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Please Vote For Me

Director: Weijun Chen
China/ 2007/ 58min

Director's Profile:

Weijun Chen is a documentary director and producer living in Wuhan, China. After graduating from the journalism program at Sichuan University in 1992, he joined the documentary production department of the Wuhan Regional TV station. His first film, *My Life Is My Philosophy*, was nominated for the best documentary of the year by the Chinese National Association of Broadcasters. In 2003 he completed *To Live Is Better Than To Die*, which was awarded a Peabody and Grierson award, as well as the Rodlf Vrfba Award from the One World Festival. He made *Please Vote For Me* in 2007 for an International Documentary Project which we'll explain later.

Production History:

This film is a part of the "Why democracy?" Project. 'This project aimed at a broader understanding of the conditions of governance in different societies and cultures, brought together 10 independent award-winning filmmakers from different countries around the world, including China, India, Japan, Liberia, U.S.A., Bolivia, Denmark, and Russia, each focusing their films on issues of contemporary democracy.' That's not all. They created 17 thought-provoking short films, which deal with personal, political and rights issues around the theme 'what does democracy mean to me?' *Please Vote For Me* and other films were shown on 42 television networks in October, 2007. ("Why democracy?": <http://www.whymocracy.net/house/question> s)

Synopsis:

Students in a Grade 3 class of a primary school in Wuhan were going to have their first democratic election for their class monitor. There were three candidates chosen by their teacher. During the election period, the candidates were about to present themselves and won the election through talent shows and public speeches. Finally there would be debates. Our director WeiJun Chen followed the whole process and presented us the spectacular competition among them through this film.

What Type of Documentary film:

An observational documentary with a few interactive elements.

Evaluation:

The director transferred a serious and sensitive topic--democracy--into a lighthearted and even funny life scene of primary school students, whereas how people live and responds to democratic election in China are revealed. This film serves as an open platform for discussion, evoking different discussions about democracy in China. It won the Jonathan Gili Award for Most Entertaining Documentary: while examining the profound topic, it also provides us with great joy when watching it. Besides telling the truth, the film also provides a snapshot of other aspects such as the Chinese society, One Child Policy, Chinese education of children, parent-child relationship, social value etc. Thanks to international collaborations, the movie carries a historical significance. So it is a "must see" film.

Receptions:

World comments:

"It's an hour long, but it is an extraordinarily rich documentary. It offered for one thing, a fascinating glance at the complexities of modern Chinese society." (NY Times)

"After watching *Please Vote for Me*, the first thing I did was go online and make sure that this was a true documentary, and not a clever mockumentary. Apparently, everything you see and hear in this film is completely legit, which is a truly head-spinning prospect." (Ryan Stewart)

"It would be comforting to think *Please Vote for Me* is about the birth pangs of democracy in a nation that has never known such a concept, and the film does reveal much about the changing face of Chinese society... these Chinese students throw themselves into the election body and soul, applying to it what could almost be called life and death stakes" (Dan Edwards)

From Chinese audiences:

Democracy in China?

"Whereas, it is a pity that most of the time, we don't really know what it (Democratic) is-- I mean as in China there were never practical democracy experiences, nor full understanding of theoretical and practical activities of democracy... At times, the problems reflected in the election are not the evil of democracy, but the evil of human beings... Democracy is the stage." ¹

Parents' education:

"A group of Grade-3 children under the plan of the teacher, devised by the parents, are acting like puppies in the class monitor election. Greedy, attacks, revelation of others' defects, conspiracy behind, or straightly damning on each other, are all reflections of Chinese adults' behaviors." ²

References: 1. <http://movie.douban.com/review/1361599/>

2. <http://movie.douban.com/review/1220832/>

Discussion questions:

1. Who do you want to vote for you are in this class, and why?(considering their abilities and strategies, etc.) Are you satisfied with the outcome of the class monitor election? Why or why not?
2. During the class monitor election, every competitor used many western democratic elections' strategies, but this election has nothing to do with politics. What do you think of this kind of intentionally politic-free democratic election?
3. In your opinion, did the election for class monitor work as an exercise in democracy? What did you learn from this experiment?
4. How do you feel about the parents in the film and the ways they helped their children campaign? Would your parents help their children in the same way? What might they do differently?
5. What role does this project "Why Democracy?" take in the production and publication of this film? What are the advantages of international collaboration reflected by this film?

請為我投票

導演: 陳為軍

中國/2007/ 58min

導演簡介：

陳為軍是一個住在中國武漢的紀錄片導演和製作人。1992年從四川大學傳媒專業畢業後，陳為軍加入了武漢電視台紀錄片製作部。他的第一部電影，《我的生活就是我的哲學》被提名中國全國廣播工作者協會最佳紀錄片獎。2003年他完成了《好死不如賴活著》，並且獲得了Peabody and Grierson獎和同一個世界rodlf vrfba獎。他在2007年為一個國際紀錄片計劃拍攝了《請為我投票》，後面我們將會詳細介紹這個計劃。

制作歷史：

這部電影是《為什麼民主？》計劃的一部分。該計劃由來自不同十個國家的十位獲獎的獨立電影人參與，分別為中國，印度，日本，利比裏亞，美國，玻利維亞，丹麥，以及俄國，每個電影人都負責探究一個當代的民主問題，目的是了解不同國家對於社會文化的統治情況。除此之外，他們制作了十七部涉及個人，政治以及民權等問題的短片，講述關於“民主對我來說是什麼”這個話題。《請為我投票》以及其他的電影均在2007年5月在42個電視頻道播出。（有關《為什麼民主？》計劃，詳見

<http://www.whydemocracy.net/house/questions>）

劇情簡介：

武漢是一個跟倫敦差不多大的位於中國中部的城市。陳為軍導演在這裡做了一個關於民主的實驗。長青小學三年級的一個班的同學將第一次通過選舉來選擇自己的班長。3個8歲的候選人在老師和家長的教唆和希望下彼此競爭班長的職位。

電影類型：

這是一部觀察型的紀錄片，並且含有少許的互動成分在其中。

評價：

本導演機智地將一個嚴肅敏感的話題轉移成為一個輕鬆詼諧的小學生生活片段的記錄，同時，一個中國式的“民主選舉”場景也被生動地展現。這部電影給觀眾充分的空間討論什麼是民主，為什麼要進行民主選舉。在探討這個深刻的話題同時，孩子們天真的舉止給觀眾帶來了歡樂，增添了電影的趣味性。電影獲得了Jonathan Gili Award最具娛樂性獎。電影如實地反映了中國的社會現狀，壹些問題如壹孩政策，中國父母對子女的教育，父母與子女的關係，社會價值等等。由於國際間的合作，電影如實反映了中國社會現狀，具有歷史研究的價值。值得一看！

電影評論：

世界觀眾：

“電影只有壹小時，但是內涵豐富，折射出現代中國社會的複雜現狀。”（《紐約時報》）

“看過《請為我投票》後，我很好奇這究竟是不是壹部真正的紀錄片，而非刻意捏造的故事。毋庸置疑，劇中的壹切都是真實的，這才是真是的正統的中國教育，令人歎為觀止！”（Ryan Stewart）

“我認為，反映的是民主如何在壹個沒有民主傳統的國家初步生長，它反映出了很多中國社會的真實現狀……這些中國的小學生全身心投入到競選當中，對他們而言，競選是壹場沒有硝煙的戰爭，不是你死就是我活。”（Dan Edwards）

中國觀眾：

“然而非常可惜的是，太多的情況下我們都並不完全清楚我們自己在說什麼——我是指，由於中國人從來就沒有實際的民主經驗、也缺乏對於國外當下民主之理論與實踐的充分全面的認知和理解……很多時候，在選舉當中出現的問題並非是民主的邪惡，而僅僅是人性的邪惡，人類的貪婪、自負、衝動、軟弱等等根深蒂固的本性會透過各種社會制度和生活場景或隱或顯的表現出來，民主也是它們的舞台。”1.
“三年級的八歲小孩子在老師的策劃，家長的言傳身教下如提線木偶般壹本正經地競選班長，乃至賄選，互相攻擊，披露缺點，幕後直白的暗算，或乾脆惱羞成怒地辱罵，這壹切，中國式成人思維跟性格折射在天真的小孩身上……”2.

參考：1. <http://movie.douban.com/review/1361599/>

2. <http://movie.douban.com/review/1220832/>

討論問題：

1. 如果你是這個班的“選民”，你會選誰當班長？為什麼？（考慮他們的能力以及競選策略等）
2. 在準備選舉的過程中，各位競選者運用了許多與西方民選類似的策略。在某種程度上講，在中國，實際上有許多正在發生的民主選舉。因此，對於這種刻意與政治保持距離的民選，你怎樣看待？
3. 你是否認為這個班級選舉可以作為民主的一個實驗？你從這個實驗中知道了什麼
4. 紀錄片可以反映真實生活的場景，除了“民主”這個話題，你還發現了那些關於中國人民生活的反映，比如說父母與孩子之間的關係，小學教育，等等？
5. 《為什麼民主》計劃是怎樣促成電影《請為我投票》產生的？通過這部電影的制作過程，試談談國際合作給電影製作帶來那些促進因素？