

## Editor's Introduction

Anxiety attaches to intellectuals engaged in social movement work because who they are and what they do set off alarms. Yet the scholarly critiques of neoliberal dogma and the injunctions to reconsider cultural strategies, which Jamie Morgan, Nam-hee Lee, and Andrea Louie raised in *positions* 11:3, force the question of who, supposedly, is to do these tasks and how they ought to do them. How do activist intellectuals work? Are academic researchers responsible for hands-on political work? Does the internationalist work of an engaged intellectual address our immediate crisis? What relationship is there between preemptive war and struggles to build alternative social institutions under conditions of market-inspired poverty? What is the timetable? Why struggle for democratic popular counterinstitutions even as the Bush administration's illegal war against Iraq rages on?

Wang Hui's lavish critique of the 1989 social movement's origins, strategies, and blind spots carries over into this issue our prior focus on retrospective

political criticism. But they add a second string of questions: What relations obtain between unsentimental historical writing that evaluates immediate events and the work of those intellectually engaged in politics here and now? What happens when we step away from the safety of retrospection and toward the source of the anxiety—the internationalist intellectual in contemporary justice movements? The individuals interviewed here are in most respects like the readers reading the interviews. How should we interpret the interviewees’ openly critical, undefensive self-reflection on their perceived gains and losses? Do their reflexive experiences of negotiating with the poor register as knowledge? What do their ambivalence and realism say about political claims made in the name of a scholarship perhaps necessarily removed from field experience?

The figure of the politically engaged intellectual in international justice movements is vital since it highlights the fragility or contingency of intellectual work. Several key points arise in the generous retrospections that make up the bulk of this issue. One is that “movement” does not (perhaps never did) characterize the social activity in question. What may have once been coherently oppositional, as in Beijing in 1989 or Chicago and Paris in 1968, or is now a predictably reformist, neoliberal, nongovernmental organization (NGO), is neither coherent nor particularly effective. Whatever it is that we are doing, Shigeki Takeo, Kin Chi Lau, and Gayatri Spivak repeat, it is chaotic. Sometimes it feels futile, given the magnitude of the crisis. Also, in Shigeki Takeo’s words, “It takes a lot of time.” The time it takes and the willingness to spend a lifetime reinventing a politically engaged social science, as Chayan Vaddhanaphuti is doing, gives Takeo’s point a certain resigned realism. A second point at which the internationalist intellectuals highlighted here seem to concur is at the moment when the question “What is the relation of intellectuals and social movements?” turns into, as Kin Chi Lau bluntly puts it, “What kind of knowledge do we need?”

In “The Year 1989 and the Historical Roots of Neoliberalism in China,” Wang Hui reinterprets Primo Levi’s question: Since the political strategies of yesterday no longer work (if they ever did), how do we put a lien on the past, grasp its processes anew, and reuse it? Of course, Wang makes the thoroughly necessary move of seizing the past from the neoliberal opposition and revising its historical narrative. He reasserts the social origins and

forces that infused the popular oppositional justice movement of Beijing in 1989 and he resituates political need in the ambiguous new context. Wang's willingness to risk writing provisional history in the moment addresses Kin Chi Lau's demand for writing about how we came to this point. Indeed, Lau's requirement that engaged intellectuals must grasp the determinations that structure this present is clearly voiced in all the interviews, from Chayan Vaddhanaphuti, Vandana Shiva, and Gayatri Spivak, to Mark Selden and Shigeki Takeo. The overriding point is that the past must be made comprehensible to the current conjuncture.

Celia Lowe's interview with Chayan Vaddhanaphuti initiates a theme that resonates broadly but is most pointed here, and that is the impact of Cold War "development" political strategies on contemporary politics. For Chayan Vaddhanaphuti, as for Lau, Takeo, and Shiva, the driving force of post-Cold War change and counter-development must be the democratized people. Who the people are, how ethnicization or indigenization becomes social fact, the singularities of Thai social composition and the balance between improved standards of living in relation to the people's degradation, their resources, their habits, and their self-conception are all important topics for Chayan Vaddhanaphuti's renewed social science project. He gives the example of the Pak Mun case, in which the World Bank, the World Commission on Dams, his own Regional Center for Social Science and Sustainable Development, and the indigenous villagers all have participated. This case allows him to reexamine post-World War II social science, regional warfare, and the international radicalism of an earlier time. At no point in the labor of an engaged intellectual like Chayan Vaddhanaphuti does the history question ever subside. Marukawa Tetsushi, a politically engaged regional specialist, writes of affect and politics and the persistent trauma of colonialism in Taiwan through the political event of mobilization against Kobayashi Yoshinori's "New Arrogant-ist Manifesto" *manga*, or illustrated book. Marukawa's point is not simply that Kobayashi's popular fascist pseudohistory requires a scholarly rebuttal. Marukawa himself seeks to raise a latent history into political analysis.

"It Takes a Lot of Time," an interview with Shigeki Takeo by Ruri Ito, raises concerns about area studies, literary romanticism, the negotiation of the colonial heritage, and a certain political event that cannot be fully

characterized because its primary author makes so few claims for it. Takeo's decade-long connection to Iriomote Island has transpired in a series of ad hoc inventions of what Kin Chi Lau will characterize in another context as drawn-out negotiation or exchange among the relatively powerless and a motley group of intellectual activists and students from Tokyo universities, Naha City Okinawan public scholars, Taiwan indigenous movement activists, Iriomote residents, and supporters of environmental justice like Kinsei Ishigaki. The everydayness of ritual performances, birth, erosion of livelihood, and the ambivalence and comedy of different kinds of people engaging one another in ill-defined efforts to live with dignity, even remaining in poverty, are complexly knit together in Takeo's narrative of how he gradually decided to become "the university professor who never does research."

Taken immediately after September 11, 2001, supplemented editorially during the so-called war on terror, "Not Really a Properly Intellectual Response: An Interview with Gayatri Spivak" illuminates the double bind of much current political engagement. Spivak maneuvers between the UN-sponsored "NGO belt" and the ghastly effects of global restructuring. Like Takeo, she improvises strategies within the impoverished communities where she teaches. Quotidian social injustice and students vested in subalternity mean, Spivak reiterates, that inequality and education are not distinguishable. Her well-known reservations about institutionalized helping form a backdrop to descriptions of her experience in other "Asias." Spivak links pre-1989 political memory to George W. Bush's imperialist Iraq and Afghanistan policies as she notes a changing relation of her own scholarly work to the personal and institutional politics of poverty relief. Her encounters in Hong Kong point further to the growing exchanges among intellectuals who hold Indian or Chinese rather than U.S. passports. Despite some trepidation about how a reregionalized "Asia" might work, other centers of gravity are emerging, linking engaged intellectuals to "Asias" that, as Chayan Vaddhanaphuti might say, are not mapped yet—or as Spivak's parable of the Himalayas suggests, are in the process of once again being remapped.

Trauma, Wang Hui's unavoidable scars of social suffering, is a rich medium for invention, as many of the engaged intellectuals interviewed here would, I think, agree. Certainly, Qi Wang makes that case when he interviews

queer intellectual Cui Zi'en. Cui's tale of postsex eroticism—"Endangered Species Rule!"—and the remarkable film précis that Chris Berry provides in his introduction to Cui's film work signify, as Wang says straight out, a transmutation of the social hurt that Cui encounters. Yet, in the exchange between the interviewer and Cui, what emerges as the public persona of this first publicly queer P.R.C. media artist is a patient, compassionate, bodily stubbornness—perhaps the same stubbornness that Takeo, Lau, and Spivak mention in their own self-characterizations of what they do when they are working politically. Cui simply takes the position that his writing is available to those who care to recognize the queerness of everyday experience and consequently to recognize that methods of redress—of sexual injustices as much as poverty relief—are projects for the long term.

Kin Chi Lau, college professor, translator, feminist, and transregional activist, directly voices the core of bitter patience and longing that saturates these accounts. Her agonistic work of reflection, where small social gains are measured in terms of personal intellectual development and collaboratively imagined liberated zones, gives Lau an optimistic realism about political engagement outside the university in relation to the time it takes for social practices to take root. Lau's vivid descriptions of a mundane collective meeting and the processes of democratic self-criticism and village sexual politics are fresh and useful. Yet despite all the years she has commuted from her urban Hong Kong university to rural Jiangxi, for her the barrier of unequal relations between the engaged intellectual and the rural impoverished is still raw. Lau's is a history not just of socialist collectivism and recent rural market policies, but also of the historical burden that Chinese intellectuals bear in relation to nationalism, regionalism, and rural social welfare.

Three more articles, "Why Must We Talk about the Environment? A Summary of Nanshan Seminar," "Responsibility and Politics: An Interview with Mark Selden," and "Globalization and Graduate Students: An Interdisciplinary Graduate Forum with Vandana Shiva," speak to our hope that the never-ending work of engaged intellectuals will be put to work in the classroom. A statement from the P.R.C. New Left pantheon, the Nanshan Manifesto is a facet of the crisis that Vandana Shiva discusses in her colloquium with University of Washington graduate students. Mark Selden generously reminds readers of the long tradition in the United States of

internationalist scholarship and political activism within institutional Asian studies. His provocations and his example are part of the political *longue durée* that all contributors to this issue of *positions* are emphasizing.

Tani E. Barlow, Senior Editor