

Appeal for a worldwide reading on March 20th 2012 for Liu Xiaobo. He will be released in June 2020.

The international literature festival Berlin (ilb) calls on cultural institutions, schools, radio stations and interested parties to participate in a worldwide reading of prose and poems by the Chinese author and 2010 Nobel Peace prize laureate Liu Xiaobo on March 20th 2012.

Three years ago, Liu was taken from his Beijing home and arrested. He waited more than 12 months to receive a formal sentence - 11 years of imprisonment for "inciting subversion of state power." After the announcement of Liu's receipt of the Nobel Peace Prize last year, the Chinese authorities put his wife, Liu Xia, a poet and photographer, under strict house arrest. She vanished from the private and public sphere on October 18, 2010, and to this day no one can reach her, either through phone, cell or internet.

Liu Xiaobo was imprisoned three times before his last arrest in 2008. While serving his three years of "Reeducation through labor" between 1996 and 1999, he wrote many poems in prison, all dedicated to his wife Liu Xia. As a young man, Liu devoured books on western and Chinese philosophy and literature, and this experience is strongly reflected in his lyrical writing. From Confucius to Kant, from Sima Qian to Van Gogh or Jesus, for young Liu Xiaobo, knowledge had no borders. As a prolific writer, his writing has influenced generations of young people in China since the 1980s. When his articles and books were banned and censored in mainland China, he began submitting his writings to overseas Chinese websites. His books have been published in Hong Kong, Taiwan and the USA. Liu's explosive and lyrical style, marked by its razor sharp criticisms and pervasive irony, has cooled down in recent years and transformed into more thoughtful and objective prose. He changed his role from an agitated activist to an observer and analyst.

Mimicking the form of Czechoslovakia's Charter 77, Liu Xiaobo and his Chinese colleagues selected a rational and peaceful way to express their concern for China's future development through their own manifesto, Charter 08. Freedom, equality, justice and human rights are universal values, standard in a modern society, and not inconsistent with the official rhetoric of the Chinese government, which touts China's rule of law. Both within the Chinese Constitution and within the international treaties the Chinese government has signed, there is a guarantee of the freedoms of expression, assembly and publication. Thus, the accusation that Liu was "inciting subversion of state power" is a joke and a slap to China's own face.

In fact, the more than 800 articles authored by Liu in the past ten years indicate exactly the opposite. In his book, *Civil Awakening, The Dawn of a Free China*, published in 2005, Liu explained that the reform in China is bottom-up and not top-down; that is, it does not start with the government, but rather, the real momentum of reform is generated by civil society, among the people at the grassroots level. The constant confrontation between common citizens, peasants, workers and official forces has awakened the consciousness of the Chinese people, so that they now are aware of their basic rights. As Liu said: "The slow but progressive process of changes cannot be achieved through radical demands of the government to remodel the whole society. The present tendency is that the self-generated changes in the society will slowly push the regime to move toward change."

Liu Xiaobo is not only a fighter for democracy and freedom of expression, but also a humble humanist. That's why the Chinese regime cannot tolerate him, because he does not only demand reform and a democratic future for China, he also demands a re-examination of Chinese history and an end to China's one party dictatorship. He truly touches on the root of the problem, which is why the CCP is afraid of him and prefers to keep this agitator behind bars.

The goal of the worldwide reading is to share Liu Xiaobo's works with a broader readership, to remind the world that a humanist, a freedom fighter, an

outstanding writer and Nobel Peace Prize winner is still in a Chinese prison and to express the protest against it.

The international literature festival Berlin called for a worldwide reading on March 20th 2012, with a reading of Liu Xiaobo's Prose and lyrics. As many as 100 institutions, including radio and television stations, either participated in or reported on the worldwide readings across all continents.

The texts intended to be read on this worldwide reading are available in Chinese, Japanese, Korean, English, French, German, Italian and Spanish. Institutions and persons who would like to participate in the reading are asked to inform us of their wish to be involved. The email address is:
worldwidereading@literaturfestival.com