

China Initiative: Past and Present

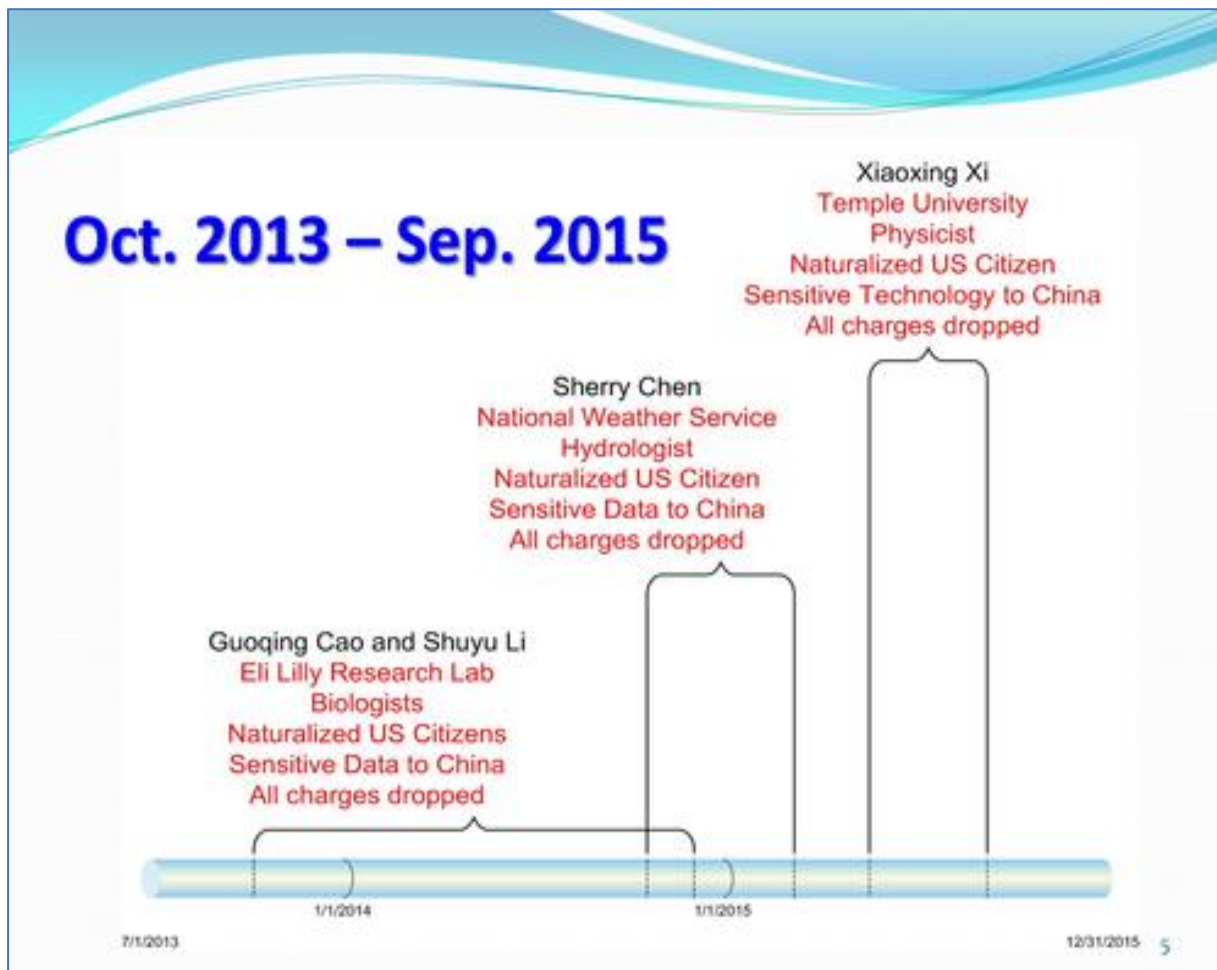
中国行动的前世今生

Michigan State University
Asian Pacific American Studies Program Webinar

Jeremy Wu, Ph.D.
Founder and Co-Organizer, APA Justice

March 12, 2025

How APA Justice Started in 2015

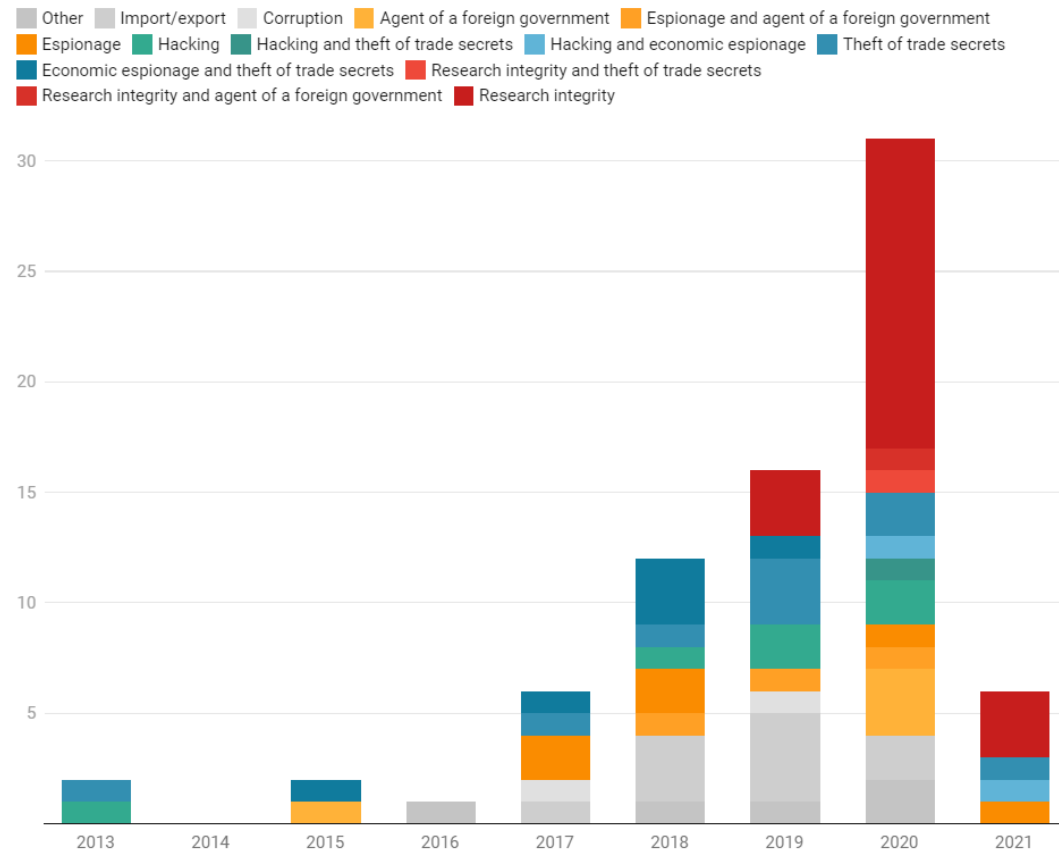


- Four Chinese American scientists in private industry, government, and academia, all naturalized U.S. citizens, were accused of passing secrets to China. All charges were dropped.
- Congresswoman Judy Chu, Chair of CAPAC, called for a platform to address racial profiling and related justice and fairness issues for the Asian American community.



11/01/2018 Launched; 02/23/2022 Ended

Cases charged under the China Initiative by year



The "China Initiative"

A US government national-security program, created to address economic espionage, disproportionately targeted Asian Americans and academic communities for administrative errors and harmed academic freedom and open science.

THE NUMBERS

Known Cases

77

Known Impacted Individuals

162

Days Lasted

1,210

Prosecutions

“I am the luckiest among the unlucky.”

MIT Professor Gang Chen

COURT LISTENER

From Free Law Project, a 501(c)(3) non-profit.

Opinions ▾ RECAP Archive Oral Arguments Judges Financial Disclosures

United States *v.* Chen (1:21-cr-10018)

District Court, D. Massachusetts

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Last Updated: Jan. 6, 2023, 5:40 p.m. EST

Assigned To: Patti B. Saris

Referred To: Donald L. Cabell

Date Filed: Jan. 19, 2021

Date Terminated: Jan. 20, 2022

Date of Last Known Filing: April 26, 2022

DOCKET ENTRIES

PARTIES AND ATTORNEYS

Search this docket



Filed

MM/DD/YYYY

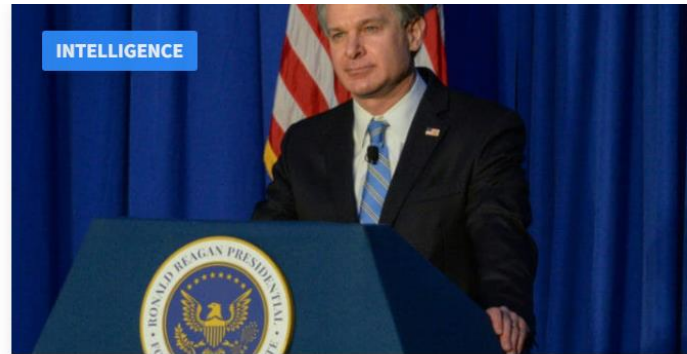
to

MM/DD/YYYY

Document Number	Date Filed	Description
1	Jan 13, 2021	ELECTRONIC NOTICE of Case Assignment (Finn, Mary) [1:21-mj-01011-DLC] (Entered Main Document Case Assig

3/12/2025

Investigations



The Chinese Threat is Real: FBI Says They Average a New Counterintelligence Case Every 12 Hours

Christopher Burgess / Feb 8, 2022

“Of the nearly **5,000** active FBI counterintelligence cases currently underway across the country, almost **half are related to China.**”

Christopher Wray, FBI Director
July 7, 2020

Jeremy.S.Wu@gmail.com

Surveillance

MENU

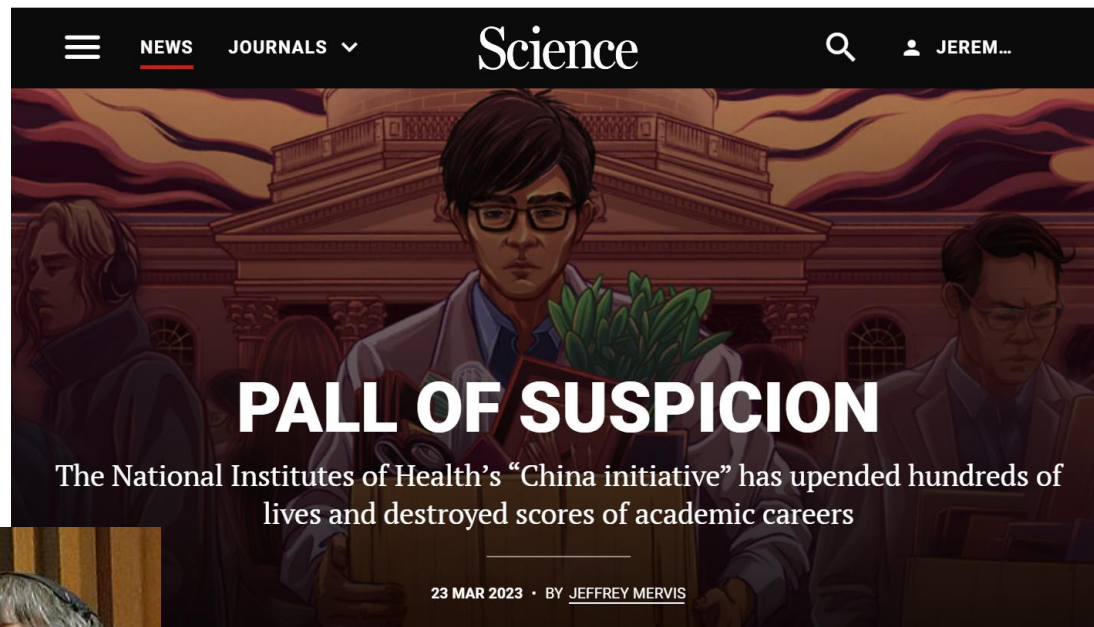
LAWFARE

FISA REFORM

FISA Section 702 (2008-2023?)

By Adam Klein Tuesday, December 27, 2022, 8:30 AM

“Traditional” FISA, which requires lengthy applications to the secret FISA court, was used in fewer than **500** cases in 2022. Section 702, which doesn’t require individual court orders, can cover orders of magnitude more targets: more than **230,000** in 2021.



23 MAR 2023 • BY JEFFREY MERVIS

Dr. Michael Lauer
then head of
NIH's extramural
research



Science Editorial: “The institutions and the NIH need to resolve this. Given the information available in the public domain, the scientific community could easily conclude that this is a xenophobic program to harm Chinese scientists and cut off international scientific cooperation. The federal government needs to figure out a way to let the NIH and the institutions reassure the community that this is all worth it.”

91%
China

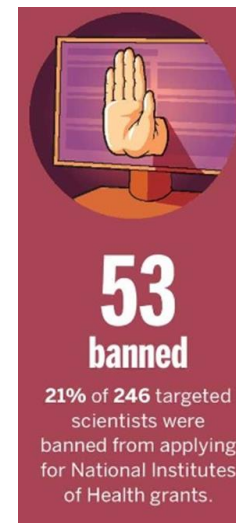
For **225** of the cases
China was the
country of concern.

85%
male

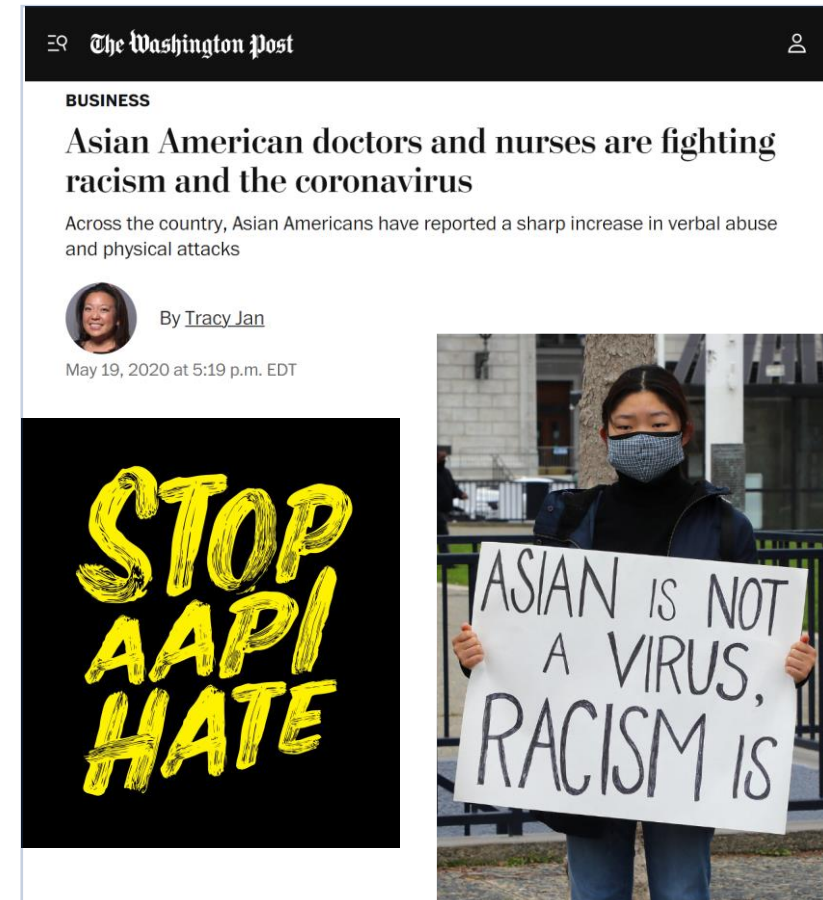
199 of the targeted
scientists are men.

81%
Asian

182 of the targeted
scientists self-
reported as Asian.



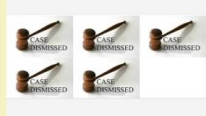
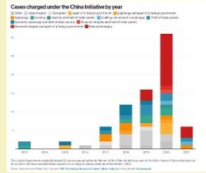
NIH's “China Initiative”



12 Timecards on the “China Initiative”

<https://www.apajusticetaskforce.org/the-china-initiative>

Nov 1, 2018	1. DOJ launched China Initiative U.S. Attorney General Jeff Session launched the China Initiative to combat national security threats and economic espionage emanating from the People's Republic of China. Without a definition of what constitutes a China Initiative case, it drifted to profile and stigmatize Asian Americans and individuals of Asian descent, creating severe damage and a chilling effect on scientific collaboration and harming U.S. leadership in science and technology.	 Read more
Dec 7, 2018	2. Attempted Dialogue with FBI Failed A month after the launch of the China Initiative, a group of community leaders met with a senior FBI official and representatives at the FBI headquarters in Washington DC to convey concerns raised within the Chinese American community about the role of bias in its investigations, among other issues, in a futile attempt to establish a continuing dialogue to address the concerns.	 Read more
Apr 19, 2019	3. Media Reports on Purge by NIH and FBI Headlined by "How Not to Cure Cancer – The U.S. is purging Chinese scientists in a New Red Scare," investigative reports emerged on FBI and NIH nationwide activities targeting individuals of Asian descent, especially biomedical researchers in the Houston area.	 Read more
Aug 21, 2019	4. Shift to Profiling Scientists of Chinese Origin Kansas University Professor Feng "Franklin" Tao became the first academic and scientist of Chinese origin to be indicted in August 2019. He was followed by Professors Anming Hu and Gang Chen, Researcher Dr. Qing Wang, New York Police Department Officer Baimadajie Angwang, a group of five STEM researchers and students from China, and others. The year 2020 saw the injustice inflicted by the government shifting and intensifying its profiling of scientists, most of them of Chinese origin, for "research integrity" in the name of national security.	 Read more
Feb 27, 2020	5. Communities Respond with Resilience From generation to generation, the Asian Pacific American communities have been resilient in fighting against discrimination and protecting their civil rights. It is a continuing effort that transcends the China Initiative, which again confirms the commitment and determination of the communities from elected officials to organizations and individuals.	 Read more
Jan 5, 2021	6. Letter to President-Elect Biden to End China Initiative On January 5, 2021, a coalition of organizations and individuals wrote to President-elect Joe Biden, requesting him to end the China Initiative and take steps to combat racial profiling. Two weeks later, the indictment of MIT Professor Gang Chen ignited the "We Are All Gang Chen" movement. Between September 2020 and June 2021, five organizations partnered to produce a series of five educational webinars to raise nationwide awareness about the China Initiative.	 Read more

Jun 30, 2021	7. Congressional Roundtable on Racial Profiling Following a public campaign led by Maryland State Senator Susan Lee and a coalition in February 2022, Reps. Jamie Raskin and Judy Chu hosted a Democratic Member Roundtable on "Researching while Chinese American: Ethnic Profiling, Chinese American Scientists and a New American Brain Drain" in June 2022. It was the first congressional hearing where the profiling of Chinese American scientists and the damage to American leadership in science and technology were heard.	 Read more
Jul 22, 2021	8. Five Visa Fraud Cases Dismissed The abrupt dismissal of visa fraud and other charges against five scientists from China in five separate "China Initiative" cases and the FBI reports from the discovery process exposed the weaknesses of the prosecutions, dissension in the FBI's own ranks, and exaggerated claims of national security risks by the government.	 Read more
Sep 8, 2021	9. Stanford Faculty Starts Nationwide Campaign to End China Initiative A group of 177 Stanford University faculty members sent an open letter to US Attorney General Merrick B. Garland, requesting that he terminate the China Initiative. The campaign became national and continued until the end of the China Initiative. More than 3,100 faculty, researchers, and scientists representing over 230 institutions from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico co-signed the letters.	 Read more
Sep 15, 2021	10. The China Initiative Unraveling and Out of Control Multiple media reports the China Initiative as unraveling and out of control after cases that were sensationally publicized early on by the government began to be dismissed or acquitted in courts rapidly in a span of several months.	 Read more
Dec 2, 2021	11. MIT Technology Review Investigative Reports On December 2, 2021, MIT Technology Review published two investigative reports on the China Initiative as newly appointed Assistant Attorney General Matt Olsen was conducting a review of the initiative.	 Read more
Feb 23, 2022	12. China Initiative Ends Assistant Attorney General Matt Olsen announced the end of the China Initiative. The 1,210 days of the Initiative were extremely damaging to individuals and their families, as well as the Asian American and scientific communities. The end of the China Initiative is a welcomed start to correct the harms it caused. APA Justice is committed to continue to work to address racial profiling and seek justice and fairness for the Asian Pacific American communities.	 Read more

Dark Clouds Before The Storm

“Nontraditional Collectors”

Hearing Type: Open

Date & Time: Tuesday, February 13, 2018 - 9:30am

Location: Hart 216



“Research Integrity”

In August 2018, NIH sent 10,000 letters to institutions, asserting threats to U.S. “research integrity.”

“The 5th Column”



“Thousand Grains of Sand”

“If a beach was an espionage target, ... the Chinese would send in a thousand tourists, each assigned to collect a single grain of sand. When they returned, they would be asked to shake out their towels. And they would end up knowing more about the sand than anyone else.”

- Paul Moore, FBI analyst, 1990s

Dialogue vs Monologues

2018/12/07 FBI HQ Visit



2024/06/06 Rice University Forum



A DIALOGUE BETWEEN ACADEMIC AND ASIAN AMERICAN COMMUNITIES AND THE FBI

Impacted Persons



Gang Chen



Anming Hu



Franklin Tao



Angwang



qianp.com

Who Was Dr. Jane Wu? Northwestern University Neuroscientist Dies By Suicide

Story by Times Now Digital • 5mo • 3 min read



Jane Wu

MIT
Technology
Review

Featured Topics Newsletters Events Podcasts

UNDER THE DOME

We are all Gang Chen

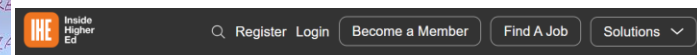
Why we pushed back when the US government accused our colleague of fraud.

By Yoel Fink and Yasheng Huang

June 29, 2021



Jeremy.S.Wu@gmail.com



Former Professor Wins \$1.4M Despite Charges of Undisclosed Chinese Ties

Li Wang

3/12/2025

We Are Not Alone

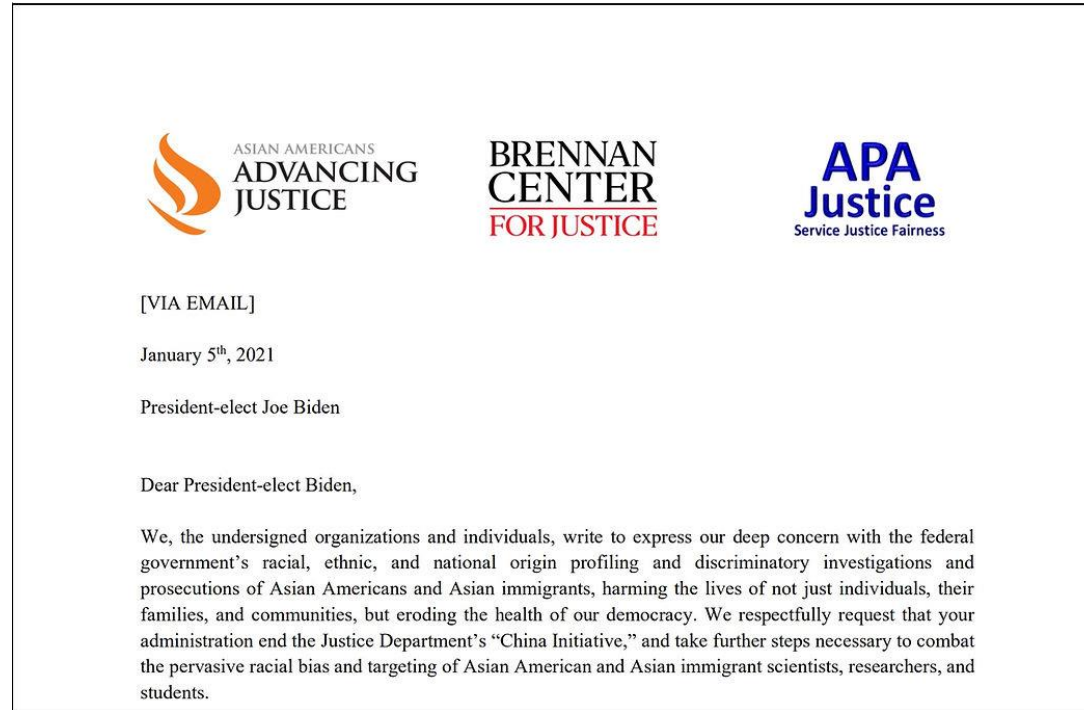
Individuals and APA Community

- Stories of Strength
- Community Support
- Civic Engagement
- Lessons in Perseverance

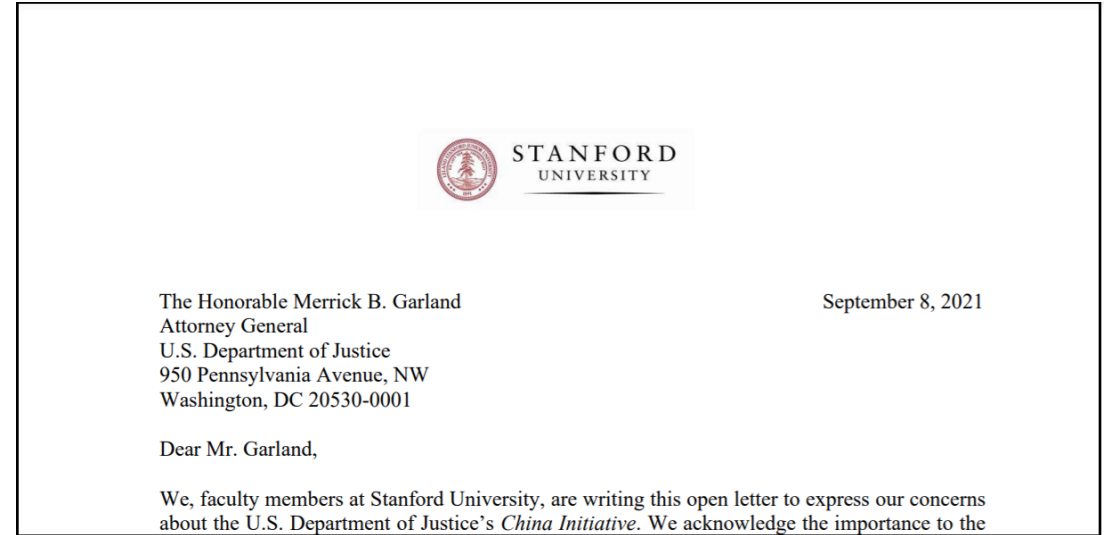
And beyond...

- Support from Civil Rights Organizations
- Academic and Scientific Communities
- Political and Legislative Support
- Public Awareness and Advocacy Efforts

Making Our Voices Heard: Petitioning



2021/01/05 30,000 signatures collected and sent to President-elect Biden



2021/09/08 Stanford University faculty started a nationwide letter campaign to the Attorney General.

- 241 institutions
- 3,119 faculty co-signers
- UC Berkeley: 214 co-signers
- Michigan State University: 61 co-signers
- 50 states + DC + Puerto Rico

CAPAC Support



2021/06/30 Democratic Member Roundtable:
Researching While Chinese American

https://youtu.be/G24w7d2_owo (1:42:15)

- Publicly condemning racial profiling and calling for an end to the China Initiative
- Co-hosting a roundtable and raising the issue in Congressional hearings
- Supporting faculty and advocacy efforts against racial profiling
- Opposing the revival of the China Initiative and calling for further accountability

Inform and Educate



*The Inauguration of A Webinar Series on
The Human and Scientific Costs of “China Initiative”*

Steven Chu 朱棣文 : Nobel Laureate, Stanford University Professor of Physics and Former U.S. Secretary of Energy

Margaret Lewis 陸梅吉 : Professor, Seton Hall University School of Law

John Yang : President & Executive Director, Asian American Advancing Justice | AAJC

Mike German : Fellow, Brennan Center for Justice at NYU Law School

Livestream to FaceBook on Wed, September 30, 2020 | 8 PM EDT, 5 PM
@ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/386238778398753> PDT

**Webinar:
Policy Needs
for U.S. Science
and Scientists**

**Wednesday,
December 2, 2020
8pm ET / 7pm CT / 6pm
MT / 5pm PT / 3pm HT**

RSVP:
<https://tinyurl.com/yx6tru9>

**Building Coalition Against
“China Initiative” Discrimination:
Fighting racial targeting of Asian Americans and
communities of color, past & present**

**Wednesday, Feb. 24, 2021
8pm ET / 7pm CT / 6pm MT / 5pm PT / 3pm HT**

Rep. Judy Chu
U.S. Representative (CA-27), Chair
of Congressional Asian Pacific
American Caucus

Faiza Patel
Director of Liberty & National
Security Program,
Brennan Center for Justice

Karen Korematsu
Founder & Executive Director,
Fred T. Korematsu Institute

Becky Monroe
Director of Fighting Hate & Bias
Program, Leadership Conference
on Civil and Human Rights

Leslie Wong
President Emeritus,
San Francisco State University

RSVP:
<https://bit.ly/3obRcBa>

**第四次“中国行动”座谈会：法律
资源和政策倡导：如何面对
“中国行动”中的种族定性**

**2021年4月28日星期三
8pm ET / 7pm CT / 6pm MT / 5pm PT / 3pm HT**

Patrick Toomey
Senior Staff Attorney, ACLU
National Security Project, ACLU

John Yang 杨重远
President & Executive Director,
Asian Americans
Advancing Justice | AAJC

Frank Wu 吴华扬
President, Queens College, City
University of New York

Susan Lee 李凤迁
Maryland State Senator,
Majority Whip

Michael German
Fellow, Brennan Center for
Justice, New York University Law
School

报名链接:
<https://bit.ly/3B0UaE>



2019/04/19 Science

Science

SCIENCEINSIDER | POLICY

Exclusive: Major U.S. cancer center ousts 'Asian' researchers after NIH flags their foreign ties

Chinese American community fears ethnic targeting at MD Anderson by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and National Institutes of Health

2019/04/19 Houston Chronicle

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LOCAL // HOUSTON

MD Anderson ousts 3 scientists over concerns about Chinese conflicts of interest

2019/06/23 Bloomberg Business

Businessweek | Feature

The U.S. Is Purging Chinese Cancer Researchers From Top Institutions

The NIH and the FBI are targeting ethnic Chinese scientists, including U.S. citizens, searching for a cancer cure. Here's the first account of what happened to Xifeng Wu.

Role of the Media

2021/06/08 Knox News

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knox news.

[News] Sports Business Go Knoxville Shopper News Advertise Obituaries eNewspaper Legals

CRIME & COURTS

University of Tennessee assured NASA that professor had no prohibited ties to China

 **Jamie Satterfield**
Knoxville News Sentinel

2021/06/13 Knox News

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CRIME & COURTS

Trial reveals federal agents falsely accused a UT professor born in China of spying

 **Jamie Satterfield**
Knoxville News Sentinel

2021/12/02 MIT Technology Review

POLICY

The US crackdown on Chinese economic espionage is a mess. We have the data to show it.

The US government's China Initiative sought to protect national security. In the most comprehensive analysis of cases to date, MIT Technology Review reveals how far it has strayed from its goals.

By Eileen Guo, Jess Aloe, & Karen Hao

December 2, 2021

POLICY

We built a database to understand the China Initiative. Then the government changed its records.

Our monthslong investigation revealed a major DOJ effort troubled by shifting narratives and a lack of focus. Here's how we got the facts.

By Eileen Guo, Jess Aloe, & Karen Hao

December 2, 2021

End of The China Initiative

2022/02/23 Announcement by Matt Olsen



Why Not (歪脑) video: <https://bit.ly/41yLa9S> (16:39)

1. "We Are All Gang Chen" 我们都是陈刚
2. The "China Initiative" "中国行动"的前生今世
3. A Scientist's Loyalty 科学家为谁而忠诚

Did The China Initiative End?

APA Justice statement in part:

Ending the “China Initiative” is a promising start to correct the harms caused by the initiative, apply lessons learned, and rebuild community trust and confidence that were lost in our law enforcement and judicial system.

But we emphasize that this is just a start.

We, like many other organizations and individuals, have broad concerns that the end of the initiative is just in name but does not reflect a change in fact and substance.

COMMUNITY TOWN HALL
THE END OF THE "CHINA INITIATIVE"

3pm ET | 2pm CT | 12pm PT
THURSDAY, MARCH 17

An open forum for community members to ask a panel of experts questions about the recent announcement from the Department of Justice to end the "China Initiative."

THU NGUYEN
OCA National

HAIBEI SHUE
United Chinese Americans

BRIAN SUN
Committee of 100

MARGARET LEWIS
Seton Hall University

FRANK WU
Queens College, CUNY

PATRICK TOOMEY
ACLU

YASHENG HUANG
Asian American Scholar Forum

ARYANI ONG
Asian American Federal Employees for Nondiscrimination (AAFEN)

XIAOXING XI
Temple University

JOHN C. YANG
Advancing Justice — AAJC

REP. JUDY CHU
(CA-27), CAPAC Chair

REP. TED LIEU
(CA-33)

FAIZA PATEL
Brennan Center

JEREMY WU
Asian Pacific American Justice

REGISTER: bit.ly/0317townhall
Note: Briefing will not be recorded.

Logos: ADVANCING JUSTICE, AAFEN, ACLU, AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, APA Justice, BRENNAN CENTER FOR JUSTICE, ICA, THE LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE, ADVOCATE, WFA, AASF

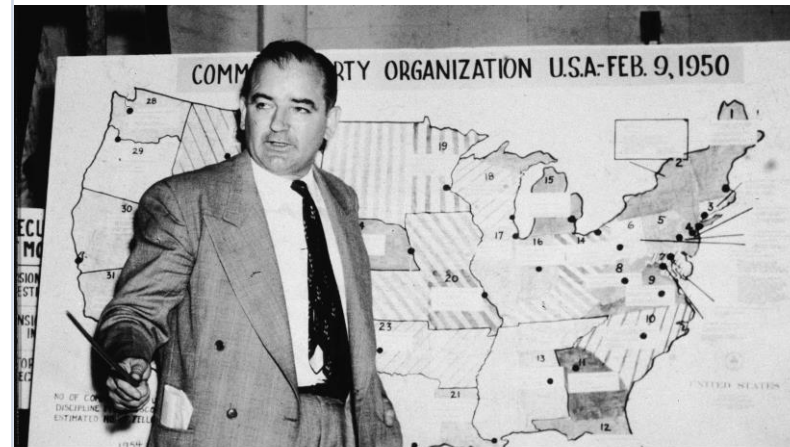
Turbulent Times Again

Legalizing Discrimination



3/12/2025

Return of McCarthyism



The Red Scare: How Joseph McCarthy's Anti-Communist Hysteria Left a Mark on the U.S.

The Red Scare ruined lives and movements.

Jeremy.S.Wu@gmail.com

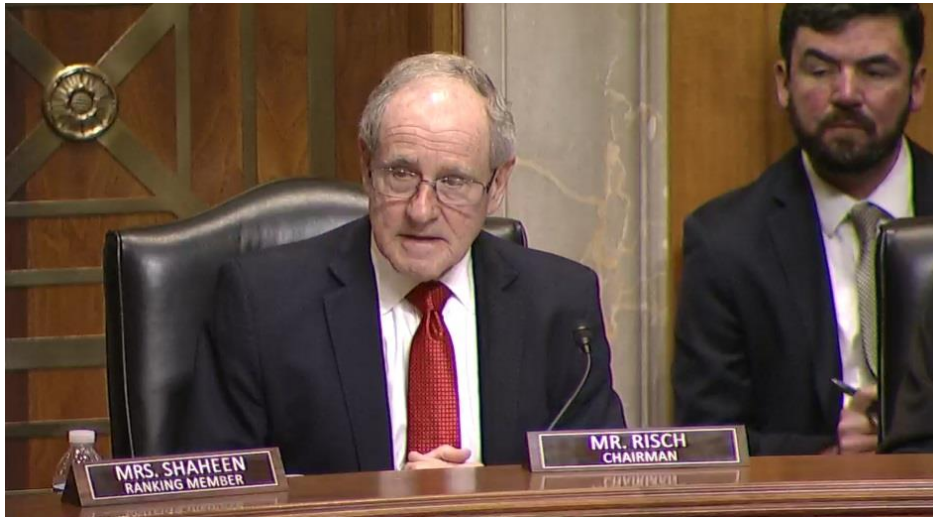
Warrantless Surveillance



Section 702 is up for reauthorization; it expires on Dec. 31, 2025

17

Return of The China Initiative?



“... each [Chinese student]”, whether they like it or not, is an agent of the Chinese Communist Party.”

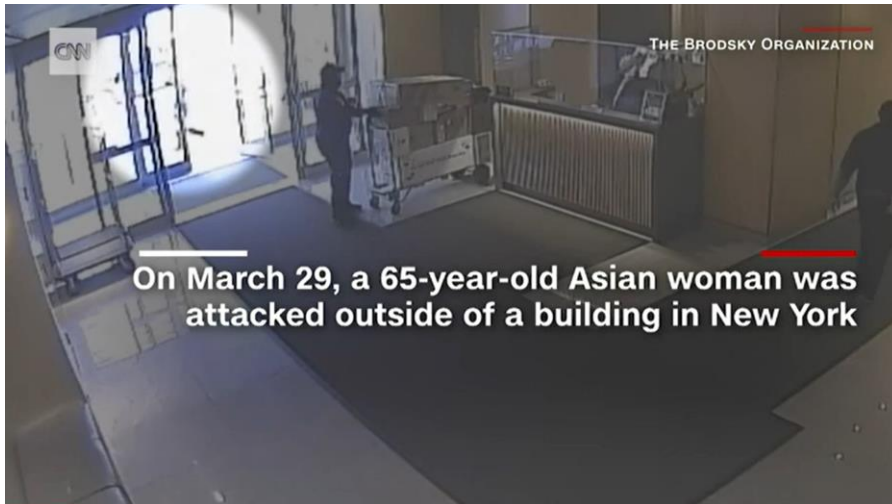
2025/01/30 Senator Jim Risch, Chair, Senate Foreign Relations Committee, <https://bit.ly/43kUklc>



- New name and new terms
- Legislation vs Executive Action

Community Responses

- Advocate for Policy Change
- Build and Strengthen Coalitions
- Collect and Analyze Data
- Educate and Raise Awareness
- Engage and Partner with the Media
- Mobilize Communities for Action
- Pursue Legal and Legislative Action
- Promote Civic Engagement
- Support Rallies and Public Demonstrations
- **The Yellow Whistle**



800,000 WHISTLES

WILL BE DISTRIBUTED STARTING APRIL 19, 2021

IN NATURE, YELLOW IS THE COLOR OF DAFFODILS AND SUNFLOWERS, SIGNALING THE ADVENT OF SPRING, BRINGING HOPE, OPTIMISM, AND ENLIGHTENMENT.

IN AMERICA, YELLOW HAS BEEN WEAPONIZED AGAINST ASIANS AS THE COLOR OF XENOPHOBIA.

THE YELLOW WHISTLE™ IS A SYMBOL OF SELF-PROTECTION AND SOLIDARITY IN OUR COMMON FIGHT AGAINST HISTORICAL DISCRIMINATION AND ANTI-ASIAN VIOLENCE. THE WHISTLE IS A SIMPLE GADGET WITH A UNIVERSAL PURPOSE—TO SIGNAL ALARM AND CALL FOR HELP—FOR ALL AMERICANS.

WE SHALL NOT REMAIN SILENT, BECAUSE WE BELONG™.

Why Are We Doing This?

Martin Niemöller (1892–1984)

- First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a socialist.
- Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a trade unionist.
- Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—because I was not a Jew.
- Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me

Multiple Sources

- We rode on the shoulders of those who came before us.
- We have the responsibility and obligation to do the same for those who come after us.