

There are massive social inequalities in contemporary China, especially concerning the rights and treatment of women in certain aspects of Chinese society. Within the higher echelons of Chinese society i.e. entertainment, sports and media industries, the sexual exploitation of women is particularly commonplace. However, Chinese society doesn't usually hear of these crimes as the state quickly suppresses any mention of them on social media services, such as the China based service named Weibo. Although not directly owned by the Chinese government, Weibo operates underneath the heel of it as the Government can shut the website down if it ever becomes a threat to Chinese national security. An occurrence of this happened in November 2021 when a prominent Chinese Tennis player named Peng Shuai detailed how she was sexually abused for a year by the former Vice Premier of the communist party, Zhang Gaoli. This post was quickly deleted off of Weibo and any further mention of it was suppressed. An article from The Diplomat explains the degeneracy of these state officials as so, "Although only the tip of the iceberg, it exposes the real life of China's highest cadres, how their power masked their hypocrisy, and how they are excessively corrupt" (The Diplomat, 2021).

Peng Shuai's experience was not the only horrific attack on women to occur in China in recent memory, Zhou Xiaoxuan, who was an intern at a television company at the time, alleged that a prominent TV host forcibly kissed and groped her during her internship in 2014. The perpetrator, Zhu Jun, had attempted to sue Zhou for defamation, but it appears that that case hasn't gone anywhere. Even though a serious crime had been reported, the courts seemed to treat the 'respected' TV host as more important than Zhou, the victim in the case, as he was not required to attend the earlier proceedings. This almost gives Zhu an air of invincibility, the belief that he can do what he wants because he is of a higher status than Zhou. The Chinese courts and Police have seemed to provide Zhu with this protection, making accessing key evidence pertaining to the case, such as CCTV footage of the incident and interview transcripts with Zhou's parents after she reported the incident, 'truly too difficult' according to Zhou (The Guardian, 2022). The large power discrepancy between Zhou Xiaoxuan and Zhu Jun can be explained by a few different factors. Firstly, because Zhou is a woman in a society that, on the one hand, prides itself by claiming they have equal rights and opportunity for all, remains largely patriarchal. With women being expected to keep quiet about incidents like this to not put shame on their family's name, or to simply keep their family safe from the perpetrator, usually being a powerful official. And secondly, although this doesn't necessarily apply to Zhou's case, the social class of the victim may cause them to have less standing in court, with poorer individuals being accused of wanting fame or money from the proceedings. Nevertheless, Zhou has vowed to not give up, even though she has exhausted all legal means (The Guardian, 2022), showing that even in the face of overwhelming adversity, human resilience will always prevail.

French Philosopher Michel Foucault delves into this idea that humans will always resist power if they feel they are being wronged in his Book, *The History of Sexuality Volume 1: An Introduction*. Here he writes that, "Where there is power, there is resistance," (1976, p.93) this parallels Zhou's experience of being shut down by higher authorities several times but not giving up on her mission for justice. A reason for this is that Zhou doesn't want others to suffer the same way that she did and not be trusted by the Courts (The Guardian, 2022). Foucault goes on to explain that this resistance is not exterior to power, rather that it is a product of it because humans dislike the idea of being controlled. This makes the quote more nihilistic in nature, that power is outside of our control and therefore our actions are meaningless in trying to resist it.

The subject of Chinese studies helps us to understand where these social inequalities originated from, mainly through the analysis of historical documents of events in Chinese history and the individual study of groups and class divisions that formed between them. These analyses can assist in developing a core understanding on how contemporary Chinese society operates. From its traditions, societal norms and values and institutional structures and how these affect the lives of individual Chinese citizens.

Reference List

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