

Joanne Leedom-Ackerman: Editor's Note and Acknowledgements

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A zoo in China placed a big hairy Tibetan mastiff in a cage and tried to pass it off as an African lion. But a boy and his mother heard the animal bark, not roar. As news spread, the zoo's visitors grew angry. "The zoo is absolutely trying to cheat us. They are trying to disguise dogs as lions!" declared the mother.¹

In 2009 the Chinese government put Liu Xiaobo, celebrated poet, essayist, critic, activist, and thinker into a cage, labeled him "enemy of the state," charged him with "inciting subversion of state power," and sentenced him to eleven years' imprisonment. Liu Xiaobo was not an enemy, but he was a "lion" the state feared. He challenged orthodoxy and conventional thinking in literature, which he wrote and taught, and authoritarian politics, which he protested and tried to help reshape. His insistence on individual liberty in more than a thousand essays and eighteen books, his relentless pursuit of ideas, including as a drafter and organizer of *Charter 08*, which set out a democratic vision for China through nonviolent change, and finally his last statement, "I have no enemies and no hatred," threatened the Chinese Communist Party and government in a way few other citizens had.

Dr. Liu Xiaobo was the first Chinese citizen to win the Nobel Prize for Peace, in 2010, but he was in prison, was not allowed to attend the ceremony, and died in custody in July 2017.

When news of Liu Xiaobo's death reached the world and in particular the writers and democracy activists who knew him, writers began to write. Tributes and analyses poured in, many sent to the Independent Chinese PEN Center (ICPC), a gathering of writers inside and outside of Mainland China that Liu helped found and served as president. *The Journey of Liu Xiaobo* traces Liu's history and the path of liberalism in China and is perhaps the largest gathering of Chinese democracy activists' writing in one volume. Because of length restrictions, some tributes are listed only by authors' names in the appendix.

A Chinese edition was published in 2017 as *Collected Writings in Commemoration of Liu Xiaobo* by Democratic China and the Institute for China's Democratic Transition. It is hoped that this revised and expanded English edition, organized according to phases of Liu's life and development, will find an even wider audience and offer insight into the person—his ideas, his loves, and his legacy. Some have suggested that because of Liu Xiaobo's death and the economic and political ascendancy of the current Chinese regime, Liu's legacy has been reduced to a void. I would recommend that those who claim such consider the longer arc of history. The same was said of visionaries in Eastern Europe when earlier protests were crushed in Poland, East Germany, and elsewhere; the same was said of early martyrs in South Africa, where repression eventually led to widespread civic resistance and in other countries where civilians have challenged repressive systems. Liu Xiaobo was committed to nonviolent engagement and

political change. Though he no longer walks the earth, his ideas and writings endure. History will unfold this story. In the meantime the essays in this volume recount one man's journey and commitment to the struggle for the individual's right to freedom.²

Societies move forward and are changed by ideas, by leaders, and ultimately by their citizens. None of these essays show Liu Xiaobo aspiring to personal power. But those in power worried about this man of ideas and this activist who set ideas into motion. He didn't need to roar like a lion to garner the world's attention and respect. By his life and his death he holds those in power to account.

Notes

1. Michael Bristow, "China 'Dog-Lion': Henan Zoo Mastiff Poses as Africa Cat," *BBC News*, August 15, 2013, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-23714896>..
2. In these collected essays, a number of writers express concern about the fate of Liu Xiaobo's beloved wife, poet and artist Liu Xia, who spent years under house arrest. Since the writing of these articles, Liu Xia has been allowed to go to Germany for medical treatment. As of 2019 she resides in Berlin.