



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on October 14, 2010

Chinese “Dissident” Receives Nobel Peace Prize for Supporting US Constitutional Principles

Liu Xiaobo, co-author of “Charter 08,” was arrested two days before that freedom manifesto was published on December 10, 2008, and was finally sentenced on Christmas Day 2009 to 11 years in prison for “inciting subversion of state power.” Late last week he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his trouble.



Nobel committee chairman Thorbjorn Jagland made the official announcement:

The Norwegian Nobel Committee has decided to award the Nobel Peace Prize for 2010 to Liu Xiaobo for his long and nonviolent struggle for fundamental human rights in China. The Norwegian Nobel Committee has long believed that there is a close connection between human rights and peace. Such rights are a prerequisite for the ‘fraternity of nations’ of which Alfred Nobel wrote in his will....

The campaign to establish universal human rights also in China is being waged by many Chinese, both in China itself and abroad. Through the severe punishment meted out to him, Liu has become the foremost symbol of this wide-ranging struggle for human rights in China.

Obvious comparisons to the same committee’s selection last year of President Obama for the prize abound here and [here](#), but what is most remarkable about the matter is the uncanny similarity of the political principles espoused by Liu and his co-authors in “Charter 08” to those enumerated in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States.

To begin, many of the original signers of “Charter 08” were prominent citizens both in and outside the government, including lawyers and government officials as well as business owners, scholars, and literary critics, each of whom knew he faced risk of arrest, internment, and possible execution for his efforts. Many, including Liu, had already been involved in previous struggles to challenge the government, and yet remained steadfast in the cause of freedom.

The document directly challenges the authority of the Chinese government’s policies on human rights, calling “for an end to some of its essential features, including one-party rule, and their replacement with a system based on human rights and democracy.”

The preamble to “Charter 08” states that “the Chinese people, who have endured human rights disasters and uncountable struggles across [the] years, now include many who see clearly that freedom, equality, and human rights are universal values of humankind and that democracy and constitutional



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government are the fundamental framework for protecting these values." It continues:

By departing from these values, the Chinese government's approach to "modernization" has proven disastrous. It has stripped people of their rights, destroyed their dignity, and corrupted normal human intercourse....

The political reality ... is that China has many laws but no rule of law; it has a constitution but no constitutional government. The ruling elite continues to cling to its authoritarian power and fights off any move toward political change....

The stultifying results are endemic official corruption, an undermining of the rule of law, weak human rights, decay in public ethics...and the exacerbation of a long list of social conflicts....

As these conflicts and crises grow ever more intense, as the ruling elite continues with impunity to crush and strip away the rights of citizens to freedom, to property, and to *the pursuit of happiness*, we see the powerless in our society ... becoming more militant and raising the possibility of a violent conflict of disastrous proportions. [Emphasis added.] The decline of the current system has reached the point where change is no longer optional.

In the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson, one of the most highly regarded "dissidents" of the time, wrote,

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness — That to secure these Rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just Powers from the Consent of the Governed.

From "Charter 08":

Human rights are not bestowed by a state. Every person is born with inherent rights to dignity and freedom. The government exists for the protection of the human rights of its citizens. The exercise of state power must be authorized by the people.

From the Declaration:

That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these Ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its Foundation on such Principles, and organizing such Powers in such Form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.

From "Charter 08":

Constitutional rule is rule through a legal system and legal principles to implement principles that are spelled out in a constitution. It means protecting the freedom and rights of citizens, limited and defining the scope of legitimate government power.

From the Declaration:

Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes.

From "Charter 08":

We should construct a modern government in which the separation of legislative, judicial, and executive power is guaranteed.... Division of power between provincial governments and the



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central government should adhere to the principle that central powers are only those specifically granted by the constitution and all other powers belong to the local governments.

From the Constitution, Article I, Section 1:

All legislative Powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States.

From the Constitution, Article II, Section 1:

The executive Power shall be vested in a President of the United States of America.

From the Constitution, Article III, Section 1:

The judicial Power of the United States shall be vested in one supreme Court.

From Amendment X to the Constitution:

The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.

The similarity of "Charter 08" and the precious documents establishing the American Republic 200 years ago is eerily remarkable, and reminds one that the principles of freedom are eternal and that they must be articulated, supported, and defended by "dissidents" of every age and time.

Photo of Liu Xiaobo: AP Images



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