

American Scientists Denounce FBI Attacks on China and Science

by Mike Billington

March 13—Hundreds of America’s leading scientists, including six Nobel Prize recipients in chemistry, physics and medicine, have issued two powerful public letters denouncing the FBI’s criminal prosecution of hundreds of Chinese scientists in the United States, including American citizens of Chinese descent, as well as Americans who have collaborated with Chinese institutions for the advancement of human knowledge.

These attacks, originally launched during the Trump Administration by FBI Director Christopher Wray, in concert with the egregious attacks on China from Trump’s de-ranked Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, were exposed in the *EIR* [Special Report](#) of November 22, 2019, “Stop the McCarthyite Witch Hunt Against China & President Trump.”

The attacks included FBI letters to every major university in the nation demanding that all Chinese professors and students must be considered suspect as spies and investigated by the universities themselves. Scientific and medical research institutions were particularly targeted, with leading cancer and Parkinson’s disease research scientists driven out of their jobs, many arrested for the outrageous “crime” of working together with Chinese institutions to cure deadly diseases. The level of intimidation and racial profiling was intense, the specific aim being to terrorize the population, especially the academic and scientific community, into cutting ties with China.

Many Chinese-American and Asian-American institutions have protested vigorously, especially as racially motivated harassment of Asians and Americans of Asian



Christopher Wray, Director of the FBI, the primary enforcer of the new “yellow peril” witch-hunt.

FBI

descent has spiked across the country. But until recently, the American professional community has been mostly intimidated into silence.

Harvard and MIT Mobilize a Fight

Now, however, a fight has been launched by leading scientists and professors, sparked by the arrest of two of the world’s leading scientists in the area of nanotechnology, the study of manipulating atomic matter with applications in virtually every area of science and engineering.

On January 21, professors at MIT issued a public letter to the MIT President protesting the arrest of MIT Professor Gang Chen just days earlier; and on March 1, 42 professors, mostly from Harvard, signed “A Call to Save Professor Charles Lieber and Scientific Collaboration.” Although the MIT letter did not reveal the names of the more than 170 signers, the Harvard letter



did—most of them professors at Harvard, but representing leading scientists from other universities in the U.S. and the UK as well, including six Nobel Prize winners in physics, chemistry and medicine.

Prof. Lieber, the Chairman of the Department of Chemistry at Harvard, is described in the [Call](#) as “one of the great scientists of his generation..., among the few scientists in history to achieve election to the U.S. National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine.” He was arrested in January 2020 for infractions regarding his federal reporting of his participation in China’s “Thousand Talents” program, which aims to recruit scientists from around the world to work in China or in cooperation with Chinese scientific research centers.

There were no secrets involved, only technical infractions normally simply corrected, but now criminalized, through a “tragically misguided government campaign,” which “reflects a fundamental misunderstanding of modern science, in which open-source practices make discoveries available to all,” Lieber’s defenders write. They note: “Global collaboration among researchers is essential for scientific discovery.” This campaign, they add, “is threatening not only the United States’ position as a world leader in academic research, but science itself.”

Given his stature, the Call continues, Professor Lieber’s prosecution is the “most notable by the government, but these prosecutions are rampant.” They declare that they are standing up not only for Professor Lieber, but for “the fundamental concepts of scholarly collaboration, academic freedom and scientific advancement.”

Persecution of Professor Gang Chen

The [letter](#) of January 21 defending Professor Gang Chen at MIT, who was arrested on January 14, 2021 for failing to report his supposed ties to the Chinese gov-



Harvard University News Office/Kris Snibbe
Charles Lieber, Chairman of the Chemistry Department at Harvard.



MIT
Gang Chen, Professor of Power Engineering at MIT.

ernment, ridicules the charges against him as totally ludicrous. The campaign to demonize scientists collaborating with Chinese scientists and research facilities, the letter states, has dire implications—

for open academic and intellectual freedom, essential elements of progress towards solving the world’s greatest challenges. [The complaint against Professor Chen] vilifies what would be considered normal academic and research activities, including promoting MIT’s global mission. Standard practices such

as writing recommendations for our students so that they might receive fellowships or other prestigious and well-deserved career advancements are portrayed as some sort of collusion with outside forces in an effort to help them steal American technology....

The complaint against Gang Chen is a complaint against all of us, an affront to any citizen who values science and scientific enterprise.

Yoel Fink, the primary author of the letter, told Rebecca Trager of *Chemistry World* that America’s competitiveness depends so heavily on scientific and technological talent from abroad, that its national security is harmed by the message that the U.S. government will question the loyalty of foreign scientists.

Among the most outrageous charges against Chen is that a \$19 million grant from China’s Southern University of Science and Technology, which was used to create a joint MIT-Southern University

Center for research, was somehow money pocketed by Professor Chen himself. The complaint added that Southern University has ties to the Chinese government. The MIT letter notes:

Most major universities in the world are public



DoS/Ron Przynsucha

Antony J. Blinken, Secretary of State, is continuing his predecessor's abusive targeting of all things Chinese.

institutions and can be described reasonably as belonging to some arm of their country's governments.

MIT, and all major universities, are constantly competing for major government grants for research in medicine, engineering, military, the arts and more. The letter concludes:

The defense of Professor Chen is the defense of the scientific enterprise that we all hold dear—we are all Gang Chen.

Biden Continues Targeting of Asians

On January 5, 2021, over 100 individuals and institutions representing Asian-Americans [wrote](#) to incoming President Joe Biden urging him to take steps to combat what they described as “pervasive racial bias and targeting of Asian Americans and Asian immigrant scientists, researchers and students,” and stating that the FBI campaign was pressuring universities and research institutions to participate in racial, ethnic, and national origin profiling.

While President Biden, following his two-hour phone call with President Xi Jinping, voiced his opposition to a return to Cold War blocs, and has also expressed his distaste for racial profiling and harassment of Asians—he addressed this issue in his March 11 [address to the nation](#) on the COVID-19 crisis—the fact is that his State Department and National Security Agency under Antony Blinken and Jake Sullivan respectively,

are continuing Pompeo’s abusive targeting of all things Chinese. Biden even re-appointed as Director of the FBI, Christopher Wray, who was the primary enforcer of the new “yellow peril” witch-hunt during the Trump Administration.

Blinken and Sullivan are scheduled to meet in Alaska on March 18 with China’s two leading foreign policy spokesmen—Yang Jiechi, the director of the Central Foreign Affairs Commission of the Chinese Communist Party, and Foreign Minister Wang Yi. If the United States is not to continue its descent into xenophobia and pre-war hysteria, Biden’s cabinet members would be wise to heed the words of China’s Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian on Thursday, who welcomed the upcoming meeting, but added:

We require the U.S. to treat China and Sino-U.S. relations in an objective and rational manner, discard the Cold War and zero-sum thinking, and respect China’s sovereignty, security, and development interests.

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