

## TRANSCRIPTION/TRANSCRIPTION

### EVENT/ÉVÉNEMENT

Transcription prepared by Media Q Inc. exclusively for Halifax International Security Forum

DATE/DATE: November 23, 2019 08:40 AT

LOCATION/ENDROIT: Westin Nova Scotian Hotel, 1181 Hollis St., Halifax, NS

PRINCIPAL(S)/PRINCIPAUX: Peter van Praagh, President, Halifax International Security Forum

Cindy McCain, Chair, McCain Institute for International Leadership

Figo Chan, activist, Vice Convenor of the Civil Human Rights Front, Hong Kong

Emily Lau, Former Chairperson, Democratic Party, Chair of Foreign Affairs Committee, Democratic Party Hong Kong

SUBJECT/SUJET: Halifax International Security Forum board member Cindy McCain presents the John McCain Prize for Leadership in Public Service to the people of Hong Kong.

**Peter van Praagh:** La—ladies and gentlemen, it's my honour to introduce once again Mrs. Cindy McCain. (Applause).

**Cindy McCain:** Thank you. It is such a pleasure and a privilege to be here this morning and attending this forum now as a new member of the board. I'm deeply honoured and deeply driven to be a good part of this – this institution. I thank Peter and my fellow directors and all of you for the exceptional work the Halifax International Security Forum does to help unite the world's democracies in common purpose to protect our interests and advance our values around the world. As you know, that was the cause nearest to my husband's heart, the cause of liberty and equal justice for all humanity. And he was so proud to be a part of the Forum, to join with you to analyze and discuss how best to secure our freedoms and see them flourish in all nations.

I'm especially honoured to present the John McCain Prize for Leadership in Public Service for 2019 to the very brave champions for freedom and justice who stand in defiance today in the streets and the campuses of Hong Kong in opposition to the encroachment of their human rights. China's rule – China rule – China's rulers insist that human rights are subordinate – subornative (ph) to re—to regimes' prerogatives. The product of their malign philosophy are plain for all to see in the corruption that they breed, the justice they thwart, the minorities they persecute, and the protestors they threaten in Hong Kong, whose only demand is that China honour its commitment to Hong Kong's autonomy, to one country, two systems.

It takes exceptional courage to face the threats of powerful – of a powerful tyranny, to insist on the commitment to speak truth to power. We are graced today by two people with that – that kind of deep moral courage. Emily Lau, as you know, has – has long struggled for justice in Hong Kong. Figo Chan of the Civic and Human Rights Front has literally been on the front lines fighting for freedom. They will accept the John McCain Prize on behalf of the people of Hong Kong today.

It's an honour to meet both of you and to add your – add our voices to your defence of liberty. I hope this tribute to those who are struggling for their rights in Hong Kong will encourage more people around the world to raise their voices in support of your cause, especially in my country's government. I commend the US Senate and the House of Representatives for – for overwhelmingly passing the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act. I sincerely hope the President will sign it enthusiastically and publicly very soon.

My husband wrote the following. He hoped it would encourage others in the US government, and Americans generally, to identify with people everywhere who are seeking to build societies from the same ideals on which our society was founded. It was one thing to recognize obstacles to change and to understand the world as it is with all of its corruption and cruelty, but it's a moral failure to believe tyranny and injustice are the inevitable tragedies of man's fallen nature; that there are some places in the world that will not change or aren't worth the effort to make it better. They can be changed. They have been changed.

Writing – writing of the death of Nobel Laureate Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo, John said the cause for which Liu had con—sacrificed his life would prevail in time, that Chinese people would be secure in their rights of life, liberty, and justice. It will happen, he wrote, because the rationalization that Asia isn't the west and Confucianism isn't compatible with individual liberty is a lie. It's a – it's natural for – it's for – it is natural for human beings – all human beings – to want to live without fear of oppos—of oppression. It's natural to want to make choices for yourself, all your choices. It's natural to the human mind to use our needs, wishes, desires, that ideas that interest us and direct our lives, to inform our choices about where to live, what to do for work, whom to love, or how many children to have. It's unnatural to the human heart to surrender its agency.

That is what John McCain would have observed on the streets of Hong Kong today: the human heart insisting on its agency – thousands and thousands of human hearts. And he would – would have been so proud that his name is – is used to commend and publicize the cour—your courage and decency. Thank you very much. Please join me. (Applause). There we go. We'll take a picture for a second here. (Applause). I will give the microphone to you.

**Figgo Chan:** Ladies and gentlemen, thank you. This is a great honour for our people, the people who are fighting on streets at this moment. We hope international society will their attention and close eyes to us. Chinese (inaudible) and Hong Kong governments calls us – us rioters. But we are simply fighting for democracy, freedom, and societ—social justice. This not the value of Hong Kong. This – this is value we share between all others. Those who fight, over 4000 arrested, including (inaudible) doctors, reporters. They is human – human (inaudible). We are facing the (inaudible) from Hong—from the government, police, and (inaudible). Our elected representative in my organization are being attacked again. It's part of the difficult and fears. We will keep fighting, even with the (inaudible) person from Chinese. We hope the international society will stand strong with us. There is (inaudible) in Hong Kong (inaudible) to Hong Kong. We hope the (inaudible) belong to all of us. Thank you very much. (Applause).

**Emily Lau:** Mrs. McCain, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, it's really real honour and a privilege for me and Figo to be here to accept the John McCain Prize. When the news went out last night, many Hong Kong people have already been informed, and Figo's – his WhatsApp has not stopped. So – and – and they know. The Journal is in Hong Kong, and the people know that this is actually going out live. So I think, as we speak, there are many people in Hong Kong and in the rest of the world are watching.

And some people are obviously watching, and that's the Chinese government. I'm sure you have heard what the ambassador in this country said yesterday. Maybe he didn't even know about the event this morning, Mrs. McCain. But the ambassador was very angry with the Americans, with Congress, for passing the legislation, and serving a warning to the Canadian Parliament not to do likewise, particularly not to act in concert with the Americans to interfere in Hong Kong affairs. So I don't know how they would describe this morning's event.

But ladies and gentlemen, I think Figo and I are very grateful to the international community, and I think there are about people from 80 countries in this room coming here, showing your support for Hong Kong. This prize is priceless. And yesterday, during the various sessions, so many questions on Hong Kong were asked. We were really very moved, and we are very happy. So I can assure you that we, the Hong Kong people, will continue to fight on, as Senator McCain had said – I have always had a lot of admiration for him – to speak truth to power and to have the courage to stand up for what you believe in. And I'm sure that is what all of us in this room believe in. So we will take this prize back to Hong Kong, share with our people, and let them know there is a lot of support for us.

We are not fighting for independence. Don't let the Chinese government mislead you. We are fighting for China to keep the promise of one country, two systems, whereby we can keep our free lifestyle, have our personal safety, the rule of law, independence of the judiciary. And we hope Britain, being the former colonial power, would do its best to help, and Britain's allies and friends all over the world would also help. Ladies and gentlemen, tomorrow Hong Kong will have elections to the district councils. We are not sure whether the government may cancel the election because they say it's too tumultuous, there's turmoil. But of course I think our people would like the election to be held. As many of you know, we allow the voices – the people's voices to be heard via the ballot box, be they pro-Beijing or pro-Hong Kong or pro-democracy.

So my dear friends, we have a very long and difficult road ahead, but it will be very, very gratifying for us to know, when we continue to travel on that journey, we have so many of you and all the people you represent here giving us support. And may I issue an invitation to you: please don't be afraid. Please come to Hong Kong to see us and support us. I'm sure the protestors, the people, will be very happy to welcome you. And I am sure, although some of our participants, particularly the friend from Tibet, he predicted last night at our very late session, almost midnight, he said there will be a crackdown in Hong Kong. The crackdown will be like Tiananmen in Beijing 30 years ago. I hope our friends in this room and all your friends outside will do your best to ensure that there will be no rivers of blood flowing in Hong Kong.

And you will know that the Hong Kong people – upright, courageous Hong Kong people – will do our best to defend all these universal core values. And the ambassador said if Canada work with America, they will retaliate. But with so many women and men in uniform in this room, I think we feel quite secure. I'm not – I'm not saying – (laughs) – I'm not saying we want to provoke any kind of military action – of course not. But we know. I heard all the speeches yesterday, what the – it's there for? So ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much for the award. And I'm sure our people in Hong Kong are very, very honoured and very grateful. And please, come to Hong Kong to see us. Free Hong Kong! Stand with Hong Kong! (Applause).

**Cindy McCain:** Thank you.

**Emily Lau:** Thank you.