

Submission from Ng Mei-Fung Rosana

View against arguments put forth by Ivory Trades and Carvers

I am a Hong Kong citizen and a tax payer. I am writing to express my view against arguments put forth by ivory traders and carvers on the Hong Kong's ivory ban.

First of all, ivory traders and carvers claim that ivory carving is a Chinese tradition and heritage. Ivory carving is indeed listed under Hong Kong's First Intangible Cultural Heritage Inventory among the 480 items listed. The criteria for being listed as an inventory is under various domain such as: oral traditional and expressions; performing arts; social practice, rituals and festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe, traditional craftsmanship. Ivory carving is under traditional craftsmanship including moon cake making technique; dragon dance paper head making technique; mahjong tile making technique; dragon boat making technique etc. None of these technique poses detrimental damage to the environment and other forms of life on this planet.

According to Hong Kong Leisure and Cultural Service Department's "Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Hong Kong", the 20 most representative heritage of Hong Kong are: Cantonese Opera, Hakka Unicorn Dance in Hang Hau in Sai King, Zuanzhen Temples Taoist Ritual Music, Nanyin (Southern Tunes), Cheung Chau Jiao Festival, Tai O Dragon Boat Water Parade, Yu Lan Ghost Festival of the Hong Kong Chiu Chow Community, Mid-Autumn Festival – the Tai Hang Fire Dragon Dance, Waong Tai Sin Belief and Customs, Spring and Autumn Ancestral Worship of Clans, Tin Hau Festival in Hong Kong, Mid-Autumn Festival – the Pok Fu Lam Fire Dragon Dance, Taoist Ritual Tradition of the Zhengyi School, Sek Pun (Basin Feast), Herbal Tea, The Arts of the Guqin (The Craft of Qin Making), Hong Kong style Milk Tea Making Technique, Paper Crafting Technique, The Sewing Technique of Hong Kong-style Cheongsam and Kwan Kwa Wedding Costume, Bamboo Theatre Building Technique. Ivory carving is not on the most representative Hong Kong Cultural Heritage list.

The raw materials needed for ivory carving came from cruel and unsustainable poaching of elephants, driving the species to extinction. In Hong Kong, hardly any local residents buy ivory, 90% of the ivory sold in Hong Kong are illegally carried across the boarder to China. Hong Kong is known to have the most ivory items selling on the streets and is one of the biggest ivory trafficking port in the world, the ivory market brings a bad reputation to the city. As a Hong Kong citizen I am not proud to have an ivory market in Hong Kong.

If one must argue ivory carving is a valuable Chinese heritage, we must look at the example China is setting to the world. China recognized that their ivory demand poses huge threat to the elephant population and is leading the species to extinction. China will close its entire ivory market by end of 2017, much sooner than what the Hong Kong Government proposed to have the Hong Kong market close by 2021. Lets not waste any more time here to discuss destroying a Chinese cultural heritage.

Furthermore, Hong Kong government announced 27 years ago that an international trade ban came into effect and allowed a grace period for traders to dispose of their ivory in an orderly manner. The government urged people to change trade and even provided training program and incentive scheme to help those involved. Those decided to remain in the trade made a business decision and therefore have to bear its business risk. It is not reasonable to ask Hong Kong tax payers to bear any consequences.

I strongly support the Hong Kong Government to pass the ivory ban bill without compensation.