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Good Characters announces the Chinese Character of the Year 2020 for America.

Good Characters, the California-based naming consultancy that specializes in Chinese languages, announces 抗 (kàng, pronounced kahng, meaning anti-, resist, fight, combat, disobey, defy, or refuse) as the Chinese Character of the Year 2020 for America.

Why was 抗 (kàng) chosen?

You will probably agree that the largest and most far-reaching events in America in 2020 were a pandemic, protests, and a contentious election. And 抗 (kàng) is the single best character to represent the pandemic and the social and political rivalries of 2020.

Let's look at specific examples involving 抗 (kàng) in words and terms:

In the news and at the top of people's minds every day is 抗疫 (kàng yì), meaning anti-epidemic, or, in 2020 context, battling a pandemic.

The character 抗 consists of 扌 on the left, representing a hand, and 亢 on the right. Originally 亢 was a pictograph of the neck; the dot and the horizontal line represent the head and the lines below represent two vertical neck cords or bands, or they can be seen as the shape of the neck to the shoulders.

Relating this character to combating COVID-19, we have learned that frequent hand-washing (扌, hand) and filtering what we breathe in (from nose into throat; within the neck, 亢) reduce the virus's spread.

2020 was also a year of activism regarding many different issues conducted by different groups. The constantly mentioned word 抗議 (kàng yì) means protest.

People often raise their hands (扌) in a protest, voicing (亢) their opinions, whether they feel they can breathe (亢) or not. 2020 is also the year that many cities, states, and counties put an end to police neck (亢) restraints.

If you leave aside what the character represents and just look at it with your imagination, doesn't 抗 look like a person (亢) — with the dot on top as the head, the horizontal line as arms wide open, and the vertical lines as legs apart in a defiant stance — holding a staff (扌) like a warrior?

Or looking at it in a more morbid sense, 亢 can be a pictograph of the head and the neck separated, which might end up happening to people who stick their necks out to resist or disobey.

Back to the pandemic. Since there is no cure for COVID-19, researchers are working on both drug treatments and a vaccine. Some antiviral (抗病毒, kàng bìngdú) medicines show promise for treating coronavirus. And vaccines help your body develop specialized antibodies (抗體, kàng tǐ) to fight infections, resulting in immunity (抵抗力, dǐ kàng lì).

In the 2020 election, the media's prediction of a Democratic landslide didn't turn out to be true. Instead, support for the two parties was about equal. And the best word for this is 抗衡 (kàng héng), meaning contend with or against, match, or counterbalance.

In terms of U.S.-China relations, China seems resolved to defy (抗衡, contend against) the U.S. while at the same time calling for cooperation. PRC leader Xi congratulated President-elect Joe Biden and said he hopes China and the U.S. will “uphold the spirit of non-conflict, non-confrontation, mutual respect, and win-win cooperation.”

Confrontation is 對抗 (duì kàng). The U.S.-China confrontation intensified during 2020.

In conclusion, 2020 has been a year of 抗 (kàng): fighting a pandemic, protesting injustices, and contending in elections. It is Good Characters' hope that as we enter into the new year, Americans will succeed in fighting the good fight, defy the pessimistic expectations of many, and create a better and greater year in 2021.

A Brief History

In 1995, the Japanese Kanji Proficiency Society began its annual announcement of the kanji of the year. Kanji are the Chinese characters adapted for the Japanese language. “Kanji,” quite literally, translates to — kan-: “Han Chinese” and -ji: “characters.”

December 12 was pronounced “Kanji Day,” the date the society announces its annual Kanji of the Year because 1212 can be read as じいじ一字一字 (ii ji ichi ji), literally “good character one character,” meaning “one good character” in Japanese.

Eleven years later, in 2006, the Chinese character of the year began to be announced annually in China. A few years later, Taiwan, Malaysia, Singapore, Macao, and finally, Hong Kong each started to choose its own Chinese character of the year. The

Character of the Year is something like *Time* magazine's Person of the Year — an image selected toward the year's end that reflects, or sums up, many of the main events, thoughts, and attitudes of the year.

In 2017, after another 11 years had passed, Good Characters, as Chinese language brand naming specialists, thought it would be fitting to designate a Chinese character of the year from the American perspective.

"We thought it would be fitting that there should be a Chinese character of the year from the American perspective," Andy Chuang, Chinese naming expert and founder of Good Characters, said. "After all, Chinese is the third most-spoken language at home in the United States according to the U.S. Census Bureau."

The Good Characters Chinese Character of the Year 2017 for America was 狂 (kuáng).
<https://service.goodcharacters.com/daily/character-of-the-year-2017.html>

The Good Characters Chinese Character of the Year 2018 for America was 戰 (zhàn, pronounced jahn).
<https://service.goodcharacters.com/daily/character-of-the-year-2018.html>

The Good Characters Chinese Character of the Year 2019 for America was 亂 (luàn, pronounced lwahn).
<https://service.goodcharacters.com/daily/assets/character-of-the-year-2019.pdf>

Chinese Character of the Year 2020

The Good Characters Chinese Character of the Year 2020 for America is 抗 (kàng, pronounced kahng), meaning anti-, resist, fight, combat, disobey, defy, or refuse.

Permanent Link: <https://service.goodcharacters.com/daily/assets/character-of-the-year-2020.pdf>

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