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June 8, 2013: Chen Guangcheng Comes to Pittsburgh

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Title: Chen Guangcheng Comes to Pittsburgh

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6/8/2013—Today City of Asylum/Pittsburgh, a marvelous local group that supports artists and others against dictatorial regimes around the world, presented Exiled Voices of China and Tibet. It was a great program featuring Tienchi Martin-Liao, the president of Independent Chinese PEN, the poet Liao Yiwu, the activist Chen Guangcheng and New York Times reporter Andrew Jacobs. It was an absolutely fantastic group of people and was presented just down the street from my house in Pittsburg. I got to ask the question of Chen Guangcheng about the controversy of American law schools with programs in China. Here's how I put it: Mr. Chen, your case and the treatment of your nephew, still in China, has sparked debate among American law schools that have programs in China including Duquesne law school here in Pittsburgh. The debate is how we should teach American law students about a Chinese legal system that does not function lawfully. Do you have any message that you would wish to bring to American law schools that are engaged in this debate? Chen did not answer the question directly. He started out by saying that the American conception of law and the Chinese government's conception of law were very different. Law in China is simply a tool of the government and really a control not even by the government, but by the Communist Party. In a sense both the government and the people have been kidnapped by the Communist Party, which controls the administration of the legal system in all its applications. There is for example no way to sue a Communist Party secretary. They are like emperors. The party decides who is prosecuted, the party decides who is sentenced and a party propaganda Bureau controls the media. Since the entire country is a tool of the Communist Party, you cannot just look at the courts in the legal texts to decide what the law is. Such sources would describe the legal system in a democracy but they do not do so in China. Now, the law schools with programs in China must decide on the implications of this statement.