

Ms Fermi WONG Wai-fun

Ms Fermi Wong could be hailed as a pioneer in the fight for social justice for ethnic minorities in Hong Kong. Over the past 16 years, she worked from morning till night, financing her projects out of her own pocket. The ceaseless accusations heard at the beginning gradually turned into recognition by the public, and even brought her the Hong Kong Humanity Award. More importantly, her hard work has finally achieved some initial success in her fight for the ethnic minorities.

Ms Wong came to Hong Kong from Fujian Province at the age of 11 and lived with her family in a squatter area. Her father and three out of his five children have mild intellectual disability. Fortunately, Ms Wong and one of her elder sisters are intellectually normal and Ms Wong was admitted to the social work programme at the City University of Hong Kong. Living with family members with intellectual disability, Ms Wong experienced poignantly the importance of enlightenment through education. It is not about attaining a qualifications certificate, but the capability to tell right from wrong, beauty from ugliness. She strongly believes that education will facilitate self-determination, the ability to instill meaning into one's own life and lead a fulfilling life by contributing to society. Such conviction has driven her to persist in fighting for the rights of ethnic minorities, in particular their education.

Working with heart and soul for 16 years, Ms Wong said humbly that her work was progress from zero to one in three aspects. First, she succeeded in urging the Legislative Council to pass the Race Discrimination Bill in 2008. Second, she helped change the central allocation policy for primary one and secondary one places, so that ethnic minority students in principle enjoy the same opportunities as Chinese students. In addition, she also succeeded in urging the government to recognise that Chinese is not the mother tongue of ethnic minority students and to provide a "Chinese Language Curriculum Second Language Learning Framework" with supporting materials to help non-Chinese speaking students learn Chinese effectively. Third, she succeeded in reflecting the difficulties and injustice faced by ethnic minorities, especially those from South Asia. As a result, they are no longer individuals ignored by society, but a group whose hardships have become an issue of public concern.

To Ms Wong, the most exhausting work is fighting for changes in government policy. During the process, she experienced intensely the apathy of the system and some of the policy makers. With the above hard-earned achievements, she has at least succeeded in establishing a framework for her successors. She is optimistic about future development work because after all these years, we gradually "see" the ethnic minorities and recognise them as part of our society. What touched her heart profoundly is how much Chinese people care about the education of the young generation, regardless of their race. One day she got into a taxi. When the driver learned that she was the one who stirred up the whole issue of the rights of ethnic minorities, he not only scolded her but also denounced them for taking the jobs of Hong Kong people... Yet when Ms Wong told the driver about the plight of their children who had little opportunity to study at school, the driver responded in all seriousness: "No! They must go to school!"

In the past, Ms Wong had felt dejected after repeating her request letters to the government year after year. Feeling guilty about failing her service targets, she had thought about giving up altogether, and letting a more capable person carry on her unfinished mission. Yet witnessing the progress made by ethnic minorities over the years, she eventually decided to stay. There are young people who initially considered themselves hopeless, yet recently told her enthusiastically: “Hong Kong is my home. I want to contribute to Hong Kong!” Seeing how they work under difficult conditions, Ms Wong determined not to give up her mission. Besides, she has received support and encouragement from members of the public, volunteers, teachers and some government officials who share her view that education is important to ethnic minorities, and thus render assistance through different channels. Even the delegates she met while lobbying at the United Nations donated money to Hong Kong Unison to support her team’s work. All these have fueled her determination to continue the mission.

At the end of 2013, Ms Wong stepped down as leader of Hong Kong Unison, in order to let her successor further develop the organisation’s work, and to allow her exhausted heart and soul to rest. As a Christian, she hopes there will be more people “to act justly and to love mercy” (Bible: Micah 6:8). Hong Kong’s uniqueness lies in its diversity and international vision, and Ms Wong believes that Hong Kong could only maintain its status as a metropolitan city if we could have the broad-mindedness to accept people of different races and a willingness to embrace different cultures. This is particularly relevant to university students in Hong Kong. Besides knowing the biblical teaching, they have to put it into action: to care for society and to fight for justice, democracy and freedom. This is her expectation of university students.

Even though Ms Wong has left the organisation she founded single-handedly, her care for the ethnic minorities never ceases. Not long ago, a 12-year-old Nepalese boy asked her tearfully why people scolded him and was it only because he was Nepalese? Ms Wong asked the crying child to remember this firmly: skin colour and race have nothing to do with one’s worth and dignity.

Mr Chairman, for her distinguished contribution to the ethnic minorities in Hong Kong and the fighting for social justice, may I now present Ms Fermi Wong to you for conferment of an honorary fellowship.

Chinese citation delivered by Prof Lisa Leung

王惠芬女士

談到為香港的少數族裔人士爭取社會公義，王惠芬女士堪稱先鋒。十六年來，她夙興夜寐，事事上心，出錢出力，由最初面對罵聲不絕到今天逐漸得到大眾認同，甚至獲頒「香港人道年獎」。更重要的是，她的努力終於為少數族裔人士爭取到初步成果。

王女士十一歲從福建來港，居於木屋區。父親有輕度智障，五個子女中三個亦為輕度智障人士，猶幸王女士與二姐智力正常，她本人更考上香港城市大學社工系。與有智障的家庭成員相處，令王女士深深體會到教育啟蒙的重要性；這並非指一紙學歷證書，而是判斷是非美醜的能力。她深信教育讓人自主，為自己的人生賦予意義，為社會作出貢獻，如此生命便能圓滿。就是這份信念，驅使她堅持為少數族裔人士爭取權益，尤其是教育方面。

十六年的心血成果，王女士謙稱是由零分到一分的進展，主要為三方面。其一是爭取到2008年立法會通過《種族歧視條例草案》。其二是在教育政策上改變了小一和中一的派位制度，讓少數族裔學生原則上和華裔學生享有同等的派位機會；以及爭取到政府承認中文不是少數族裔學生的母語，並提供「中國語文課程第二語言學習架構」和支援教學材料，幫助非華語學生有效學習中文。其三是在社會上反映少數族裔居民，特別是南亞裔人士生活上所面對的困難和不公義，把他們由無人關心的個體變成被關注的群體。

對王女士來說，最耗心力的是爭取政策制度的改變；過程中讓她深切感受到制度以及部分政策制定者的冷漠。上述得來不易的成果，總算為後繼者建立起框架來。對於他們進一步的推展工作，她是樂觀的，原因是經過這些年來，大家已逐漸「看見」這群少數族裔人士了，也承認他們是香港社會的一份子。當中深深觸動王女士的，是華人社會對下一代教育的重視，而這份關懷更是跨種族的。她這番體會，來自某次乘計程車時，無意中給司機知道了她就是為少數族裔人士爭取權益的「始作俑者」，除了責罵她外，更痛罵這些人跟香港人「爭飯碗」……然而當王女士告訴他這些人的孩子失學的情況時，司機卻義正詞嚴的說：「唔得！一定要返學！」

王女士過往曾因為年復年向政府寫著相同內容的陳情書而氣餒，也因為未能向服務對象有所交待而想過中途放棄，好讓有能者完成未竟的使命。但她最終還是留下來，因為眼見少數族裔人士不斷進步，有年青人最初認定自己沒有希望，最近卻熱切地對她說：「香港是我的家，我想貢獻香港！」看到他們在艱難的條件下奮鬥，王女士更不能放棄使命。何況社會大眾、義工、教師，還有一些政府官員也認同教育對少數族裔人士的重要性而透過不同渠道幫助她；連到聯合國進行相關遊說工作時認識的外國代表團，回國後也捐款到香港融樂會支持他們的工作。這一切，都推動她堅持下去。

2013年底，王女士卸任了，好讓接班人繼續推展香港融樂會的工作，也讓自己疲憊的身心休息。身為基督徒，她希望有更多人「行公義，好憐憫」（聖經彌迦書六章八節）。王女士認為，香港的獨特性正在於有多元化的社會和國際視野；要保持國際大都會的地位，便要有接納不同種族人士的胸襟，願意接觸不同的文化。這點對香港的大學生尤其適切：他們不單要有「行公義，好憐憫」的認知，更要有相關的行動關懷社會，爭取公義、民主、自由。這是她對大學生的期望。

即使離開了自己獨力創立的香港融樂會，王女士對少數族裔人士的關懷從未止息過。一次，一個十二歲的尼泊爾孩子哭著問她：為甚麼他會給人責罵？就因為他是尼泊爾人嗎？王女士要流著淚的孩子牢牢記住：膚色和種族跟人的價值和尊嚴，毫不相關。

主席先生，為表揚王女士對香港少數族裔人士以及爭取社會公義所作出的貢獻，本人謹恭請閣下頒授榮譽院士銜予王惠芬女士。

中文贊辭由梁旭明教授宣讀