



## **The People's Court Film Transcript**

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### **NARRATION**

A practice court for law students at Sichuan University in the city of Chengdu. 1000 miles southwest of China's capital, Beijing.

### **NARRATION**

They're re-examining a real-life industrial injury case between a laborer and his employers.

### **DEFENSE LAWYER**

The plaintiff, Feng Yong, never signed a labor contract with us. In fact, we didn't even know he was one of our workers.

### **NARRATION**

China's move to market capitalism is forcing deep changes in society. The number of cases going through the courts has more than doubled in the past 20 years.

### **PLAINTIFF'S LAWYER**

We have his time sheets and his site pass, which prove he was indeed working there and under the supervision of the defendants.

### **NARRATION**

To keep pace with the booming economy and maintain order, China has put in place a whole new legal system. In the past quarter century, China has created nearly four hundred law schools, and trained hundreds of thousands of judges and lawyers. Few nations have ever attempted to produce a body of law so quickly.

### **PLAINTIFF**

The company has the nerve to claim that my accident didn't happen at their worksite.

### **DEFENSE LAWYER**

You're lying to the court about your injuries. You're acting!

### **PLAINTIFF**

I worked myself to death for you and now I'm blind and it's your fault. How dare you say I'm lying!

### **JUDGE**

Order! Calm down!

### **PROFESSOR MRS. WANG**

We have two goals in our law schools: to teach students the law, and also to nurture their sense of social awareness and their obligation to pursue justice in society.



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### NARRATION

Social justice can be hard to obtain in these volatile times. Every day peasants abandon the land for a better life in the cities. In the past 15 years, 1 out of every 10 Chinese has made the move – the largest ongoing migration in history. These migrant workers are the muscle of their country's economic miracle. They're building the new China, and many of them have been pulled out of poverty.

### NARRATION

But migrants seeking work in Chengdu know they don't have the same rights to health care, housing or education as permanent urban residents.

### MIGRANT WORKER

I've been here for five years. It's been very hard.

### 2ND MIGRANT WORKER

Only a few of us have been able to get a job. Most haven't. Some of us work on the construction sites but haven't been paid.

### 3RD MIGRANT WORKER

Dreams? We're only second-class citizens. We don't have dreams.

### NARRATION

Unpaid wages are just one of many injustices propelling Chinese to take to the streets in record numbers. According to government statistics, there are an average of 200 protests a day. Many more go unreported.

### NARRATION

Professor Wang Xue Fen teaches law at Sichuan University. Coming from a poor rural family, he has a special interest in the legal problems facing these workers.

### PROFESSOR WANG

Were you paid?

### LABORER

No, we weren't paid. When we tried, we were told the company didn't exist. There's nothing more we can do.

### 2ND LABORER

We need a just society. Only the rich and powerful have justice. There's no justice for the poor.

### 3RD LABORER

This isn't socialism. It's the law of the jungle, where the strong prey on the weak.



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**NARRATION**

An employer who's been listening in has heard enough.

**EMPLOYER**

Many of my employees are very lazy. Everyone knows me here, I hire lots of workers.

**WU GANG**

Haven't you heard of workers not being paid?

**EMPLOYER**

No, it's required by law.

**WU GANG**

All we want is to be paid for our work. And when we're old, we want pensions, just like city people.

**NARRATION**

At the nearby public gardens, retirees with pensions and time on their hands while away the day. For many migrant workers, this can only be a distant dream.

**NARRATION**

Professor Wang often meets here with his post-graduate students.

**PROFESSOR WANG**

Studying law shouldn't just be about making money. There should be something more to it than that. It should be about becoming a more socially responsible person.

**NARRATION**

When China's leaders embraced a market economy in the late 1970s, a modern legal system was needed to go with it. The principle of "the rule of law" was only recently adopted in China's Constitution for the first time ever.

**PROFESSOR WANG**

The USA and Britain have had three hundred years to develop their legal systems. Remember, China's only had about twenty.

**NARRATION**

Many of the law classes at Sichuan University focus on labor and employment issues.

**PROFESSOR GAO**

Today we're going to talk about a real case involving a labor dispute.



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### **PROFESSOR MRS WANG**

What kind of case is it?

### **STUDENTS**

An administrative case.

### **STUDENT**

Since the worker didn't sign a contract with the company, it's difficult to prove he was an employee.

### **2<sup>ND</sup> STUDENT**

Not having a contract, he should try to find witnesses to prove that he was in fact employed by the company.

### **NARRATION**

Young law students may take the existence of a modern legal system for granted. But their teachers' generation remembers the Cultural Revolution, a period when the law was arbitrary and society was turned upside down.

### **PROFESSOR MISS WU**

In the 1970s, when the Cultural Revolution ended, people had no concept of the rule of law.

### **NARRATION**

Before the upheavals of the last century, China had a legal tradition that mainly served the authority of the state.

### **PROFESSOR MISS WU**

We never used to talk about individual rights because Chinese tradition emphasizes protecting society.

### **NARRATION**

Today, all citizens are recognized as equal before the law in principle – but it's a work-in-progress.

### **PROFESSOR WANG**

We're changing the relationship between the citizen and the state. Modernizing the law means developing the idea of individual rights. That requires changing people's way of thinking and thousand-year-old habits.



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### **NARRATION**

Soon these students will take their place as judges and lawyers in courtrooms across China.

### **NARRATION**

The nearby district court serves a large section of central Chengdu. Wide Angle was given exclusive access to film in the courts - a first for a Western documentary.

### **NARRATION**

Being involved in a lawsuit used to be considered a disgrace, but now the court's busy docket is filled with employee disputes, road accidents, divorce petitions, and migrant labor cases. Upstairs in the court offices, the judges are preparing their caseloads for the

day. In courthouses across China, the volume of disputes is on the rise. The law is a growth industry.

### **JUDGE YU**

The more the economy grows, the more we see problems that need legal action. Labor disputes are an important part of it all. Many migrant workers have no knowledge of their rights under the labor laws, or why they're taken advantage of.

### **JUDGE YU**

Be seated.

### **NARRATION**

Judge Yu Hong's first case for the day is a labor dispute. The case concerns Li Mingna, a young car salesman who's taking on his former employers. They're refusing to pay his severance. And though he only has a high school degree, Li is fighting the case himself. The company has sent its contract lawyer.

### **COMPANY LAWYER**

We asked the plaintiff to come back to work.

### **LI MINGNA**

I want my salary and compensation: \$433. It's impossible for me to go back to the company.

### **JUDGE YU**

Would you like the court to mediate?

### **COMPANY LAWYER**

Yes, I'd like that.



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**JUDGE YU**

What about you?

**LI MINGNA**

Yes.

**NARRATION**

Supervised mediation is often chosen. It allows both parties to reach a compromise while saving face – a key Chinese value.

**JUDGE YU**

Defendant, why haven't you paid the compensation?

**COMPANY LAWYER**

He was fired by the department, not the company. We want him to come back to work.

**JUDGE YU**

From Li's point of view, the signed document constituted a dismissal notice. Li Mingna stopped going to work. It meant the end of his contract. The court rules in favor of Li Mingna's claim. Please tell your company executives about our suggestion to pay him the compensation.

**NARRATION**

Judge Yu has managed to get both parties to agree to a settlement. It's a binding agreement that can't be overturned or appealed by either party.

**LI MINGNA**

I was really nervous, but I was confident about winning the case. It goes without saying, I'm very happy with the result.

**NARRATION**

But there are no guarantees Li will get the severance he's owed – up to half of court rulings in China go un-enforced.

**NARRATION**

In the morning's next case, the stakes are higher. Cao Xianjin, a 20 year old migrant worker, is accused of robbery with violence. There are no 12-person juries, as in American courts. Instead there's a panel of three judges – who reach a majority verdict. Cao is illiterate and penniless. A legal aid lawyer has been assigned by the state to defend him.



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### **LAWYER WANG HAI**

Lawyers don't make much money from legal aid cases like robbery, so they generally don't like doing them.

### **NARRATION**

Cao left his remote hill village in the south to support his parents – like many migrants. When the jobs didn't work out, Cao tried snatching a handbag. He was quickly caught, and was arrested carrying a box-cutter. But he denies the charge of violence.

### **CAO XIANJIN**

I didn't use the blade as a weapon. It was just a tool to cut the strap. I never intended to hurt the victim.

### **NARRATION**

Cross-examination of witnesses could back Cao's claim. But – as in 95 per cent of China's criminal trials – none appear. Cao's defence lawyer can only review written testimony gathered by the prosecution.

### **LAWYER WANG HAI**

The accused broke the law for the first time because of his stupidity and immaturity. Cao has no prior criminal record.

### **NARRATION**

The lawyer's disparaging words may help his client receive a lighter sentence.

In China over 99 per cent of criminal trials end in conviction compared with approximately 70 per cent in U.S. state courts. The odds are against Cao.

### **CAO XIANJIN**

I hope the court can give me a chance to start over.

### **JUDGE**

On behalf of Chengdu City People's Court, I now pronounce the verdict.

### **BACKGROUND VOICE**

All rise.

### **JUDGE**

The accused, Cao Xianjin, is sentenced to six years in prison for robbery, and a fine of \$130.



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**NARRATION**

The judges conclude that the handbag owner did get hurt in the course of the robbery and that Cao bears the responsibility.

**INTERVIEWER**

What do you want to say to your parents?

**CAO XIANJIN**

Dear mom and dad, please look after yourselves. I'll take care of you when I come out.

**LAWYER WANG HAI**

That was a harsh sentence. The law only stipulates three years for robbery. I think six is a bit harsh.

**NARRATION**

We left Chengdu and headed for the rural county town of Gongxian, 300 miles away. Apart from the coal mines, there are few job opportunities. Many have left for the big cities.

**NARRATION**

Just a few months ago, this was an open field. But in a clear signal, the authorities have just completed the biggest building in town – a new courthouse. Peng Tian is chief judge. The 36 judges under his supervision serve around half a million peasants in the outlying rural areas.

**NARRATION**

China's leaders believe that encouraging people to use the courts will be key to creating a "harmonious society".

**JUDGE PENG**

A harmonious society doesn't mean one in which there are no disputes. There are still disputes and conflicts in a harmonious society, yet they can be resolved quickly and efficiently.

**BACKGROUND VOICE**

Run!

**NARRATION**

The courts in China are an extension of the one-party system.

**BACKGROUND VOICE**

Stop!



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### **NARRATION**

Nearly all judges are members of the Communist Party.

### **BACKGROUND VOICE**

Salute!

### **NARRATION**

Senior judges are hired and fired by local Party officials, who also pay the court's running costs. As chief judge, Peng oversees politically sensitive cases in private, before they go to trial. These behind-the-scenes adjudication committees exist in all of China's courts and allow Party officials to influence cases and intervene in verdicts. Despite the lack of separation of powers, Judge Peng professes his faith in the system.

### **JUDGE PENG**

We are watched over by many official organs, like the National People's Congress, the higher courts, as well as the media. Because of this transparency, we must do everything according to the law.

### **NARRATION**

A third of the judges in Gongxian are women. Li Jia Qun has been a judge here for 22 years.

### **JUDGE LI**

These days women are in a much better position. There's more respect and less injustice. Women have a higher social status, so many of us work and participate more.

### **JUDGE LI**

Today we're on our way to a school, where we're going to talk to the students about the law. A lot of people get into trouble when they're young and end up as criminals.

### **JUDGE LI V/O**

The school wants me to talk to the kids as a judge. I feel more comfortable talking to them as a mother. I can communicate better that way.

### **NARRATION**

China's 150 million migrant population is expected to triple by 2025. Many of these children may one day become migrant workers.

### **JUDGE LI**

I'm Miss Li from Gongxian People's Court. My son is a little older than you, and he's also a middle school student. I work as a judge in the court and have dealt with many cases involving young people. Do you want to hear some of their stories?



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**CLASS**

Yes!

**NARRATION**

This morning, there are only two cases going through Gongxian's new court. Liu Ming Fu, a migrant laborer, is accused of stealing a moped. He has a string of convictions for petty theft. He spent 11 of the past 12 years in jail. The stolen moped was worth 700 dollars. For a migrant laborer, that's more than half a year's earnings.

**JUDGE**

When were you arrested?

**LIU MING FU**

On August 27th.

**JUDGE**

Who sentenced you?

**LIU MING FU**

The Gongxian People's Court.

**NARRATION**

In criminal trials, as in the United States, previous convictions are taken into account in sentencing.

**PROSECUTION**

The accused, Liu Ming Fu, has a prior record. According to Criminal Law 55, he should receive a harsher sentence.

**NARRATION**

In the court room next door, Mr. Li Ya Chun is trying to block a local government plan to demolish the house he lives in.

**LI YA CHUN**

We had a problem with our new house because we didn't apply for a building permit when we built it.

**NARRATION**

Like most Chinese towns, Gongxian is expanding rapidly. The latest plans are for a commercial development where these shops and fields now stand. But Mr. Li and his neighbors' building stands in the way.



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**LI YA CHUN**

I may have built the house, but you can't prove that it belongs to me.

**NARRATION**

Although Mr. Li built the house it actually belongs to someone else...

**JUDGE**

The court rejects the request made by the Gongxian Planning and Construction Ministry.

**NARRATION**

...So the town planners are suing the wrong man.

**NARRATION**

Mr. Li can breathe easily – until, that is, the town planners can work out who the real owner of the building is.

**NARRATION**

The case of the moped thief is also drawing to a close.

**JUDGE**

Liu Ming Fu, you will be sentenced to two years in prison and a fine of \$260. I hope that after you serve your sentence you will truly reform yourself. And become a better person. That when you're released, you'll be a good citizen and a useful member of society.

**JUDGE LI**

Because our country is now promoting the use of the law our People's Court must continue to connect with the public.

**NARRATION**

Judge Li and her colleagues regularly travel to the outlying hill villages around Gongxian with a mobile court. It's part of the government's effort to bring the emerging legal system to the farthest corners of the country.

**NARRATION**

Today's case is in Long Jia Village, about an hour's drive out of town. Around here, no one can remember ever seeing the inside of a court room – or the outside.

**NARRATION**

But Li Yao Quan is about to. He was born here and lives in the same traditional style as generations of his family. But there's a problem: his neighbor, Mrs. Li, no relation, whose recently-built house overshadows his property.



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### **NARRATION**

Over the years, the neighbors have had a string of petty disputes. But last spring their mutual dislike took a turn for the worse when someone set fire to his bamboo and banana trees. Li Yao Quan accused his neighbor.

### **NARRATION**

Although the government is encouraging people to use the courts, in rural areas many still prefer the traditional way: mediation through the village head. But in this case, the passions were too inflamed.

### **LI YAO QUAN**

There's a famous TV soap opera called "Justice Bao", about a real court judge who's always honest in his judgments. That's what gave me the idea of taking my neighbor to court.

### **VILLAGE HEADMAN**

To my knowledge, no one in the village, or the county for that matter, has ever asked for a trial to be held over such a trivial matter. Even more serious issues aren't brought before the court.

### **INTERVIEWER**

So why now?

### **VILLAGE HEADMAN**

Because they really don't like each other.

### **NARRATION**

Long Jia Village's first mobile court hearing is about to begin. Li Yao Quan's neighbour, Mrs. Li, has come with a legal aid lawyer. It's an event not to be missed. The entire village gathers for the proceedings.

### **LI YAO QUAN**

I'm asking the court to rule that the defendant pay me \$520 as compensation for my loss.

### **NARRATION**

This is Li Yao Quan's big moment, and he isn't going to be rushed.

### **LI YAO QUAN**

Altogether 150 red bamboo trees were damaged, 60 blue bamboo trees, 320 bitter bamboo trees, 4 banana trees, 5 pepper plants, 10 tea trees...



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**NARRATION**

The judge reads out the village head's reports of his previous attempts at mediation. The two neighbors couldn't even agree on the facts.

**DEFENSE LAWYER**

Our view is that the plaintiff's request is unreasonable and that he's exaggerating. We hope the court will investigate the facts, uncover the truth and give justice to my client.

**LI YAO QUAN**

If you look carefully, you can see she lit fires at these two places. This shows that she burned my property on purpose.

**JUDGE WANG**

Now, don't get carried away. You've got no proof for your story.

**LI YAO QUAN**

I do have proof. She's already admitted that 320 trees were damaged. I hope the People's Court will support my claim in full.

**JUDGE WANG**

The court needs evidence.

**LI YAO QUAN**

If someone is injured, the person responsible for the injury has to pay the necessary medical expenses. It's the same with my trees. Some of them are not dead, but badly damaged, and I need to be compensated.

**NARRATION**

The judges make one last attempt to get Mr. Li and his neighbor to settle the case amicably.

**JUDGE WANG**

Do you accept the court's offer to mediate?

**LI YAO QUAN**

You can mediate as much as you like, but I want at least \$130 to compensate for my 320 trees.

**NARRATION**

The two neighbors still won't talk to each other. The judges work on them individually, with a few words of encouragement.



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**JUDGE LI**

No matter how small the case, we treat it fairly. It's important that we all work together to resolve the matter. Just you be more careful next time you burn your weeds!

**JUDGE**

Is everyone ready? Let's start again.

**JUDGE**

We have reached an agreement. The defendant will pay \$52 in compensation to the plaintiff in one installment, immediately.

**JUDGE WANG**

Can you write a receipt?

**LI YAO QUAN**

I'm not sure how.

**JUDGES**

OK, take your time. We'll help you.

**JUDGE WANG**

This is how you write "compensation."

**JUDGE**

You're neighbors. There's a saying that good neighbors are more important than distant relatives.

**LI YAO QUAN**

This is the first time I went to court, and I think the judges seemed really concerned and took good care of the case.

**INTERVIEWER**

Why were you smiling so much?

**MRS LI**

I wasn't. I was just embarrassed about all the attention.

**LI YAO QUAN**

This is the first time I've had to write anything in fifty years!

**JUDGE LI**

I thought she seemed like an honest woman.



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**NARRATION**

The Gongxian judges run a regular information stall in the local market, another part of the plan to make the new laws more accessible.

**RESIDENT**

Do you have any flyers about housing disputes?

**JUDGES**

Yes.

**JUDGE LI**

If you want a divorce, you can do it through the court. You should bring your marriage certificate and your residency permit. But you have to think over many things: your relationship with your husband, your kids, how to divide up your property, what you want...

**NARRATION**

Tensions are never far below the surface.

**WOMAN**

The Party Secretary of our village is a real bully. We have to keep our heads down.

**JUDGE TIAN**

What's his name?

**WOMAN**

Zeng Qiang. He always bullies us.

**JUDGE TIAN**

Come to my office.

**WOMAN**

For six years the government has been trying to silence us.

**JUDGE TIAN**

I work as a judge for the local government. If you have anything to report, I'll sort it out for you. My name is Tian.

**JUDGE**

Talk to them.



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**WOMAN**

I don't want to talk to them, because I know all the officials are corrupt and are protecting each other.

**NARRATION**

The woman is quickly whisked away. Three quarters of all Chinese think corruption is rife in China. The government itself reports that tens of billions of dollars are embezzled by state officials every year.

**WOMAN**

They're all protecting each other. That's the way it is here, and there's nothing we can do about it.

**NARRATION**

The judges have an uphill task in asking people to trust them.

**NARRATION**

We'd reached the limits of what the courts would allow us to film, and headed back to the provincial capital, Chengdu. On the way, a sign of why the lack of trust in officials is so pervasive.

**NARRATION**

This cement factory is typical of the Maoist era industry of the 1950s and '60s. It spews clouds of dust and noxious gases over Gongxian and the surrounding area. As soon as our camera was spotted, some local peasants sought their chance to be heard.

**MAN**

The situation is very serious. The pollution is really bad.

**WOMAN**

It's dusty. Very, very dusty.

**MAN**

It's really harmful.

**MAN**

As you can see from the chimney, the smoke is very thick, full of dust.

**FACTORY WORKER**

I've got lung problems and they've never been checked out.



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**INTERVIEWER**

Do you think the factory should be shut down?

**MAN**

No. Not shut down. They should put a filter on the chimney.

**WOMAN**

Yes! It should be closed.

**MAN**

They should at least do something about the pollution. According to the law, they should invest in equipment to help prevent it.

**INTERVIEWER**

Do you think the pollution is affecting your baby?

**MAN**

Just look at his hair! It's yellow, not black.

**INTERVIEWER**

Have you talked to the court?

**WOMAN**

It's useless. They just give you the run-around. No one wants to take responsibility. We complain but they just ignore us. The problems can't be solved.

**CROWD**

That's how our society is.

**NARRATION**

Their frustration is only made worse by the difficulty in accessing lawyers – with one lawyer for every ten thousand people, they're few and far between. Lawyers rely on local officials to renew their licenses from year to year. It's one of the reasons taking on cases against officials and state-linked companies can be a risky business.

**NARRATION**

Finding a lawyer willing to talk about the dangers proved difficult. But we found one man. Ran Tong. He accepts the cases other lawyers won't touch.

**RAN TONG**

The most vulnerable people face problems and uncertainties. Without our help they'll panic. Their situation will seem hopeless. We lawyers and the government should be concerned about this. It's easier said than done!



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**NARRATION**

Among Ran Tong's clients are workers cheated out of their wages by employers.

**WOMAN**

My son can't go to school because we can't afford the fees. We can't even pay for food, let alone school.

**NARRATION**

Ran Tong took us to the outskirts of his hometown Chengdu. All around are farmlands being turned into concrete and glass. Scenes repeated around China's main cities.

**RAN TONG**

Look at this. It all used to be farm land. All these areas are newly built. Soon it will be the best part of town. The pride of Chengdu!

**NARRATION**

But a closer look shows the story is very different. It's riddled with land disputes – a legacy of the collective ownership established under Communism.

Property developers, conspiring with government officials, grab land cheaply from peasants whose land rights are unclear under the law.

**NARRATION**

Last year, developers kicked Mrs. Li and her family off their land.

**MRS. LI**

Our old house was over there. They promised that after the road was finished, they'd give us land to rebuild our house.

**NARRATION**

The family had to build themselves a temporary shelter.

**MRS. LI**

We're in a very bad situation. I'm very angry. They don't care about our lives. They didn't listen to us at all.

**WOMAN**

They want to sell us an apartment at \$23 per square foot.

**MRS. LI**

How can we afford that?



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### **RAN TONG**

Well, that's what they cost these days!

### **WOMAN**

If we don't agree we'll lose our home and our business. That's why I say the property developers and the government are in this together.

### **OLD MAN**

The truth is the rich can have it all their own way. The court just does what the government tells it to.

### **NARRATION**

Our camera team was alerted that local thugs were coming to stop the filming. We left quickly.

### **NARRATION**

All around the outskirts of town were similar cases. Ran Tong took us to meet another client. Mr. Lai, a village head, was negotiating to save his community from being demolished. But the property developers apparently had the law on their side.

### **MR. LAI**

The police came and dragged me out of the house. They were kicking and stomping on me. They threw me in jail. I was covered in bruises. I couldn't stand for fifteen days.

### **NARRATION**

Mr. Lai was jailed on trumped up charges of hit and run driving. His real crime had been to stand up to the property company and local officials.

### **NARRATION**

If land cases are always controversial, dam projects can produce the most extreme conflicts. The hills and rivers of Sichuan Province are being developed to meet the growing demand for electricity. On the Dadu river, construction of the Pubugou dam is displacing 100,000 peasants whose homes will be submerged. The central government allocated funds to compensate them, but when local officials siphoned the money off, there were riots.

### **RAN TONG**

I realized the seriousness of the case when there wasn't a single mention of it in the press.

### **NARRATION**

News did trickle out to the foreign media. Ten thousand armed police were sent in. A policeman was beaten to death. Three teenagers were convicted of the killing. Ran Tong



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lodged an appeal for a fifteen year old called Cai Zhao. No pictures of him or the incident are available and access for filming is still denied.

### **RAN TONG**

Although we were barely paid, we worked hard and were meticulous with the case. It's my responsibility as a lawyer.

### **NARRATION**

Ran Tong regularly contacted the court for an appeal date. A year later, rumors spread that the case had been heard in secret. His 15 year old client was given a life sentence. The oldest of the three, eighteen year old Chen Tao, was secretly executed.

### **RAN TONG**

I was in total shock. I'd never heard of a suspect being executed without his lawyer even being informed.

### **NARRATION**

Ran Tong learned the judges at the Sichuan High Court had tried the case six months before. China is estimated to execute up to 8000 people a year, more than the rest of the world combined.

### **RAN TONG**

First a female judge said the case was "sensitive." Then the male judge in charge said that because of the sensitivity of the case, they used "internal rules" which allowed them to take action without informing the lawyers. I was very emotional and demanded they show me these rules. Nobody told us about this when I studied law. In all my years as a lawyer, I've never heard of such a thing. I'm saying this to you quite calmly, but I can tell you, at the time, I was furious.

### **NARRATION**

The High Court declared the case closed and told Ran Tong there was nothing more to be done. Work has resumed at the Pubugou dam, forcing out the 100,000 whose homes will be submerged.

### **NARRATION**

Back on the outskirts of Chengdu, Mr. Lai the village leader who'd stood up to the property company, is a free man – thanks to Ran Tong.

### **MR. LAI**

Thank you very much for all your hard work. You've done so much for people like us.

### **NARRATION**



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After a hard fought court case Ran Tong proved that Mr. Lai had been wrongfully imprisoned, and got him released.

**RAN TONG**

I'm just an ordinary person like you.

**MR. LAI**

Even though you say you're just ordinary, you have achieved so much. You've helped us enormously.

**RANG TONG**

I'm no superman

**NARRATION**

Now that he's gotten Mr. Lai out of prison, Ran Tong plans to fight the property company that took the village's land in the first place. Lawyers like Ran Tong have to tread carefully through a web of connections between business interests, local officials, and the law. They risk being harassed or detained -- even jailed. To be completely honest, I can only do my best to help people within the limits of the law. I don't want to risk my life for them because I have my own responsibilities. My mother's in her seventies and I have a dear wife.

**NARRATION**

The state recently passed a new property law. But the law does not clearly define who owns what, and places no new limits on the government's power to expropriate. If Ran Tong loses his case against the property developers, there may be no place for Mr. Lai and his fellow villagers in this corner of the New China.

**RAN TONG**

Lawyers, judges, and prosecutors - each play a crucial role in the legal system. They're like a chair with three legs. Take one away and the chair will fall down.

**NARRATION**

China is already home to some of the world's steepest divisions between rich and poor. There are fears for the expansion of a social underclass with little trust in the authorities and the rule of law.

**PROFESSOR WANG**

How can we shore up trust in the law?

**FEMALE STUDENT**

We have to wake up to what's really going on in China.



## **The People's Court Film Transcript**

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### **2<sup>ND</sup> FEMALE STUDENT**

Good judges help – they shine out as an example. Their moral judgment encourages people to have more trust in the law.

### **MALE STUDENT**

China has a long tradition of centralized government. It's not easy to change the system. It's a gradual process. It may take a very long time, but we must stay optimistic.

### **PROFESSOR WANG**

My personal view is that we need the judiciary to be independent. The legal system should be separate from all outside influences.

### **JUDGE LI**

We are the people's judges. We always strive to help the people. If we resolve a case well, everyone should be satisfied.

### **NARRATION**

At Sichuan University's practice court, the law students finally reach a verdict.

### **STUDENT JUDGE**

All rise! The court rejects the plaintiff's request for compensation.

### **NARRATION**

Soon these students will choose their career paths – will they become state judges like Judge Li, or crusading lawyers like Ran Tong? While the Communist Party maintains its

dominance it has embarked on a bold potentially risky experiment to embrace the market economy and create an entirely new legal system. China's leaders know for their experiment to succeed, the people need to trust the People's Court.

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**The People's Court  
Film Transcript**

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**The People's Court  
Film Transcript**

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**The People's Court  
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