

Yang Jianli

Yang Jianli was born in Shandong Province in northern China and graduated from college at the age of 19. A rising star in the Chinese Communist Party, Jianli quickly became disenchanted by the corruption and duplicity he witnessed in the communist system. He left China to pursue a career in Mathematics at U.C. Berkeley. In 1989, at the age of 26, his fellow graduate students at Berkeley elected him to go back to Beijing in support of their counterparts in China who were demonstrating for democracy in Tiananmen Square. After escaping the gruesome massacre, Jianli dedicated his entire life in promoting a peaceful democratization. He received his Ph.D. in Mathematics from U.C. Berkeley and Ph.D. in Political Economics from Harvard Kennedy School of Government. When he returned to China again in 2002, he was put in prison for 5 years. Upon his release, Jianli founded Initiatives for China.