

Monthly newsletter: July 2020

Message from Keith

To say this unusual year has brought unprecedented challenges would be an understatement. I'd like to take this opportunity to let you know how we at JMSC are responding to two of the biggest.

The first of course is the coronavirus, which first appeared in Hong Kong around the Lunar New Year and, as of this writing, has led to more than 1,500 cases and 10 deaths. While Hong Kong has fared better than much of the region and the world, Covid-19 still meant disruptions to our teaching plans and the cancellation of some planned events.

The big question is for September and the start of the 2020-21 academic year. Our plan now is for a full return of face-to-face teaching in classrooms at Eliot Hall in September, but following strict social distancing guidelines and making sure there is some online component to our classes for any overseas students who may not be able to join us on time, either because of the quarantine rules or the disruptions in air travel.

The University is planning for a return to classroom teaching, but the campus might look and feel less crowded, as some of the larger lecture hall classes will be moved online.

The situation could of course change, depending on the course the virus takes in the coming weeks. Our goal remains to provide top quality in-person journalism instruction here on campus, but making sure we keep our students and staff healthy and safe, and follow government guidelines.

The second major challenge is the passage of the new National Security Law, which creates four new criminal categories, for secession, terrorism, subversion of state power and collusion with foreign forces. Of particular concern for us as journalists and journalism teachers is Article 9 of the new law, which is about strengthening “guidance, supervision and regulation” over schools and the media, and Article 54, which says the new mainland National Security Supervising Agency set up in Hong Kong will “strengthen the management of international organisations”—including non-government groups and news agencies of foreign countries.”

The new law also gives the police sweeping powers to conduct warrantless searches, surveillance and eavesdropping, and to force journalists and internet companies to turn over their notes and data.

Many have been asking what this means for the future of press freedom, academic freedom and the teaching of journalism. Is there even a future for journalism in Hong Kong?

At the moment, the specifics of the new law are vague, and that vagueness is deliberate. By not spelling out precisely what actions or words count as secession or subversion—by not clearly delineating Beijing's “red lines”—it gives the authorities the power and leeway to apply the law as they see fit, while forcing everyone into a defensive mode of timidity and self-censorship to avoid possible transgressions. That includes journalists, academics and others in the public space.

We do not intend to do anything differently at JMSC, as we adhere to our mission of training the next generation of reporters and imbuing them with journalism's international best practices. That means teaching journalism that is fact-based, fair and unbiased, and that gives voice to the voiceless and continues to speak truth to power. The role of journalism is to hold public officials and powerful institutions accountable and to tell stories that need to be told. The biggest danger for press freedom in Hong Kong is if journalists start to self-censor out of fear, and we don't intend to do that ourselves or teach that to our students.

Journalists in Hong Kong will need to learn to operate differently than they have in the past—performing journalism more like their counterparts in mainland China, or in other authoritarian or quasi-democratic countries where the press is severely restricted. Reporters will have to exercise heightened sensitivity about protecting the identities of their sources and data. They will need to navigate around the invisible and shifting “red lines,” the same way reporters in, say, Thailand, have to steer around strict *lèse-majesté* laws against insulting the king, or how journalists in Malaysia or Indonesia tiptoe around Muslim blasphemy laws.

China itself is one of the world’s most restrictive countries for journalists—but there is still great journalism coming from inside the Mainland, including exposés on the Uighur concentration camps in Xinjiang and the plight of Wuhan at the height of the coronavirus outbreak.

The future of journalism in Hong Kong depends on whether journalists are now going to cower in a defensive crouch, setting “red lines” in their own heads and giving in to the temptation of self-censorship. Or if they carry on, pushing the limits, testing the boundaries with hard-hitting, fact-based and well-documented stories that are beyond refutation.

Until someone tells us otherwise, we are going to continue teaching the latter. We aren’t changing, and we’re not going anywhere.

Keith Richburg
Director of the JMSC

Alumni & Student News



Work by HKU photography students, including our journalism students, were again selected for the annual *Young Lenses* exhibit at the Foreign Correspondents' Club. The theme this year was "[Hong Kong Life in Transition](#)", and featured photos by students from City University of HK and HK Baptist University and HKU. (Photo by Janine Ng, BJ 2022)



Congratulations to [Chloe Feng](#) (MJ 2020), who has been selected as this year's recipient of the [Mick Deane Scholarship for Video Journalism](#). The scholarship was established in honour of journalist Mick Deane and is awarded primarily on the basis of academic merit, and to candidates who demonstrate the talent, skills and commitment to excellence in video journalism. More about Chloe and the scholarship [here](#).

Faculty & Staff News



In the third episode of *Journalists in chairs drinking wine*, **Jeff Timmermans** spoke with Associated Press's London-based medical writer Maria Cheng. Maria, who has Hong Kong roots, formerly worked as an information officer at the WHO and has been at the forefront of the AP's coronavirus coverage in Europe. Watch [here](#).



Keith Richburg joined hosts Hugh Chiverton and Rachel Cartland on RTHK 3's *Backchat* on 17 June to discuss how the Black Lives Matter movement is developing in the US, how it is different this time and whether there will be a lasting effect. Listen [here](#).



CNN's **Kristie Lu Stout** spoke to Keith Richburg and other educators around the world about how Covid-19 has changed the way we learn and how schools are adapting to online teaching in a special series, *Inventing Tomorrow*.



Dr. Masato Kajimoto moderated the panel discussion "Beyond facts: Sensitivity of correcting misinformation in public during COVID-19 pandemic" on 23 June. The event was part of **Global Fact7**, a weeklong virtual Global Fact conference organized by the **International Fact-Checking Network**.



Dr. King-wa Fu spoke at a forum organized by the **HKU Convocation** and moderated by Keith Richburg on 3 July to discuss the impact of the National Security Law on academic freedom. Also on the panel were **Professor Joseph Chan** (Dept of Politics and Public Admin.), Edy Tsz Lam Jeh, President of the **HKU Students' Union**, and **Professor Simon Young** (Dept of Law).



Sharron Fast and Keith Richburg spoke at a **panel discussion** hosted by the Foreign Correspondents' Club on 7 July along with lawyer and writer Antony Dapiran about what the National Security Law means for press freedom in Hong Kong and how it may alter the way media in Hong Kong will operate and perform its role in society. Watch the entire event [here](#).



Ruby Yang premiered the sequel to her 2014 film *My Life, My Voice* at MOViE MOViE Pacific Place on 10 July. Members of the cast of *My Life, My Voice Revisited* joined Ruby and their guests, including Cecilia Ho, President of the Lee Hysan Foundation, which funded the production of both the first film and the sequel.



Ruby caught up with four of the students from the first film where she followed a group of misfit high school students from Hong Kong cast together for a musical theatre performance to see how that summer impacted their lives and what they are doing now. Watch highlights from the premiere [here](#).

JMSC in the news



(9 April) The Washington Post: [China's investigative journalists offer a fraught glimpse behind Beijing's coronavirus propaganda](#) (King-wa Fu)



(10 April) Agence France-Presse: [Asia cracks down on virus 'fake news'](#) (Masato Kajimoto)



(16 April) Times Higher Education, [Online learning shift contends with Chinese internet restrictions](#) (Masato Kajimoto)



(13 April) Inside Story: [Coronavirus: Why are Africans in China being targeted?](#) (Keith B. Richburg)



(24 April) Journal of Risk Research: [Did the world overlook the media's early warning of COVID-19?](#), co-written by King-wa Fu and Yuner Zhu



(28 April) Abacus: [China has a massive 5G network but without the coronavirus conspiracy theories](#) (Masato Kajimoto)



(1 May) The National: [Coronavirus: experts disagree as Donald Trump insists virus came from Wuhan lab](#) (Masato Kajimoto)



(13 May) The Guardian: ['The stakes are higher': Hong Kong's battle lines redrawn for post-Covid protests](#) (Keith B. Richburg)



(26 May) Rest of World: [Hong Kong's COVID-19 neighborhood watch](#), by Marianne Bray



(30 May) Los Angeles Times: [Deleting Facebook, downloading VPNs: How Hong Kongers are preparing for a draconian law](#), co-written by Antonia Tang Wai Yin (BJ 2022)



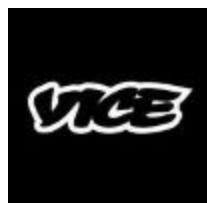
(12 June) BBC News: [Hong Kong: City of two masks faces a new crisis](#) (King-wa Fu)



(18 June) The Washington Post: [Video evidence of anti-black discrimination in China over coronavirus fears](#) (Keith B. Richburg)



(20 June) Financial Times: [Conspiracy theories flourish as coronavirus resurfaces in China](#) (King-wa Fu)



(3 July) Vice: [In the 'spirit of reciprocity,' China and the US trade jabs over media organizations](#) (Keith B. Richburg)



(6 July) Reuters: [Hong Kong schools should not provide material against new law, government says](#) (King-wa Fu)



(6 July) Hong Kong Free Press: [Hong Kong security law: journalists and scholars 'at a loss' in trying to predict new red lines](#) (Sharron Fast)



(6 July) CNN: [First person charged under Hong Kong's national security law appears in court](#), co-written by Vanesse Chan (BJ 2020)

(7 July) CNN: [Hong Kong schools told to remove books that violate new law as police powers extended](#), co-written by Vanesse Chan (BJ 2020)



(7 July) Nikkei Asian Review: [Hong Kongers struggle with broad scope of national security law](#) (Keith B. Richburg)



(8 July) Asia Times: [HK security law raises press freedom concerns](#) (Sharron Fast and Keith B. Richburg)

Coming up



Dr. King-wa Fu will join Robert Chung of the [Hong Kong Public Opinion Research Institute](#) and student representatives on 17 July to discuss the impact of the National Security Law on HKU students and staff. The event is organized by the Hong Kong University Student Union. Details [here](#).



Masato Kajimoto attended the first WHO Infodemiology Conference (29 June - 16 July) and will be speaking at the closing webinar on 21 July. The event is organized by the World Health Organization to respond to the infodemic that has escalated to unprecedented levels since the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Find out more [here](#).

