

# American Journal of Chinese Studies

(ISSN 0742-5929)

Vol. 28

October 2021

No. 2

Copyright © 2021 American Association for Chinese Studies

MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR ..... iii

## ARTICLES

ADVOCATING EMPATHY AND INCLUSIVENESS: TAIWAN'S MOVIE *YOUR NAME ENGRAVED HEREIN* (2020) ..... 73  
*Yenna Wu*

PUBLIC OPINION AND WARLORD POWER: THE ISSUE OF TROOP  
DEMobilIZATION IN EARLY REPUBLICAN CHINA ..... 97  
*Edward A. McCord*

## INTERVIEW

DECONSTRUCTING COMPULSORY REALPOLITIK IN CULTURAL STUDIES: AN  
INTERVIEW WITH ALEXA ALICE JOUBIN ..... 115  
*Interviewers: David Kenley and William Sewell*

## BOOK REVIEWS

DAISY YAN DU. *Animated Encounters: Transnational Movements of Chinese Animation, 1940s-70s*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2019. .... 131  
*Yuxin Ma*

JUN FANG AND LIFANG HE. *The Romance of a Literatus and his Concubine in Seventeenth-century China*. Hong Kong: Proverse, 2019. .... 133  
*Thomas Jülch*

JEFFREY T. MARTIN. *Sentiment, Reason, and Law: Policing in the Republic of China on Taiwan*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2019. 134  
*Liqun Cao*

LAWRENCE C. REARDON. *A Third Way: The Origins of China's Current Economic Development Strategy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2021. .... 136  
*Jou-Fei Huang*

# Advocating Empathy and Inclusiveness: Taiwan's Movie *Your Name Engraved Herein* (2020)

Yenna Wu\*

## ABSTRACT

This article examines Liu Kuang-hui's (Patrick Liu, 1970- ) movie, *Your Name Engraved Herein* (*Kezai ni xindi de mingzi*, 2020) in the context of changes in Taiwan society reflected in the legalization of same-sex marriage on May 17, 2019. The article argues that this film is a timely cultural production that can help bridge a gap that still exists between the official legislation on same-sex marriage and public opinion, which in a series of earlier referendums expressed considerable opposition to legalization. This film makes a contribution in the way in which it depicts the localized repressive environment experienced by two Catholic high school students in the late 1980s and shows the harmful impact of institutional and interpersonal "gaslighting" in certain areas for the purpose of perpetuating a patriarchal and heteronormative society. The film's moving narrative of the sincere first love between two positively portrayed youths debunks stigmatized stereotyping of homosexuals and gay love. By enhancing awareness and understanding of homosexuals and their predicament, and advocating for empathy and inclusiveness for non-conventional love, Director Liu Kuang-hui and Producer Chu Yu-ning (Arthur Chu, 1970- ) show how it might be possible to narrow the gap between the public opinion and the legislation on same-sex marriage.

**Keywords:** Taiwan's legalization of same-sex marriage, *Your Name Engraved Herein*, Taiwan LGBTQ-themed films, the lifting of martial law in Taiwan, Liu Kuang-hui (Patrick Liu), Chu Yu-ning (Arthur Chu), institutional and interpersonal "gaslighting," empathy and inclusiveness

## INTRODUCTION

Taiwan's new movie *Your Name Engraved Herein* (*Kezai ni xindi de mingzi*, 2020) is first a romance drama, because first love is its central theme, and second a same-sex movie, because it is about first love between two high school boys. Since its official release in Taiwan's theaters in late September 2020, it has been hailed as "Taiwan's highest-grossing LGBTQ-themed

---

\* Yenna Wu is Professor of Chinese and Distinguished Teaching Professor at the University of California, Riverside. The author wishes to thank the external reviewers for their helpful comments and the editor for his fine copyediting.

movie of all time.”<sup>1</sup> On February 26, 2020, the 2020 Golden Horse Fantastic Film Festival announced that *Your Name Engraved Herein*, directed by Liu Kuang-hui (Patrick Liu, 1970- ), was selected to be its opening film.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, due to the Covid-19 outbreak, the 2020 Festival was later canceled, but this selection foreshadowed the acclaim for the film that would soon follow.<sup>3</sup> In mid-March 2020, the film won an award at the Osaka Asian Film Festival for best supporting actor.<sup>4</sup> The film also received Taiwan’s internationally acclaimed Golden Horse Awards for Best Cinematography and Best Original Film Song on November 21, 2020.<sup>5</sup> Since late December 2020, the film has been available on Netflix, thus becoming accessible to a global audience.

This article seeks to connect this film with a discussion of the controversy over legislation to legalize same-sex marriage in Taiwan on May 19, 2019, in light of the still-existing gap between public opinion and this legislation. It considers what might have caused this gap and suggests that Liu Kuang-hui’s movie is a timely cultural production that can help bridge it. After examining the comments from Director Liu Kuang-hui and Producer Chu Yu-ning (Arthur Chu, 1970- ) about the making of the movie and their inclusion of autobiographical elements, the article also seeks to explore the film’s historical significance as a representation of the localized repressive environment experienced by the two Catholic high school protagonists in the late 1980s. The article suggests that the film is particularly effective in reflecting the damaging impact of institutional and interpersonal “gaslighting” in certain areas for the purpose of perpetuating a patriarchal and heteronormative society.

The film’s empathetic depictions of the two young protagonists, Chang Jia-han (nicknamed A-han) and Wang Po Te (nicknamed “Birdy”), as well as its moving plot of their thwarted romance, help debunk negative stereotyping of homosexuals and gay love, while highlighting their predicament and suffering. This article argues that by successfully reaching out to a wide audience with their movie, Director Liu Kuang-hui and Producer Chu Yu-ning have played an important role in raising people’s awareness and understanding of homosexuals and the repression they have suffered, in essence offering the audience some level of positive same-sex education. By advocating for empathy and inclusiveness for same-sex love, Liu and Chu have helped to increase public exposure to and contacts with the LGBTQ community, thus

1 Kat Moon, “The Real Events That Inspired *Your Name Engraved Herein*, Taiwan’s Highest-Grossing LGBTQ Film of All Time,” *Time Magazine*, December 18, 2020. <https://time.com/5922735/your-name-engraved-herein-truc-story/>.

2 Wang Danhe, “2020 Jinma qihuan yingzhan *Kezai ni xindi de mingzi kaimupian*” [2020 Golden Horse Fantastic Film Festival *Your Name Engraved Herein* as opening film], *Qingnian ribao* [Youth daily news], February 26, 2020, <https://web.archive.org/web/20200712033910/https://www.ydn.com.tw/News/374354>.

3 Jiang Peiyu, “Yiqing yingxiang chixu 2020 Jinma qihuan yingzhan xuanbu tingban!” [Due to the continuation of the pandemic, 2020 Golden Horse Fantastic Film Festival will be canceled!], *Zhongguo shibao* [China times], March 18, 2020, <https://www.chinatimes.com/real-timenews/20200318003822-260404?chdtv>.

4 Leon Dai, the actor who plays the middle-aged A-han [Chang Jia-han], won the best supporting actor award for his performance in this film. See “Dai Liren Daban dianyingjie duoji-ang, kuayue yuyan guanzhong kandao chuoqi” [Leon Dai won an award at Osaka Film Festival; transcending language barrier, the audience was moved to tears], *Mirror Media*, March 16, 2020, <https://www.mirrormedia.mg/story/20200316ent035/>.

5 See “Jinmajiang di 57 jie wanzheng dejiang mingdan” [A complete award list of the 57th Golden Horse Awards], November 21, 2020, <https://www.cna.com.tw/news/firstnews/202011215011.aspx>.

nari  
mar

T

sam  
new  
end  
aga  
put  
dire  
one  
for  
Civ  
Mir  
unc  
anc  
pro  
oth  
sup  
unc  
edu  
tioi

Pro  
cor  
LG  
lat  
in  
det  
wa  
a b  
Tsa

rig  
ing  
LC  
LC  
Ch  
sin  
Inl  
Ch

25,  
tra  
20.

narrowing the gap between public opinion and the legislation on same-sex marriage.

#### THE CONTROVERSY OVER TAIWAN'S LEGALIZATION OF SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

On May 17, 2019, Taiwan became the first country in Asia to legalize same-sex marriages, marking a great victory for LGBTQ rights. While the news made worldwide headlines, it obscured the fact that in a series of referendums earlier on November 24, 2018, Taiwan citizens overwhelmingly voted against legalizing same-sex marriages. These referendums were prompted by public reactions to a May 2017 ruling by Taiwan's Constitutional Court that directed the legislature to legalize same-sex unions within two years. On the one hand, the majority of voters approved three referendum positions put forward by a conservative Christian group: that marriage as defined in the Civil Code be restricted to the union between a man and a woman, that the Ministry of Education should not require including same-sex education under the Gender Equality Education Act in elementary and middle schools, and that the rights of same-sex couples cohabitating on a permanent basis be protected only by measures other than changing the Civil Code. On the other hand, they simultaneously rejected proposals put forward by a group supporting same-sex marriage that same-sex marital rights be protected under the Civil Code's definition of marriage and that all levels of national education should include gender equality, emotional education, sex education, and same-sex education.<sup>6</sup>

The 2018 referendums took place at a time when the DPP (Democratic Progressive Party) was the ruling party (2016- ), and the DPP government, in contrast to the KMT (Kuomintang, the Nationalist Party), openly supported LGBTQ rights. When the DPP suffered a major setback in local elections in late 2018, it is hardly surprising that many read this loss as a reaction, at least in part, to the party's perceived support for same-sex marriage. Nevertheless, despite the opposition revealed in the November 24, 2018, referendums, Taiwan's legislature, following the ruling of the Constitutional Court, approved a bill legalizing same-sex marriage on May 17, 2019, and Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen signed it into effect a few days later.

The credit for this victory for LGBTQ rights should absolutely go to gay rights advocates and activists who have fought for equality for decades. Raising society's awareness of the inequality and discrimination suffered by LGBTQ people, they succeeded in rallying many Taiwanese to support the LGBTQ movement. Most crucial to the victory was the prominent activist Chi Chia-wei, who had persevered in fighting for gay rights and marriage equality since the 1980s, leading to his selection as one of *Time Magazine's* 100 Most Influential People of 2020. Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen paid tribute to Chi Chia-wei as follows:

"He began advocating for marriage equality decades ago, at a time when civic advocacy could serve as grounds for imprisonment in Taiwan. Despite the danger, he repeatedly brought his case for equal rights to the courts, and his persistence led to the Grand

<sup>6</sup> See the BBC report, "Taiwan voters reject same-sex marriage in referendums," November 25, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-46329877>. See also "2018 Referendum," Central Election Commission, November 24, 2018, archived, <https://web.archive.org/web/20181124220825/http://referendum.2018.nat.gov.tw/pc/en/00/m0000000000000000.html>.

Justices' constitutional interpretation ruling that required the government to legalize same-sex marriage, which took effect in 2019.<sup>7</sup>

When saying that "civic advocacy could serve as grounds for imprisonment," President Tsai was referring to the martial law period (1949-1987) when the KMT government held absolute power in Taiwan. As a democratically elected national leader, Tsai's praise for Chi and his championing of the equal rights cause surely exerted an exemplary impact on a considerable segment of general public to accept the legalization of same-sex marriage, despite the disapproval reflected in the November 2018 referendums.

The lifting of martial law in 1987 had opened the way for gay and lesbian movements to emerge and develop in the 1990s. As Liang-Ya Liou explains, with "mostly college students or academics" as the "core members," these movements utilized "Western examples as a means of mobilization," and took up "the discourse and strategies of their Western (often US) counterparts," while adapting them "to the Taiwanese context."<sup>8</sup> There was, certainly, a time lag in introducing Western discourses from the 1970s: "Lesbian and gay discourses were brought into Taiwan with an almost twenty-year temporal gap vis-à-vis their Western counterparts, and just a year or two ahead of the introduction of queer discourse."<sup>9</sup> Nonetheless, even before the 1990s, some local forerunners had started publishing works to raise public awareness of gay issues. For example, Pai Hsien-yung's celebrated novel *Niezi* (evil, wicked sons; translated into English as *Crystal Boys*)—a work that depicts a group of homosexuals who congregated in Taipei's New Park at night during the 1970s—was published in 1983, while the famous female writer Li Ang's story about gay love, "Jinse de ai" (love of a forbidden shade), was published in 1989. However, as Liou indicates, as Western (and Hong Kong) "cultural commodities," including "movies and MTVs portraying gays, lesbians and queers," were imported more quickly after 1987, Taiwan-produced gay and lesbian novels (e.g., Chu Tien-wen's *Huangren shouji* [Notes of a Desolate Man] and Chiu Miao-jin's *Eyu shouji* [Notes of a Crocodile]) and gay-themed films (e.g., Ang Lee's *Xiyan* [The Wedding Banquet] and Tsai Ming-liang's *Helio* [The River]) began to receive highly acclaimed awards domestically and internationally.<sup>10</sup> These cultural productions as well as the discussions they generated surely contributed to and interacted with the development of gay and lesbian movements.

As a result of this decades-long development of gay discourses and rights activism, Taiwan's society did become much more open and liberal than before. Numerous younger-generation Taiwanese have embraced the concept of gay rights and marriage equality. Even the 2018 referendums show some sign of shifting attitudes in that while the majority of the voters agreed that marriage as defined in the Civil Code be restricted to the union between a man and a woman, they also agreed that the rights of same-sex couples could be protected by measures other than amending the Civil Code. Still, there remains a considerable gap between the progressive legislation approving same-sex marriage and general public opinion as expressed in the refer-

7 Tsai Ing-wen, "Chi Chia-wei," *Time Magazine*, September 22, 2020. <https://time.com/col-lection/100-most-influential-people-2020/5888257/chi-chia-wei/>.

8 Liang-Ya Liou, "At the intersection of the global and the local: representations of male homosexuality in fiction by Pai Hsien-yung, Li Ang, Chu Tienwen and Chi Ta-wei," *Postcolonial Studies: Culture, Politics, Economy* 6.2 (2003): 192-93, DOI: 10.1080/13688790308100.

9 *Ibid.*, 192.

10 *Ibid.*, 194.

endum results. Scholars have also noted a continuing “intraparty conflict on same-sex marriage and LGBTQ rights” even within the DPP. Although the DPP’s official policy supports legalization of same-sex marriage, many within the DPP “publicly remain neutral or opposed to its passage.”<sup>11</sup> To end the political tension over same-sex marriage, the DPP government and pro-LGBTQ groups will need to recognize this reality, analyze the reasons for it, and make efforts to persuade anti-LGBTQ or ambivalent people into supporting the legalization.

The LGBTQ situation in Taiwan has been largely shaped by intertwined traditional values, political tensions, and religious beliefs. There are several reasons why many people in Taiwan still do not support LGBTQ rights, let alone same-sex marriage. Quite a few scholars have identified important cultural factors that present barriers to the recognition of LGBTQ rights, including “the Confucian cultural norms of filial piety and prioritizing collective or community consensus over individual freedom and equality.”<sup>12</sup> These norms include expectations for children to obey their parents, bring honor to the family, to marry, and to provide a male heir to continue the family line. “Even if the family is accepting of the child’s sexual orientation, others in the community may still shame them.”<sup>13</sup> Based on such cultural norms and conventional values, an entrenched bias against LGBTQ people cannot be easily eliminated.

In addition to traditional cultural norms, religious factors also present barriers to the recognition of LGBTQ rights. It is generally understood that “Christian groups commonly cite doctrinal opposition to LGBTQ rights,” and that “while only about five percent of Taiwanese identify as Christian, they comprise the majority campaigning against the LGBTQ lobby.”<sup>14</sup> As mentioned above, the three 2018 referendum questions supported by the voters were proposed by a conservative Christian group opposing gay marriage. Of course, such beliefs are not universal among Christians in Taiwan, as some also secretly or publicly support LGBTQ rights and gay marriage. But Christian believers remain a strong core element in anti-LGBTQ forces.

Opposition to LGBTQ rights within the broader public was likely also encouraged by anti-LGBTQ misconceptions spread online. For example, in the 2018 local election races as well as the 2020 election, there were some “attempts to spread false information via social media” warning older voters that “allowing gay marriage and same-sex relationships would yield fewer grandchildren” and warning the public that “same-sex legal unions could result in greater prevalence of HIV and AIDS within Taiwan.”<sup>15</sup> By comparison, the DPP government and pro-LGBTQ groups have not been effective in finding ways to rebut misconceptions or disinformation. Finally, there has been insufficient public discussion and education to help people understand and empathize with the LGBTQ community and its issues.

---

11 Timothy S. Rich, Andi Dahmer, and Isabel Eliassen, “Explaining Support for Same-Sex Marriage: Evidence from Taiwan,” *International Journal of Taiwan Studies* 2.2 (2019): 324-25, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1163/24688800-00202006>.

12 *Ibid.*, 326.

13 *Ibid.*, 327.

14 *Ibid.*, 327. By comparison, Buddhism and Taoism seem relatively tolerant.

15 Timothy Rich, Isabel Eliassen, Andi Dahmer and Carolyn Brueggemann, “The Public’s View on Same-sex Marriage Legalization,” *Taiwan Insight*, February 5, 2020, <https://taiwaninsight.org/2020/02/05/the-publics-view-on-same-sex-marriage-legalisation/>.

Timothy S. Rich, Andi Dahmer, and Isabel Eliassen have focused on how the presentation and “framing” of the same-sex marriage issue may have influenced public perceptions. Based on responses from six hundred respondents in an experimental survey conducted during March 29-30, 2018, they found “a portion of the population could be swayed by the framing of same-sex marriage, at least in terms of equating it as a challenge to traditional values.”<sup>16</sup> That is, many people could be influenced by negative narratives. The scholars contend that opposition organizations have been “more effective in promoting a view of legalization as a threat to traditional marriage” and in “employing the rhetoric of potential loss” so as to “elicit an emotional response,” whereas the proponents “failed to focus on a singular narrative that could hold similar emotional appeal.”<sup>17</sup> Moreover, “the results suggest the extent to which framing an issue in terms of the potential risks and losses resonate more strongly than framing it in a positive light.” Specifically, the opponents’ rhetoric of “loss”—i.e., the “undermining of traditional values”—has a much stronger emotional appeal than that of the proponents’ rhetoric of “Taiwan’s growing progressiveness and efforts towards achieving greater equality.”<sup>18</sup> Arguments for Taiwan’s progressiveness and greater equality may appeal to many among the younger generation, but not necessarily the rest of the population.

One might have assumed that after the legalization of same-sex marriage in May 2019, public support would necessarily increase. However, from a December 2019 survey of 502 people addressing “perceptions of same-sex marriage legalization and its implications for the 2020 election,” Rich, Dahmer, and Eliassen find some sobering data. First, in answer to the question regarding “their opinion on same-sex marriage legalization,” there were “39.2 percent in support, 33.5 percent in opposition and over 27.3 percent indifferent.” Second, “nearly one in five (19.3 percent) claimed their position changed” in answer to the question, “Since the legalization of same-sex marriage in May of 2019, has your opinion of legalization changed?” The researchers further discovered that, “not only were those that changed their views less likely to be indifferent, but that more than half moved to oppose or strongly oppose.”<sup>19</sup> In other words, more than half of the 19.3 percent who had changed their position after legalization shifted to oppose same-sex marriage. The timing of this survey—just before the January 2020 presidential election—might have been a reason why the legalization issue became part of the polemics against the DPP. Nonetheless, even in this small sample (502 people), there were more in support (39.2 percent) than opposed (33.5 percent) to same-sex marriage—a great improvement over the 2018 referendum results.

Overall, these survey results suggest that despite the legalization in May 2019, “proponents have failed to challenge misinformation or overcome traditional value concerns effectively.” Rich, Dahmer, and Eliassen warn proponents of same-sex marriage not to cede “the ability to frame the narrative” around legalization to the opponents.<sup>20</sup> With President Tsai’s huge win in the 2020 election, they hope that in addition to continued efforts in “expanding LGBTQ rights through legislation,” there will be “similar efforts to

16 Rich, Dahmer, and Eliassen, “Explaining Support,” 329-34.

17 *Ibid.*, 329.

18 *Ibid.*, 334.

19 Rich, Eliassen, Dahmer and Brueggemann, “The Public’s View.”

20 *Ibid.*

lower the misconceptions," and that the legalization will "generate an environment in which more Taiwanese have personal contact with Taiwanese [members of the] LGBTQ [community], leading to the debunking of opponents' claims."<sup>21</sup> Studies have found that "exposure to homosexuality and personal connections to homosexuals help increase positive attitudes towards them." Such connections may also include "media exposure and publicity," media coverage, and films on LGBTQ issues.<sup>22</sup> The value of such exposure to homosexuality in these contexts is that it can provide people with the opportunity to realize that homosexuals are normal individuals with human feelings and desires.

It seems logical to assume that with the backing of the Tsai administration, and given time, the 2019 legalization will surely win more public support for same-sex marriage in the long run. However, proponents should not take the legalization victory for granted. Much work remains to be done to bridge the still existing gap between positive and negative public opinion on the legislation, and to persuade all members of society to accept the need for marriage equality. As noted above, one effective way to change public opinion is through cultural productions and media.

This article argues that Liu Kuang-hui's movie *Your Name Engraved Herein* is particularly well-situated to help increase the public's "contact" with and understanding of the LGBTQ community. This is largely due to its realistic portrayals of the lives of its young homosexual protagonists. Its sympathetic depictions of the protagonists' love and suffering can minimize or eliminate misconceptions about male homosexuals and encourage empathy for this marginalized group and their predicament. To some extent, then, the film's narrative offers a counterargument to the contention that homosexuality undermines traditional values, while proposing a positive message and vision for accepting all sincere love without discrimination. One particular strength of the film is its ability to exert a strong emotional appeal on viewers of different generations, gender, and sexual orientation, thereby promoting tolerance and inclusiveness among the public. This makes the film especially pertinent for further study. While acknowledging the potential utilitarian function of this film in terms of the political issues surrounding same-sex marriage, though, it is also important to begin with an understanding of how it intersects with a broader and ongoing debate over how to understand homosexuality in the context of Chinese-speaking societies.

#### THE DEBATE ABOUT MALE HOMOSEXUALITY IN CHINESE-SPEAKING SOCIETIES<sup>23</sup>

In the past two decades, there has developed a large body of queer scholarship in the fields of Taiwanese LGBTQ culture and film studies. While it is outside the scope of this article to examine Liu Kuang-hui's film in the context of this corpus of queer cinema studies, there is one methodological aspect of this scholarship that is particularly relevant to the analytical approach of this article.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> See the discussion and the various studies cited in Rich, Dahmer, and Eliassen, "Explaining Support," 327-28.

<sup>23</sup> In this article, I refer to LGBTQ issues and rights, however, the movie *Your Name Engraved Herein* is only about male homosexuals. Understanding that the LGBTQ community is by no means a monolithic community, this article mainly focuses on the male homosexual (gay) component of this community.



Arguably the first Chinese-language film dealing with homosexuality, Taiwan director Ang Lee's *The Wedding Banquet* (1993) inspired many more Chinese-language gay films in transnational contexts. In characterizing these films, Gina Marchetti states, "a dialectic materialized in Chinese cinema involving queer issues and gay characters that oscillated between the use of homosexuality as a metaphor for various crises of identity involving the Chinese globally (e.g., Chen Kaige's *Farewell My Concubine*, 1993; Zhang Yuan's *East Palace West Palace*, 1997; and Wong Kar-wai's *Happy Together*, 1997) and films that dealt more directly with homophobia in the Chinese-speaking world and gay rights in Chinese communities (e.g., Shu Kei's *A Queer Story*, 1996)."<sup>24</sup> *Your Name Engraved Herein* is clearly closer to the latter category since it deals with homophobia and other localized repressions in Taiwan in the late 1980s and its implications for gay rights in Taiwan today. The importance, and place, of the film should therefore be seen in this context.

Hong Kong sociologist Chou Wah-Shan claims that traditional Chinese society was tolerant of male homosexuality, while modern Chinese homophobia resulted from Westernization and the imposition of Western "homo-hetero binarism" and homophobia.<sup>25</sup> Chou's dichotomy of a tolerant premodern China versus Westernized modern China appears to be partially echoing Bret Hirsch's argument that the adoption of Western sexual discourse led to modern China's homophobia.<sup>26</sup>

Two Taiwan scholars, Jenping Liu and Naifei Ding, however, refute Chou Wah-Shan's contention about a "Chinese tradition of silent tolerance" (*moyan kuanrong*) of homosexuality. They argue that "silent tolerance" seems "in practice inevitably to result, paradoxically, in *homosexuals themselves* maintaining silence about their sexuality, suggesting that the effect of the perpetual search for methods of 'alternative coming-out' true to this idealized 'Chinese culture', may effectively result in an infinitely extended *staying in*."<sup>27</sup> Finding the arguments of Liu and Ding more convincing, Fran Martin opts for reading homosexuality-themed texts for the "syncretic and impure forms of meaning they encode," instead of searching for a "pure 'Chinese' sexual tradition."<sup>28</sup>

While it does indeed seem problematic to essentialize a "pure 'Chinese' sexual tradition," especially in terms of the points raised by Liu, Ding, and Martin, Chou's discussion of "different strategies of coming out" still seems useful to some extent. Chou states,

The lexicon of "coming out" and to "be out and proud" can be culturally problematic for Chinese, as "out" implies leaving the family, parents, and the culture to become lesbian or gay, and "proud" is culturally derogatory, especially for a "deviant" form of sexuality.<sup>29</sup>

Based on his interviews with a number of Chinese male homosexuals, Chou finds that, instead of confronting their parents, some manage to draw their

24 Gina Marchetti, "On Tsai Mingliang's *The River*," *Island on the Edge: Taiwan New Cinema and After*, eds. Chris Berry and Fei Lu (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005), 113-14.

25 Chou Wah-Shan, "Homosexuality and the Cultural Politics of *Tongzhi* in Chinese Societies," *Journal of Homosexuality* 40, nos. 3-4 (2001): 29-31.

26 Bret Hirsch, *Passions of the Cut Sleeve: The Male Homosexual Tradition in China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

27 See the discussion of Chou Wah-Shan's 1997 Chinese book and the 1998 Chinese publication by Jenping Liu and Naifei Ding in Fran Martin, *Situating Sexualities: Queer Representation in Taiwanese Fiction, Film and Public Culture* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2003), 32-33.

28 Fran Martin, *Situating Sexualities*, 33, 201-203.

29 Chou Wah-Shan, "Homosexuality," 34-35.

C  
P  
g  
"i  
n  
a  
t  
t  
t  
a

of  
st  
di  
ex  
at  
lit  
a  
H  
yo  
su  
st  
hi  
pr  
tie  
etl

fur  
sell  
his  
anc  
old  
the  
inc.  
Pro  
ren  
the  
In  
right  
thei

(in  
tem  
fact  
stor  
his  
acto

dity, Tai-  
 ore Chi-  
 g these  
 ema in-  
 e use of  
 the Chi-  
 g Yuan's  
 97) and  
 peaking  
*er Story*,  
 category  
 iwan in  
 impor-  
 xt.  
 Chinese  
 Chinese  
 Western  
 tolerant  
 partially  
 ual dis-  
  
 e Chou  
 (moyan  
 ms "in  
 intain-  
 rpetual  
 hinese  
 inding  
 r read-  
 ms of  
 sexual  
  
 inese'  
 g, and  
 seems  
  
 atic  
 me  
 of  
  
 Chou  
 their  
  
 Cinema  
 113-14.  
 Socie-  
  
 rkeley:  
  
 publi-  
 ation in  
 32-33.

partners into becoming "quasi kin-members" in their families, thereby integrating "sexuality into family life."<sup>30</sup> Chou correctly acknowledges that such "strategies and cases are neither exhaustive, nor necessarily Chinese," as many homosexuals in other societies "are using similar strategies to negotiate acceptance from and integration with the family," and at the same time, there are "differences among various Chinese societies" and "[d]ifferent *tongzhi* [homosexuals] have different needs and use different strategies to tackle their problems."<sup>31</sup>

Just as real-life homosexuals in different cultures, societies, historical periods, and locations may deal with their situations in diverse, fluid ways, so we should not privilege one single universal way for all, or necessarily assume a dichotomy of so-called Western versus Chinese ways. By the same token, in examining fictional or filmic representations of homosexuality, we need to attend to the specific circumstances and the historical, sociocultural, and political contexts in each work's representation, rather than cavalierly imposing a set interpretive or analytic frameworks on all works. In *Your Name Engraved Herein*, for example, none of the homosexual students is "out and proud": a young student, Shoushou, is discovered by his schoolmates to be gay, and suffers from daily bullying; A-han almost comes out to his parents but is stopped by Birdy; and Birdy employs various strategies to avoid coming out to his family and community. Instead of faulting Director Liu for failing to represent "out and proud" examples, we should try to understand the specificities in the students' circumstances as well as the historical and sociocultural ethos and contexts.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ELEMENTS AND THE VISION OF INCLUSIVENESS: LIU KUANG-HUI AND CHU YU-NING

The movie *Your Name Engraved Herein* serves multiple private and public functions. Before all else, it provides a channel for Director Liu Kuang-hui's self-expression and self-healing, permitting him to remember and confront his personal trauma and to recover from it. The director also uses the movie and his own example to convey sympathy, support, and encouragement to older-generation homosexuals who had similarly suffered as well as those in the younger generation who still live in anxiety, shame, or fear, despite the increasing tolerance of Taiwan's society. Furthermore, both Director Liu and Producer Chu Yu-ning intended for the movie to reach a wide audience by reminding them of their own first loves. In so doing, they wish to persuade the public to be more empathetic with and inclusive of other people's love. In other words, they offer a vision for the public to accept other people's right to love without discriminating against them or their love because of their gender, sexual orientation, or other factors.<sup>32</sup>

The movie began generating a great deal of enthusiastic discussion online (in social media) even before its official release in Taiwan's theaters on September 30, 2020. One highlight in the film's promotion was its "authenticity" factor—the movie was partially based on Director Liu Kuang-hui's personal story and, after shooting this movie, Liu finally came out as a homosexual to his mother. Would-be viewers were also attracted by the two handsome young actors, Chen Hao-sen (Edward Chen) and Tseng Ching-hua (Tseng Jing-hua;

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>32</sup> I will analyze some of the film's aesthetic and affective aspects in a separate article.

Peter Tseng), who play the gay lovers, A-han and Birdy, in the film.<sup>33</sup> Meanwhile, Director Liu and Producer Chu, along with the two actors, diligently appeared in talk shows both before and after the release of the movie in order to publicize the production and their vision for the film. Thus, the main focus of an interview with the host Lū Xinjie of the online channel Caihong Pingquan Dapingtai (Rainbow Equality Platform) on September 16, 2020, was Liu Kuang-hui's first love and his "coming out" story. This interview with both Director Liu and Producer Chu provided the context for the making of the film, piqued the viewers' interest, and encouraged them to go to an early showing of the movie a few days before its formal release in theaters (September 30, 2020).<sup>34</sup>

The making of this movie not only became a vehicle for Liu Kuang-hui to share his own experience of repressed love in a homophobic era but also a journey for Chu Yu-ning whereby he learned the value of inclusiveness through direct personal contact with a homosexual schoolmate. The movie was originally conceived as a personal love story. As divulged in the September 16, 2020 interview, Liu Kuang-Hui, who had been making "idol dramas" for other people, had yearned to make a movie about his own story—his first love in high school.<sup>35</sup> After writing a simple draft story, Liu talked with Chu Yu-ning, a film director who also happened to be Liu's former high school schoolmate and good friend, to see if they could cooperate in filming this story. Also in his late forties in 2017, Chu was touched by Liu's story, which reminded him of his younger days. It turned out that Chu had wanted to write about his own story even before Liu did. So, Chu combined Liu's story with his own, making a fuller narrative that included other "elements" from the environment of the past and some other stories they remembered. Chu also forced Liu to face certain parts about himself that Liu had never dared to confront before. In the interview, Liu declared, "He (Chu) forced me to come out!" Chu also challenged Liu to include parts in the story he had not originally considered, leading Liu to note, "Through the process of dialogues, I got the initial shape of the script done."<sup>36</sup> The movie can thus be regarded as a co-creation by both Liu and Chu. Both contributed their stories of younger days to flesh out the script, cooperated in the making of the film, and instilled their vision into the final production.

Liu's first love experience revealed a teenager's ignorance of his own sexual orientation, of homosexuality, or even about the reasons for the social taboo and Christian injunctions against same-sex love. In Liu's own words, "I didn't feel I was gay. I only liked a boy and wanted to be a good friend with him for my whole lifetime . . . At that time I was very innocent (*danchun*, "simple, pure")."<sup>37</sup> The issue of physical intimacy did not cross Liu's mind at that time. Liu suffered intensely for his secret, one-sided love. He wrote very long love letters—yet only parts of the letter were given to his schoolmate, because Liu worried about frightening his beloved.<sup>38</sup> In a somewhat later

33 The nickname Birdy came from Alan Parker's movie *Birdy* (1984). A-han finds out that the movie *Birdy* is "about two good friends, one normal, the other somewhat crazy; the crazy one's called Birdy."

34 Interview of Liu Kuang-hui and Chu Yu-Ning on Caihong Pingquan Dapingtai [The Rainbow Equality Platform], September 16, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LMViWwtUrZA>.

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid.

37 Ibid.

38 Ibid.

Mean-  
gently  
vie in  
s, the  
annel  
er 16,  
erview  
mak-  
go to  
eaters

hui to  
also a  
eness  
movie  
ptem-  
mas”  
s first  
Chu  
hool  
; this  
which  
ed to  
story  
from  
Chu  
ared  
e to  
I not  
dia-  
s be  
ories  
film,

sex-  
ocial  
s, “I  
with  
hun,  
d at  
very  
ate,  
ater

that  
crazy

The  
om/

interview (September 24, 2020), Liu went further in his self-analysis: At that time, he did not want to admit that he was homosexual, since his impression of homosexuality was that it was “wicked, dirty and very dark.” So, he kept persuading himself that he only wanted to be the soulmate of the other boy. Yet he could not distinguish friendship from love in his feelings. When Liu’s feelings were finally conveyed to the boy, the boy was shocked. “He didn’t know what this feeling was about. Even I did not know what this feeling was about. So, it’s under this kind of repressive environment . . .”<sup>39</sup> When Liu and Chu reflected on this episode thirty years later while writing the script, they realized that “it was a condition created by the era.”<sup>40</sup> Using the film to fictionalize the feelings and pain he experienced during his first love in that homophobic era, Liu hoped that it could help society become more tolerant and accepting. As Liu said, “There are no differences between homosexual or heterosexual relationships . . . We hope to show people that in homosexual relationships, love is still love.”<sup>41</sup>

It was through Liu that Chu, a heterosexual, began having contact with a homosexual. Chu remembers that in that high school environment thirty years ago, a homosexual would be “bullied to death.” As Liu was Chu’s best friend, when Chu discovered that Liu was homosexual, Chu felt that he should not behave like other people (who discriminated against homosexuals) and start to loathe Liu. Chu reflected that since Liu was a fine person in doing all sorts of things, “why should I have doubts about his character simply because of his sexual orientation?”<sup>42</sup> Chu would eventually benefit from sympathizing with Liu and continuing to be his friend and confidant. Likewise, Chu’s broader views changed to the extent that he now emphasizes that there should be no discrimination over love due to the differences in gender, age, nationality, ethnicity, etc. He further envisions a future society in which people can love freely, instead of using labels such as “homosexual” or “non-homosexual.”<sup>43</sup>

During the process of scripting and filming the story of how he fell in love with a boy, Liu was apparently finally able to come to terms with his repressed trauma. Liu has a close relationship with his mother, who is Taiwanese, a devout Christian, and over eighty years old. During the Lunar New Year holidays in 2020 when they were chatting at home, Liu’s mother told him, “I prepared a gold ring for you to get married.” Liu decided to come out: “Mom, let me tell you seriously. From childhood till now, I’ve only liked guys.”<sup>44</sup> Liu describes his mother’s reactions as follows:

After my mom heard this, she paused a few seconds, then she started hitting me, “What are you talking about? What are you talking about? Don’t fool me! You scared me to death!” I again said to her seriously, “Mom, what I told you is true. It is true that all those that I like are guys.” Then my mom sighed and said, “All right. In any case, now guys can get married, too.”<sup>45</sup>

39 “POP zuizhengdian” [POP the most perfect point]: “Lin Shuwei zhuangfang dianying *Kezai ni xindi de mingzi* daoyan Liu Kuang-hui & jianzhi Chu Yu-ning & nanzhujiao Tseng Ching-hua, Chen Hao-sen & Guest DJ zishen yingpingren Cheng Wei-po” [Lin Shuwei specially interviews the movie *Your Name Engraved Herein*’s director, Liu Kuang-hui, producer, Chu Yu-ning, main actors, Tseng Ching-hua and Chen Hao-sen, and Guest DJ, the senior film critic, Cheng Wei-po], September 24, 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zrn7-Q5x9zw>.

40 Ibid.

41 Kat Moon, “The Real Events.”

42 Interview of Liu Kuang-hui and Chu Yu-Ning on Caihong Pingquan Dapingtai.

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid.

45 Ibid.

The mixed reactions of Liu's mother are instructive. As a long-term devout Christian who had for years been expecting her son to get married and have children, she was at first shocked, outraged, terrified, disappointed, and in disbelief. However, after Liu re-affirmed that he was gay, her attitude changed from one of denial to one of resignation. After all, she loved her son (who had been devoted to her) and cared about his happiness, and she had no way to change his sexual orientation when he was already near fifty years old. Nevertheless, the capstone for her to finally accept her son's homosexuality was Taiwan's 2019 legalization of same-sex marriage. This legalization obviously assured her that her son's homosexuality was no longer a stigma and that he had a legal path forward for forming an alternative family and pursuing his happiness.

The two young actors, Chen Hao-sen and Tseng Ching-hua, also participated in interviews and talk shows about the film, their acting, their interpretations of the characters' motivations, the movie's theme and message, etc., and answered questions from curious interviewers and audience members. Although neither Chen nor Tseng is homosexual in real life, they play-acted the two homosexual high-school students in the film so skillfully, sensitively, and endearingly that the audience obtains a sort of vicarious contact with—and feels mostly sympathy for—homosexuals through the film. Because of the two actors' strikingly handsome appearances, gentle temperament, and congenial manners, the public's empathy with homosexuals is further enhanced. As a result of their adoration for these two protagonists and the actors who portrayed them, the fans of the film would more likely sympathize with the LGBTQ cause. In their interviews and talk shows, Chen and Tseng not only delivered the message about all people having the right to love, but also represented two young people who had learned about two homosexuals from thirty years ago and sympathized with their predicament. In this way, they serve as exemplary models for their audience, particularly for the younger generation.

#### THE STORY AND ITS HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The movie has attracted large audiences for various reasons. In addition to the "authenticity" factor, the same-sex love theme, and the remarkable casting and acting, the movie has a fairly coherent, intelligible story, impressive cinematography, and moving music and songs that appealed emotionally to a wide audience. As the film's representation of the "repressive environment" in the late 1980s covers more areas than merely homophobia, it appeals to many members of the older generation who experienced similar conditions. The director also edited the film carefully so that it is quite restrained and avoided showing explicit sex or too much violence. According to its promotional introduction, the movie is rated as "protective class," which in Taiwan means it is suitable for children twelve or older and for children between six and twelve if they are accompanied by parents, teachers, or adult relatives and friends. As two reviewers noted, "This not only reflects how progressive Taiwan's society is, but also allows even more parents to have the opportunity of conversing with their children through viewing this film, thereby helping establish pluralistic civic consciousness and convey the con-

cept that 'love' is genderless."<sup>46</sup> This comment is significantly counterpoised against the results of the 2018 referendum where the majority of voters rejected the proposal that all levels of national education should include gender equality, emotional education, sex education, and same-sex education. Thus, we can appreciate the efforts made by Director Liu and Producer Chu to ensure the film's inclusiveness for audiences of multiple generations while embedding some elements of gender equality, emotional, and same-sex education in the film.

The film, running nearly two hours long, is composed of two parts. Part One, consisting of the first hour and twenty-five minutes of the film, is about the two protagonists' story in Witt (Wei-te) High School in Taichung, Taiwan, from sometime after the lifting of martial law (July 1987) to 1989. Part Two relates events thirty years later when the two protagonists have a chance re-encounter in Canada.

The Catholic Witt High School in Part One was based on Weidao High School (St. Viator Catholic High School) in Taichung, which both Director Liu and Producer Chu attended in the late 1980s. Liu not only incorporated autobiographical elements and memories into the film, but also strived to recreate historical authenticity in the setting, thereby making Part One a period drama. This included having the film crew reconstruct the original appearance of the Weidao High School for the shooting of the film. The director's ability to revive the setting's historical aura contributes to the viewer's understanding and appreciation of the story.

Some explanation of this specific setting is in order. Unlike public high schools, a private Catholic High School was expensive. Only relatively affluent families could afford to pay for their children to attend such a school. The reasons for the parents to send their sons to the all-boys Catholic High School were various. First, their sons did not score high enough in the high school entrance exams to enter higher-ranking public high schools. Second, compared with lower-ranking public high schools, the all-boys Catholic High School was more focused on academics and moral training, and it had better-qualified teachers, stricter discipline, a more homogeneous and presumably better-behaved student body, and a higher college entrance exam passing rate. Thus, the school catered to more committed parents, who supported the school's strict discipline because they wanted their sons to study hard and score high in college entrance exams in order to be admitted into a good university. In the film, Witt High School is shown to have started to admit female students in 1988—due to the relaxation of certain restrictions following the lifting of martial law—though it still keeps female students segregated from male students most of the time and forbids friendly or intimate relationships between male and female students.<sup>47</sup>

The verisimilitude of the film is enhanced by the very complexity of its storyline in revealing the muddled attempts of adolescents trying to understand new feelings. Part One starts in *medias res*, showing the protagonist A-han, with a wound on his left-side cheek and in painful agitation, speaking to the Catholic school's Father Oliver about why he got into a fight with his schoolmate Birdy. Then, through a series of flashbacks, we see how A-han

46 Eva Lee and Lucy Hsu, "Kezai ni xindi de mingzi juqing + renwu jixi" [*Your Name Engraved Herein*: plot + character analysis], *Cosmopolitan*, October 1, 2020, <https://www.cosmopolitan.com/tw/entertainment/movies/g34103619/your-name-engraved-herein/>.

47 However, according to the website of Weidao High School, the school began recruiting girl students at the "senior high section" in 1987. [http://www.vish.tc.edu.tw/\\_eng/](http://www.vish.tc.edu.tw/_eng/).

becomes acquainted with Birdy, how the two become attached, but then how after Birdy starts to date a girl student at school, Ban-ban (Wu Ruo-fei), he becomes distanced from A-han. At one point, Birdy asks A-han to help him steal a giant balloon—only to use the balloon to express his love for Ban-ban. Later, the disciplinary instructor discovers that Birdy was the one using the balloon to send his love to Ban-ban, and both Birdy and Ban-ban are punished for “disorderly conduct.” Birdy is given detention, while Ban-ban is expelled from school.

When Birdy’s father, angry over this incident, goes to the school intending to beat Birdy up, A-han intervenes to save Birdy from punishment by falsely claiming that he was the one who was carrying on a love affair with Ban-ban. Birdy tells A-han not to intervene, and the two argue and fight with each other, until Father Oliver enters and drags A-han away to his office. A-han’s mother then sends a message for him to come home because Birdy has told A-han’s parents that A-han got into a fight over a girl. A-han’s father is furious, while his mother implores him not to fight with his best friend Birdy over a girl. A-han wants to come out to his parents but is stopped by Birdy. When A-han angrily runs away from home, Birdy follows him to an islet in Penghu, urging him to go home. That is the last day, though, that they see each other: Birdy is transferred to another school and his family moves away. Some months later—possibly after they have both taken the college entrance exam—A-han gets Birdy’s new phone number, calls him, plays the theme song “Your Name Engraved Herein” for him, and they both break down in tears.

Part Two starts with A-han attending a reunion of the Witt High School Marching Band thirty years later. A-han finds out that Birdy married Ban-ban, had a child, but later got a divorce. It is not until A-han’s chance re-encounter with Birdy in Québec City, Canada—where they went separately to mourn the death of Father Oliver—that Birdy confesses that he actually loved A-han thirty years ago. Therefore, it is only after watching the last part of the film that the audience discovers the answers to some of the hidden secrets and puzzles in first part.

#### LOCALIZED REPRESSIVE ENVIRONMENT AND INSTITUTIONAL AND INTERPERSONAL “GASLIGHTING”

How does the film represent the “repressive environment” in 1987-89? The film starts with the TV announcement that by the order of President Chiang Ching-kuo (1910-88), martial law would be lifted on July 15, 1987. The lifting of martial law gave people hope for a new, more liberal society, yet as the whole society had been conditioned under strict restrictions during the decades-long martial law period (1949-1987) it did not mean immediate changes or a radical transition to freedom and democracy. Systemic and societal restrictions as well as conservative traditions continued to dominate.

To a certain extent, the movie represents this period as an ambivalent, transitional period fraught with ironies. For example, President Chiang’s death affords the two protagonists with the opportunity to travel together to Taipei, thereby enhancing their bonding and joy with each other. Yet the liberalization of the school’s policy toward admitting female students ironically leads to Birdy dating Ban-ban and seemingly ditching A-han, causing A-han much pain.

en how  
ei), he  
p him  
n-ban.  
ng the  
e pun-  
is ex-

ool in-  
ent by  
r with  
t with  
cé. A-  
ly has  
her is  
Birdy  
Birdy.  
let in  
y see  
away.  
rance  
heme  
vn in

hool  
-ban,  
oun-  
ourn  
-han  
film  
and

-89?  
lent  
987.  
ety,  
ring  
iate  
oci-

ent,  
g's  
r to  
the  
oni-  
A-

The film represents a somewhat localized “repressive environment” as it focuses on the experiences of Catholic high school students, especially what the two protagonists witnessed and encountered. One important repressive factor specific in their case was the high-pressure examination-oriented educational system. Other repressive elements were the strict controls by the disciplinary instructors (*jiaoguan*), and the prohibition against relationships between male and female students. Thus, while homophobia was a crucial repressive factor, it was not the only one portrayed in the film. Some of the characters’ speeches and actions reveal how they internalized the inhibitions and the discriminatory attitudes of the patriarchal and heteronormative society of the martial law era. The film thus reflects the harmful impact of what might be termed institutional and interpersonal “gaslighting” and its effect on social practices and public thinking during this transitional period. While Michel Foucault’s concepts of the repressive hypothesis and biopolitics can be applied to highlight the disciplinary aspects of homophobia and institutional repression,<sup>48</sup> this article suggests that the concept of institutional and interpersonal “gaslighting” is perhaps more useful for its flexibility and wider applicability to different aspects and levels of repression.

The term “gaslighting” is derived from Patrick Hamilton’s 1938 play *Gas Light*—which was adapted into a 1940 British film and a 1944 American film, both titled *Gaslight*. Gaslighting usually refers to one person’s psychological manipulation of another’s mind through deception.<sup>49</sup> The manipulator deliberately makes the manipulated doubt her or his own judgment and sanity even if s/he is actually right.<sup>50</sup> The manipulator can thus dominate and control the victim, and keep the victim marginalized and isolated. Expanding the notion of gaslighting from interpersonal emotional abuse to institutional abuse, Angelique Davis and Rose Ernst develop the concept “racial gaslighting,” defined as “the political, social, economic and cultural process that perpetuates and normalizes a white supremacist reality through pathologizing those who resist.”<sup>51</sup>

From the film’s representation, we can see examples of how a “repressive environment” can be viewed as an institutional or systemic form of “gaslighting.” Borrowing from Davis and Ernst, we can say the gaslighting in this case refers to the political, social, economic and cultural process that perpetuates and normalizes a patriarchal and heteronormative reality through pathologizing and isolating those who resist. Furthermore, we note this film shows how institutional and interpersonal “gaslighting” can impact various parts of life, and that its working and motivations can be complex. According to the relationship coach Cheryl Muir, “Sometimes, people who gaslight you

48 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* (London: Penguin, 1990), vol. 1.

49 In the 1940 British film *Gaslight*, a jewel thief and murderer manipulates his wife into believing that she is losing her sanity. For example, he causes the gas lamps in the wife’s room to dim during the time he is out, yet when his wife remarks on the dimming of the lights, he insists that she is wrong and is losing her mind. He uses the excuse of her mental problems to isolate her from other people. Note that the 1944 U.S. film adaptation *Gaslight* has been far more popular and frequently cited than the 1940 version.

50 Ria Wolstenholme, “The Hidden Victims of Gaslighting,” November 24, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20201123-what-is-racial-gaslighting>.

51 Angelique M. Davis & Rose Ernst, “Racial Gaslighting,” *Politics, Groups, and Identities*, 7:4 (2019), 763, DOI: 10.1080/21565503.2017.1403934. This article was originally published in 2017.



aren't doing it out of malice or to deliberately harm you but rather due to a lack of self-awareness," or perhaps even thinking to protect you.<sup>52</sup>

As part of the examination-oriented educational system, the Catholic high school relied mainly on patriarchal cultural norms to set its regulations. Christian values were also brought in to reinforce school restrictions. Following a somewhat military-style regimen, students had to obey various authorities, including disciplinary instructors and dorm supervisors at the school, the police in the wider community, their parents at home, and so forth. To fulfill their filial duty and bring honor to the family, the students were told to study hard, get good grades, and succeed at the college entrance exams—all for the purpose of entering a highly ranked university and getting a respectable and well-paid job later. To that end, the students' daily schedule and activities were strictly regimented. For example, students living in the dorm had to abide by school's curfew and not go outside the school without permission.

Interestingly, the film suggests that the disciplinary instructors paid hardly any attention to potential gay relationships but instead mainly sought to guard strictly against their male students' associations with girls. There were several reasons for this situation. First, in a single-sex high school, same-sex friendship and homosocial relationships were taken for granted and even encouraged. Second, as heterosexuality was taken as the norm in society, homosexuality was outlawed, repressed, silenced, and thus, to some degree, became invisible. Finally, the focus on male-female relationships was a response to parents who also forbade their sons from having pre-college romantic relationships with girls. As a result, the school's regulations were aimed at curbing students' sexual desires and preventing them from developing affairs with girls. Even after the school had started to admit female students, the authorities continued to segregate male and female students as much as possible, and to forbid students from developing love affairs with the opposite sex.

The film depicts dorm supervisors as the main enforcers of these rules. One of these supervisors, nicknamed Zangtou ("dirty head"), is portrayed as somewhat like a prison warden—furtively peeping into dormitory rooms and bathrooms, conducting surveillance, checking and searching the rooms and the students, and confiscating whatever he deems to be contraband. Barely five minutes into the film, Zangtou is shown performing his nightly patrol, checking the dorm rooms and students. As A-han and his dormmates stand military-style at attention, Zangtou lectures them about keeping the room sanitary, attending to personal hygiene, not hiding erotic materials or other contraband, etc., while threatening that he can still discipline them because martial law has not yet been lifted in the school. During his search of the room, he confiscates a cassette tape of pop songs. Zangtou also appropriates Christian rhetoric when performing military-style discipline. Claiming that God is also watching over the students, Zangtou seems to equate himself with God or to justify himself as carrying out tasks delegated by God. Presenting his gaslighting and disciplining of students as well-intended, he claims, "I'm doing this because I love you. I'm watching you at all times."

Ironically, Zangtou's intimidation and gaslighting have little impact on A-han's three dormmates. Though pretending to be obedient in front of Zangtou, they later take A-han along in an escape from the school to a ceme-

52 Ria Wolstenholme, "The Hidden Victims of Gaslighting."

er due to a  
 2  
 tholic high  
 regulations.  
 ns. Follow-  
 us authori-  
 he school,  
 forth. To  
 ere told to  
 exams—all  
 a respecta-  
 edule and  
 the dorm  
 bl. without

tors paid  
 ly sought  
 ds. There  
 ool, same-  
 and even  
 ociety, ho-  
 egree, be-  
 response  
 antic rela-  
 d at curb-  
 ng affairs  
 ents, the  
 ch as pos-  
 opposite

ese rules.  
 trayed as  
 ooms and  
 ooms and  
 d. Barely  
 ly patrol,  
 tes stand  
 he room  
 or other  
 because  
 h of the  
 ropriates  
 ing that  
 self with  
 esenting  
 ns, "I'm

ct on A-  
 front of  
 a ceme-

tery for assignments with girls. After using their band instruments to play, rather clumsily, the hymn "Amazing Grace," they—with the exception of A-han—waste no time in kissing and copulating with the girls. In addition to breaking the school's curfew and rules against messing around with girls, their sacrilegious act violates Christian restrictions. However, this "carnavalesque" situation—in a Bakhtinian sense—also seems to demonstrate that these gaslit students are by no means merely passive victims, but are capable of secretly subverting the rules, showing an extreme reaction to sexual repression, and conducting a surreptitious revolt against institutional gaslighting.

Nonetheless, in terms of power dynamics, Zangtou and the other disciplinary instructors represent the authorities that can wield power and inflict punishment on students. The school's curfew and restrictions on movement were intended to keep students from committing serious misconduct outside the school. Yet, while A-han and his dormmates somehow escape punishment, despite having egregiously violated the regulations, other students, including Birdy, who sneak out in the middle of the night merely to buy supper, are discovered, and severely disciplined by Zangtou. Thrashing Birdy hard with a stick in front of his fellow offenders, Zangtou scolds them, saying, "We're a Christian school, God is watching all of you, so you'd better behave yourself!" By applying undue force in punishing Birdy for such a minor "wrongdoing," Zangtou intimidates not only other offending students but also A-han, who happens to pass by. While using castigation, corporal punishment, and public shaming to teach them a lesson, Zangtou also appropriates Christian rhetoric to gaslight them. However, despite displaying outward submission under punishment, in his heart Birdy is not intimidated. In passive resistance to the brutal treatment, Birdy later steals snacks from Zangtou's office and urinates on his car in retaliation, thus demonstrating some agency in the form of "carnavalesque" subversion.

The school's gaslighting regarding boys' associations with girls as leading to exam failure is most forcefully declared in one scene. After the school starts to admit female students, some of the female students are chosen to join the band. During a band practice, a disciplinary instructor intrudes into the room and orders male and female students to sit apart. He explains to the band conductor Father Oliver, "Boys in puberty are all horny. What if they fail the college entrance exam?" Upon Oliver's protest, he says, "What God wants you to teach is love, not the love between boys and girls. This is a school rule." He even blames Oliver, saying, "Your way is gathering the students here and letting them mess around." It is at this moment that a female student, Ban-ban, courageously stands up to protest that the instructor makes the innocent sitting and learning together of male and female students in band practice seem so "filthy." Birdy also disingenuously queries the instructor, "Will separating us prevent us from messing around?" and "So long as we get into college, we don't need to know about normal social activities?" Birdy even facetiously requests, "So after we graduate, please split the world into two, and return [us] to the era of concentration camps." These protests, questions, and arguments offer reasonable counterarguments to the school's gaslighting. However, these words fall on the deaf ears of the instructor, who, furious at such open display of defiance, warns the two students to watch out.

Unfortunately, Birdy and Ban-ban later fall victim to the school authorities' regulation enforcement. Having become acquainted through the incident mentioned above, Birdy and Ban-ban gradually start a relationship.

Then, after the giant balloon incident, when it is discovered that Birdy was the one who stole and flew the balloon to send his love to Ban-ban, the authorities have both Birdy and Ban-ban severely punished for "disorderly conduct." Their misconduct is for carrying on an affair, even though they have not yet had any physical intimacy. An official announcement stating their receiving major demerits and punishments is posted, serving as public shaming of the two as well as a warning to all other students. However, while Birdy is the "culprit," he receives a lighter punishment than Ban-ban: Birdy gets detention, but Ban-ban gets expulsion, revealing the gender inequity of a patriarchal system. A boy was valued a great deal more than a girl, and his education and future career were taken far more seriously than hers. There might also be a stereotyping of women as likely seducers of men, even though in this case Birdy is the one who takes the initiative. At the same time, Birdy might have gotten preferential treatment because his father serves as the president of the Parents' Association and has a higher socio-economic status than Ban-ban's father. Finally, there is the possibility of retaliation: the instructor surely remembers Ban-ban as the rebellious student who started the "insurrection" against him in the band room. If the corporal punishment administered by Zangtou on the students who go outside the school to buy food is already unduly severe, the detention and expulsion of the students for carrying on an affair are even more excessive and inhumane.

The homophobic environment represented by the film can also be seen as resulting from systemic gaslighting aimed at perpetuating and normalizing a patriarchal and heteronormative reality. The Confucian cultural norms of filial piety require a son to obey and provide for his parents, bring honor to the family, marry, and provide a male heir to continue the family line. Homosexuality was perceived as antithetical and destructive to these cultural norms and traditional values, and an evil, abominable, and even contagious disease. A known homosexual might have been kicked out of his family, his community, and his workplace. For example, the protagonist A-qing in Pai Hsien-yung's novel *Niezi (Crystal Boys)* is expelled from school and driven out by his father due to his homosexual relations with a school employee. In 1987-89, homosexuality was still a taboo in Taiwan, and was still neither mentioned or recognized in law nor protected by law. Director Liu used the film, then, to show how homosexuals were pathologized, marginalized, and disenfranchised in the late 1980s.

When A-han and Birdy travel together to Taipei, under the pretext of mourning the death of President Chiang Ching-kuo, they see a protester on an overhead bridge in the busy Ximending shopping district, wearing a woman's white dress and shoes, smiling and nodding at the passers-by while holding a placard stating "Marriage is a human right. Homosexuality is not a disease." They find him "weird," and do not know what he is doing. Soon they see the police, both plainclothes and uniformed, arrest him and forcefully take him away. Here Director Liu re-enacts the historical scene of a protest by the activist Chi Chia-wei at that very spot decades ago. Chi's protest stood for resistance to the institutional "gaslighting" that pathologized and criminalized homosexuality. His sign reflected how, through long-term "gaslighting" and the spreading of disinformation, homosexuals were deprived of their human and civil rights, and how homosexuality came to be identified as a disease. In addition, his arrest exposed the then KMT authoritarian government's prohibition of freedom of expression and the right to demonstrate. The scene also reveals most spectators to be passive victims of such institu-

Birdy was  
n, the au-  
derly con-  
they have  
ting their  
blic sham-  
hile Birdy  
Birdy gets  
quity of a  
l, and his  
ers. There  
aen, even  
ame time,  
serves as  
economic  
ation: the  
o started  
nishment  
ol to buy  
idents for

o be seen  
ormalizing  
norms of  
honor to  
e. Homo-  
tal norms  
s disease.  
commu-  
ai Hsien-  
out by his  
1987-89,  
ioned or  
then, to  
d disen-

retext of  
tester on  
ng a wo-  
by while  
is not a  
g. Soon  
d force-  
of a pro-  
protest  
zed and  
rm "gas-  
rived of  
tified as  
govern-  
onstrate.  
institu-

tional "gaslighting." No one in the crowd shows any interest in or support for Chi's cause. Because Chi is soon arrested and isolated, he has no opportunity to talk with other people to enlighten or influence them. Upon seeing the police seize the peaceful protester, however, A-han is terrified, unlike other spectators who seem indifferent or used to seeing such arrests, and try to stay away from it. The only spectator who gets enraged and tries to save Chi is Birdy. He would have fought with the police and would have been arrested had A-han not restrained him. Their witnessing of the scene instills fear into their minds even as it reinforces the stigma and criminality associated with homosexuality.

Soon A-han experiences homophobic bias first-hand and has an intimation of trouble in his fondness for Birdy. In a dark room at a video-salon called Solar System, A-han, attracted by the sleeping Birdy, is bending down to try to kiss him. This is the first time for A-han to feel the impulse to kiss Birdy. However, a waiter, who happens to be peeping outside the door, intrudes, saying he needs to clean the table. He asks A-han what he was doing, warning A-han, "You're not allowed to mess around here!" Surprised at being discovered, an intimidated A-han obediently says ok. The waiter's initial surveillance may have been prompted by the fact that both A-han and Birdy are underage students in uniform—and therefore presumably in need of adult supervision and control. The end result, though, is that A-han's instinctual expression of love for Birdy is placed under suspicion and stigma because of the homophobic mentality caused by institutional "gaslighting."

The film makes no mention of school authorities punishing homosexual students. However, it does portray incidents of peer bullying and harassment. The agents of the most direct, graphic, and violent homophobic conduct in the film are A-han's three dormmates. Their conversations indicate that, due to systemic gaslighting, they have passively internalized homophobic bias. Seemingly mimicking the disciplinary instructors, they take actions to vilify, bully, and harm homosexual students in their school. They also gaslight their good friend A-han—possibly out of good intentions—in an attempt to make him homophobic like themselves. On one occasion, they interrogate and torture Shoushou (a younger schoolmate who exhibits gay behavior) in the bathroom, calling him "a virus," as if they fear being contaminated. They even urge A-han to join them in beating up Shoushou, warning A-han if he does not hit Shoushou, "he (Shoushou) will only do something worse—he'll force us to be gay too." At other times, when they see A-han associating with Birdy (whom they believe to be homosexual), they repeatedly advise A-han to stay away from Birdy. Later, to "protect" A-han from Birdy's "bad" influence, they curse and beat up Birdy to force him to leave A-han alone.

When watching the movie, viewers may sympathize with A-han and Birdy for their suffering, while regarding the disciplinary instructors (including Zangtou), Birdy's father, and even A-han's three dormmates as the oppressors and victimizers. However, Producer Chu Yu-Ning actually says in an interview that the disciplinary instructors in the movie are the most pitiable: they sincerely believe in and adhere to (*fuying*) the disciplinary policies and regulations and (in implementing them dutifully) thereby harm others.<sup>53</sup> Although the instructors should by no means be equated with the Nazi officers

53 See the interview of the two actors and the producer Chu Yu-Ning in "2020 chulian dianying *Kezai ni xindi de mingzì zhuyan lailai!*" [The stars of the 2020 first-love movie *Your Name Engraved Herein* have arrived!], *An An Great Movie Stars* [An An damingxing], September 29, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=smd7x9tLC3c>.

who committed crimes against the humanity, we can see a faint parallel between Chu's characterization of the disciplinary instructors and Hannah Arendt's characterization of Adolf Eichmann, one of the German Nazi leaders responsible for the Holocaust. While agreeing that Eichmann should be executed for his heinous crime, Arendt argues that instead of being an evil "abnormal monster," Eichmann was merely an ordinary, normal person "with an inability to *think*, namely, to think from the standpoint of somebody else," who greatly admired Hitler and followed and acted upon the Führer's orders with "blind obedience."<sup>54</sup> Similarly, the instructors in the movie are ordinary, normal persons "with an inability to *think*" from the students' standpoint. As victims of systemic gaslighting, they obey orders blindly and execute regulations dutifully without reflecting on whether the regulations make sense or whether the severity of punishment is appropriate to the degree of the misdemeanor. Nonetheless, Director Liu and Producer Chu express some empathy in depicting the instructor who orders the male and female students in the band room to abide by segregation rules. This instructor shows some redeeming quality when he tries to stop Birdy's furious father from hitting him.

To a certain extent, Birdy's father, like many fathers of his generation, is also a victim of systemic gaslighting. His long-term disappointment with his only son Birdy's disobedience and poor academic performance reaches the apex when he hears of Birdy's misdemeanor and his punishment by detention. However, that he still loves and protects Birdy is implied in the fact that he does not drive Birdy out of the house, despite having cursed and hit Birdy so violently at school.

A-han's three dormmates can also be seen as banal victims of systemic gaslighting, making them incapable of reflecting on whether the homophobic prejudices they have learned are reasonable or whether it is humane for them to bully their homosexual schoolmates. Producer Chu, on the other hand, serves as a real-life contrast to A-han's three dormmates. When he discovered his schoolmate Liu from the 1980s to be a homosexual, Chu set a good example in courageously refusing to go along with prevalent homophobic gaslighting to condemn and isolate Liu. Instead of blindly following public opinion, Chu relied on his cognitive and instinctual senses, exercised his ability to "think from the standpoint of somebody else," and made his own judgment.

#### CHALLENGING NEGATIVE STEREOTYPING AND ENCOURAGING EMPATHY

The film *Your Name Engraved Herein* is refreshing in that it challenges stereotyping in several different aspects. In an interview (September 24, 2020), Chu said, "We felt that an honest representation is better than accusation. An honest representation can let people understand how difficult the situation was for homosexuals."<sup>55</sup> Exactly because Liu and Chu insisted on "an honest representation" and focused on some individual, semi-authentic cases, the film manages to avoid excessively biased stereotyping and resists overly narrow ideological interpretations. Thus, it eschews a simplistic black-and-white portrayal; it does not present the disciplinary instructors as evil victimizers or the students as utter victims.

54 Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 49, 135, 149, 276.

55 "POP zuizhengdian."

at parallel be-  
d Hannah Ar-  
Nazi leaders  
ould be exe-  
g an evil "ab-  
erson "with an  
nebody else,"  
hrer's orders  
are ordinary,  
andpoint. As  
ecute regula-  
ake sense or  
of the misde-  
me empathy  
idents in the  
ome redeem-  
ing him.

eneration, is  
ent with his  
reaches the  
nt by deten-  
the fact that  
nd hit Birdy

of systemic  
eather the  
hether it is  
er Chu, on  
ormmates.  
omosexual,  
a prevalent  
blindly fol-  
ual senses,  
else," and

#### EMPATHY

enges ster-  
24, 2020),  
sation. An  
situation  
an honest  
cases, the  
verly nar-  
and-white  
mizers or

York: Pen-

By avoiding accusations, Liu and Chu in fact made the film more inclusive of diverse audiences—including likely opponents to same-sex marriage. Thus, the film does not accuse Christianity of causing all the pain it portrays. Likewise, the film does not lay all the blame on the martial law period under the KMT government. Instead, even as politics is currently very polarized in Taiwan, the film appears to de-escalate this political polarization by eschewing political and ideological stereotyping while emphasizing universal humanity and the pursuit of love and happiness.

An example of this approach is the film's treatment of ethnic tensions between *waishengren* (mainlanders; the Chinese who arrived in Taiwan after 1945, especially those who retreated to Taiwan after 1949) and *benshengren* (ethnic Chinese people who migrated to Taiwan in the generations before 1945). Rather than emphasizing conflict, the film tries to reflect some of the diversity and relatively peaceful co-existence of different ethnicities in Taiwan. A-han's father is a *waishengren* and a KMT officer who speaks standard Mandarin, while his mother is a *benshengren* who speaks Taiwanese or heavily Taiwanese-accented Mandarin. Two disciplinary instructors at A-han's high school speak Taiwanese-accented Mandarin or some Taiwanese, while the judges (in military uniforms) at military song contest are *waishengren* and speak standard Mandarin. The younger generation, whether descendants from *bensheng*, *waisheng*, or mixed *waisheng-bensheng* families, appear to speak Taiwanese-accented Mandarin, with an occasional English word or two inserted in some of their sentences. Taking the point of inclusiveness even further, the film also features the French-speaking Canadian priest Father Oliver, who speaks heavily French-accented Mandarin most of the time, with some occasional sentences in English or in French.

In the end, the film generally encourages empathy by presenting a moving story with two sensitive, well-meaning, and very likable protagonists. Debunking negative stereotyping of homosexuals, it normalizes the two gay lovers, A-han and Birdy, showing them to be ordinary, relatively innocent high school students with normal appearances and behaviors, who are physically and mentally fit—a far cry from the oft-portrayed stereotype of homosexuals as mentally ill, abnormal, depraved, or wicked. In fact, it goes further in presenting A-han and Birdy as possessing integrity, kindness, a sense of justice, as well as some musical or artistic talents. Additionally, the emphasis on sincere and pure love between A-han and Birdy constructs a powerful positive narrative against the stigmatized impression of gay love as casual, promiscuous, and dirty received by the gaslit public thirty years ago.

The film is also a Bildungsroman or a "coming-of-age" film. The film portrays primarily the growth and transformations of A-han and Birdy, but also to a lesser extent, the changes of Ban-ban and Father Oliver. All four have received some forms of homophobic gaslighting when growing up, but later in life they awaken to the truth and reject the gaslighting.

The film's main attention is on the process by which A-han grows more aware of his own sexual orientation and identity, and eventually comes to terms with it. Early on, A-han denies he is a homosexual to an old man in a park who makes sexual advances toward him, his reaction to the suggestion of a casual sexual encounter perhaps drawing on his learned understanding of homosexuality as a dirty disease. In contrast, he may also feel that his exclusive love for Birdy is pure, not about sex, and so should not be counted as homosexual. However, A-han's perception changes along with the complex ups and downs in his relationship with Birdy. Despite Birdy's rejection, A-han

continues to love and protect Birdy, even at the risk of his own safety. When debating with Father Oliver about the sinfulness of his love, A-han in desperation even expresses his willingness to go to hell. During an argument with Birdy, A-han decides to declare his love for Birdy and come out in front of his parents—and it is only Birdy's intervention that stops him from taking this course.

Whereas A-han finally becomes ready to reject the gaslighting and come out due to his intense love for Birdy, Birdy reacts differently. The relatively willful and disobedient Birdy outwardly continues to exhibit his rebelliousness, but secretly, perhaps due to his love and consideration for A-han, seems to exercise some inward self-inhibition to suppress his homosexual desire. For fear of jeopardizing his and A-han's futures, Birdy seems willing to engage in self-gaslighting and chooses to conform to conventional norms and to accept homosexuality as a behavioral aberration that can be corrected. To that end, he tries to fool himself into thinking that he is in love with Ban-ban, not with A-han; he also seeks to correct A-han's "abnormality" by trying to get A-han interested in having a girlfriend.

Ban-ban is another victim of gaslighting in her belief that she can cure Birdy of his homosexual orientation. Out of love for Birdy, she persists in making efforts to "correct" him through her marriage and by having a daughter with him. Yet all to no avail. Her loveless marriage ends in a divorce. Ban-ban says bitterly, "I only understood later on. Liking a guy is innate (endowed by nature). If I had known, I wouldn't have tried so hard. It has ruined my life, and his." Only after all her efforts have failed does she realize that Birdy's homosexuality is biological, congenital, and cannot be corrected.

The movie thus reveals how succumbing to society's homophobic gaslighting and pressure can have harmful effects. Birdy suppresses his desire and devises a scheme to save both A-han and himself from ruin. Though originally conceived without any ill intention to harm Ban-ban, this scheme—having a sham marriage and pretending to be a heterosexual—turns out to be unethical and unfair to Ban-ban and paradoxically makes all three unhappy. The film thus challenges the ill-advised pressure often placed on gay men to receive treatment to become heterosexual, while also showing how a traditional marriage based on false pretenses, such as that between Birdy and Ban-ban, can undermine traditional values and individual happiness.

Father Oliver plays an ambivalent role in gaslighting. On the one hand, he opposes the disciplinary instructors' gaslighting regarding how boys' associations with girls would lead to exam failure. In fact, he repeatedly encourages the band boys to "profiter du moment" ("live in the moment") and to experience love: "It's beautiful to fall in love at your age." On the other hand, as a Catholic priest and a gaslit victim himself, he dutifully warns the students against committing sins—including lust and homosexuality—and gaslights A-han with the admonition that homosexuals will go to hell.

Yet, Father Oliver's advice also shows empathy and brings a transnational perspective to his mentoring based on his personal experience. He tells A-han that when he was eighteen, he was also a rebel and was beaten up by his church's priests every day. After he finally left Montreal, though, his hometown changed:

In 1960, the Quiet Revolution happened in Montreal. Society broke free from the Church. People could finally follow their hearts and choose for themselves. I missed the revolution in Montreal, but I encountered your revolution here.

In saying “your revolution here,” Oliver is referring to Taiwan’s lifting of martial law in 1987 and the resulting gradual relaxing of social and political restrictions. He is, of course, not referring to the gay and lesbian movement in Taiwan, which did not begin to develop until the 1990s. But the point he makes would ironically be equally relevant to A-han’s struggle with homosexuality, even as Father Oliver warns him against following his heart in this direction. While Father Oliver—whom A-han discovers thirty years later to be a homosexual—“missed the revolution in Montreal” because he was working in Taiwan, A-han and Birdy could not “follow their hearts and choose for themselves” because the LGBTQ revolution in Taiwan also came too late for them.

The film concludes with a note of hope when it reveals that Father Oliver spent the last two years of his life with his partner in Canada, and when it shows the two middle-aged protagonists conversing with each other freely in gay-friendly Québec City, and even witnessing a magical-realistic, wish-fulfilling vision of their younger selves playing together happily and loving each other without inhibition. Thus, this coming-of-age film not only delineates the growth, struggles, and changes of the protagonists but also indirectly records the development and transformation of Taiwan from homophobia to a more liberal and open-minded society.

#### CONCLUSION

Taiwan has developed into perhaps the most liberal country in Asia in the recent two decades in its stand on LGBTQ rights. It was the first Asian country, in May 2019, to legalize same-sex marriage. By contrast, in the People’s Republic of China, LGBTQ people still suffer from discrimination and have hardly any legal protection, let alone the right to marriage equality. The victory of Taiwan’s progressive legalization of same-sex marriage should not be taken for granted, however, as the still-existing gap between public opinion and the legislation remains to be bridged. It is at this juncture that Liu Kuang-hui’s movie *Your Name Engraved Herein* can play a crucial role. The film’s theme of first love resonates with a wide audience, from young to old, while its nuanced representation of two young students’ ardent love being thwarted by a homophobic environment inspires sympathy. Liu’s film enables the audience to re-visit the historical past—specifically the late 1980s when martial law was lifted yet societal restrictions and conservative traditionalism still ruled—as a context for understanding the young gay lovers’ challenges and suffering. The conclusion of the film then takes the audience back to the present-day, much more liberal Taiwan, thereby permitting them to appreciate the tremendous progress Taiwan has made but also to empathize with older-generation homosexuals who missed out on the love and happiness they could have enjoyed.

Both Director Liu and Producer Chu use the film, which reflects their own experiences, and their appearances in talk shows to advocate for tolerance and inclusiveness for non-conventional love, and in hope of raising further public support for LGBTQ rights. In one interview they indicated that the film had received many enthusiastic and positive responses as well as some negative criticism. Welcoming debates from the opposition, Chu said,



After all, it's a pluralistic society. . . Truth will become clearer after debates. . . What we want to express is that love should not be labeled and should be freer. As long as you are sincere and true, I feel that [your love] will not harm others.<sup>56</sup>

While focusing on the localized repressive environment in Taiwan in the late 1980s, the film conveys a message of empathy and inclusiveness that is not limited to the Taiwan audience but is also applicable to a global audience. Clearly, Liu intended for the film to support and encourage LGBTQ communities in countries that still discriminate against them. Liu expressed the hope that "LGBTQ communities in other parts of Asia" can see the film, because it tells them, "You are allowed to love, you are not guilty."<sup>57</sup> In indicating Taiwan's peaceful transformation from a homophobic society into a far more open-minded society, the film may indirectly inspire the audience in some countries with strong anti-LGBTQ public opinion to change their attitudes, become more empathetic, and help promote equal rights for LGBTQ people.

56 "Kezai ni xindi de mingzi" [Your Name Engraved Herein], in "2020 Jinnma huikeshi" [2020 Golden Horse Meeting Room], October 13, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JHMJTbGinow>.

57 Kat Moon, "The Real Events."

Pu  
The

This a  
and w  
lar de  
broad  
growt  
1911  
ment  
expre  
men  
ment  
ture t  
force  
takin  
biliza  
veter  
derm  
posex  
disba  
their  
invol  
videc  
exar  
insig  
the g  
Rept

#### Keyword

\* Edi  
ott School  
cused on t  
China. His  
(1993) an  
wishes to  
article.