

**Statement By Derek Wong,  
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Open Forum on Human Rights in China  
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Thank you for the opportunity to speak at this open forum. My name is Derek Wong, and I am a student at the University of Pennsylvania. I speak today not as an expert on China or U.S.-China relations, but as a Chinese-American who has had first-hand experience with the Chinese educational system. The purpose of my presentation is to advocate further educational and academic exchanges between the two countries, and to discuss the ways in which these exchanges can contribute to the promotion of human rights and the rule of law in China.

During the fall of 2001, I studied for a semester at the prestigious Tsinghua University in Beijing. My program was unique in that I was able to enroll in classes with Chinese students, as opposed to the majority of study-abroad programs in China, which limit foreign students to language classes and "island programs," often taught in English. While I took a variety of humanities courses in history, international relations, law, and moral ideologies, the underlying premise of Marxism was evident throughout each of the courses, although in varying degree.

What soon became apparent to me was the lack of understanding some Chinese students and professors have of the United States. To be fair, the same could be said of their American counterparts. Some of my Chinese professors had studied or taught in the United States, and it was evident in their teaching. Other professors lectured with an obvious bias against the U.S. and Western society in general-it was clear that they had little, and many times an incorrect, understanding of our country.

In an informal poll I conducted of students at three top universities in Beijing, the majority of respondents said they based their opinions of the United States primarily on reports from the Chinese news media. Most of the students admired American affluence and lifestyle, and indicated that given the opportunity they would want to study in the U.S. Yet they were also highly critical of President George W. Bush and his policies toward China and Taiwan, accusing the U.S. government of being hegemonic and overly aggressive in its foreign policy.

This dualistic attitude was illustrated in the Chinese reaction to the events of September 11<sup>th</sup>. Immediately after the attacks, there was an air of shock, as well as regret for those who died in Washington and New York, some of whom were Chinese citizens. Chinese President Jiang Zemin was one of the first world leaders to offer his condolences and condemn the terrorist attacks. Yet in the days and weeks that followed, each action by the Bush administration was criticized by my professors and fellow classmates-not to mention the media-as a subtle mistrust of the United States became evident. During one lecture, a number of students applauded as a photograph was shown of a plane crashing into one of the twin towers. I was stunned as I realized that the sentiment among some students was that the U.S. got what it deserved.

With China's accession to the World Trade Organization, change is on the horizon. Use of the English language in all parts of society is becoming increasingly important. Additionally, Beijingers are eager to learn simple English phrases in anticipation of the 2008 Summer Olympic Games. Students at top universities in China are required to study English or another foreign language, a requirement which is spreading to secondary, and even some primary schools. Many wealthier Chinese families hire English tutors for their children, or enroll them in language learning centers.

The increasing globalization of China presents a golden opportunity for the United States to play an active part in promoting human rights and the rule of law in China. Many Americans possess skills and expertise in law, language training, and other areas that are in high demand in China. When Chinese students and academics come into contact with their American counterparts, there is an exchange of information, ideas, and beliefs. The result of these exchanges was evident by listening to the varying lectures of Chinese Professors who had lived in the United States compared to those who had not. During my semester in China, I had a number of candid discussions with classmates about Sino-American relations and so-called "Western values." These conversations were mutually beneficial in helping us gain an understanding of each other's culture. I got the sense that some of my classmates did not give into the Marxist ideals that are the basis for education in China, and had an interest in learning about other ideologies, including Western systems of democracy.

Several faith-based organizations are already taking advantage of China's need for English language instructors. Although they do not use religious or political materials in their classrooms, the personal relationships they forge with students are every bit as effective in promoting values we as Americans hold dear. While U.S. embassies and consulates in China issue thousands of student visas each year, many more are turned down for various reasons. Clearly we cannot accept all Chinese students who wish to study in the United States, but we can bring American education to China, and with it, our understanding of human rights, liberties, and freedoms. One such example is the Hopkins-Nanjing Center for Chinese American Studies, which is jointly administered by Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies and Nanjing University. It offers classes in Chinese for international students, and in English for Chinese students in a variety of social sciences, such as history, economics and Sino-American relations. Additionally, American students are typically paired with a Chinese roommate, allowing for daily exchange of ideas and opinions between these students.

The U.S. can also help advance the rule of law in China by contributing to WTO-related legal training. Christian Murck of the American Chamber of Commerce in China testified before this Commission earlier in the year, and said, "the American government, though it takes an active public role of advocating improvements in the rule of law in China, has been conspicuous by its absence." He called our government's record "meager...compared with that of the European Union, individual European countries and American private sector donors." Increased assistance on our part would also be seen as a sign that the U.S. welcomes China's increased role in the international community.

We need to send more students, teachers, academics, and legal experts to China if we are to understand the complexity of its culture, as well as the implications for future bilateral ties. A dramatic increase in the availability of federally funded programs or grants would certainly provide additional incentive for such exchanges. I urge this Commission to promote programs that encourage academic interaction between the United States and China, not only for the benefit of the 1.3 billion people in China, but also for students like me, who aspire to be shapers of Sino-American relations.