraw the bill. But the protestors wanted more. They started calling for more democracy in Hong Kong. News stories about the protests started popping up on U.S. news channels. All of a sudden, the whole world was watching as regular people pressured their government to listen.

Supposedly, police officers were there to protect people. Unfortunately, Hong Kong police officers attacked protesters. They sprayed them with tear gas and blasted them with water cannons. They used rubber bullets. They punished the courageous protesters. Many protesters were arrested and charged with crimes, such as trespassing and rioting.

I admire the protesters in Hong Kong. They sacrificed themselves to speak their truth — "Liberate Hong Kong; revolution of our lives" — with their shaking voices. My family and I will support them by following the news and donating money to organizations that support the protesters. No matter how far away they are, I care about my people and my hometown, and I will show it with my voice and actions.



Hong Kong protesters brave heavy rain as they march against a law that would allow extradition of Hong Kong residents to China. August 18, 2019. Photo by Studio Incendo, from Wikimedia Commons.

Carmen Chu is a student in the Adult Literacy Program at Alameda Reads in Alameda, CA. She immigrated to the U.S. from Hong Kong in 2008. She became a naturalized citizen in 2013. Carmen would like to thank her writing teacher, Cecile, who inspires her.

Sources: <www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2019/10/hong-kong-police-are-targeting-press/599815>; <www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-49317695>



An Advocate for Literacy

Lou Pinkoff

BEFORE YOU READ: What does it mean to be an “advocate” (noun, pronounced *ad-ve-kit*) and “to advocate” (verb, pronounced *ad-ve-kate*)? Try using the words in different sentences.

I try to be an advocate for adult literacy. Education means a lot to me. If I had a better education when I was young, I would have been able to make better choices in my life. It’s not too late for me to get an education now and to advocate for adult literacy so that others in my community can take classes too.

Speaking Up about Adult Literacy

Twice in the past, I have spoken with elected officials. One was a county board member, and the other was a state legislator. I had this opportunity because I have been an advocate for Alameda Reads and their programs. How did I become an

advocate? I just started speaking at different types of meetings, and it grew from there.

What is surprising to me is

If I want what I never had, I have to do what I never did.

that after I have spoken in public meetings, people have come up to me to talk about adult literacy. They are looking for classes. I have suggested programs, and some of them have gone to the places I recommended.

Another way I advocate for adult learners is that I speak to tutors in training. I share with them my experiences as a learner. I hope it has been helpful to them. Being an advocate is easy for me, for I know it has helped me.

Persisting Despite Discouragement

I understand that learning is a process, so I just keep chipping away at it. Sometimes it is easy, and

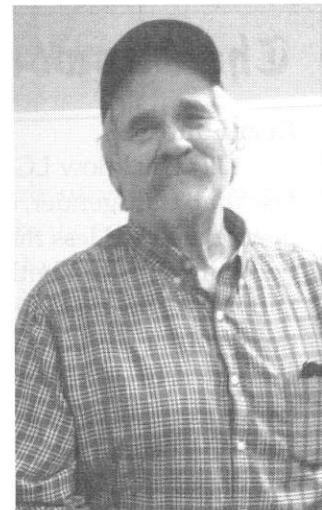
sometimes it is hard. Now I can write notes to myself, read them a day or two later, and know what I wanted to remember. In the past I could not understand what I wrote. My spelling and writing were so bad I could not make sense of it. Now my spelling has improved, and my writing skills have come a long way, so I know it can be done.

Sometimes I feel discouraged, and I wonder why I keep trying, but that feeling passes fast. I just have to keep going, for I understand if I want what I never had, I have to do what I never did.

AFTER YOU READ:

1. What are two ways Lou advocates for adult literacy?
2. What helps him persist?

Lou Pinkoff is a student at Alameda Reads in Alameda, CA. He is 66 years old and has been with Alameda Reads for 11 years. He is glad he got past his fears of others knowing about his reading and writing skills.



Be an Advocate in Your State

Contact your state adult education organization and find out how adult education is funded in your area. Ask if there are ways you can support. Write a letter or call your state representative. Read the article on the next page to learn about more training.