

# Anti-Chinese Racism Sets Stage for New McCarthyism

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*More than a dozen young visiting scholars from China had their visas abruptly terminated in a [letter](#) from administration of the University of North Texas (UNT), Denton, on August 26, in a letter dated ...August 26! The letter informed the students that they could return to campus from their lodgings to pick up belongings, but all other access was closed to them. The students and fellows were [given no explanation](#). They were left with no legal basis to be in the U.S. and began scrambling for the very few and very expensive flights back to China.*

At first the UNT administration simply stated that all those funded by the Chinese Scholarship Council (CSC) were terminated. According to [Wikipedia](#), the CSC is the main Chinese agency for funding Chinese students abroad (currently 65,000 with 26,000 of them in the US) and an equal number of foreign students in China, some from the US. (Americans interested in CSC scholarships to study in China can easily find information [here](#). There is nothing secret or nefarious about CSC; the US has agencies that offer similar aid to scholars.)

The University at last offered an explanation of sorts in a statement by its spokesperson, the Vice President for Brand Strategy and Communication (VP for BS and C) as [reported](#) on September 10 by the North Texas Daily: “UNT took this action based upon specific and credible information following detailed briefings from federal and local law enforcement.” The VP for BS and C was “unable” to provide more details. Local police later denied any role in such briefings. It was the feds who provoked the discharges.

If these young students were doing something illegal or in violation of University rules, then they should be told what it is and presented with evidence so they could answer such charges. That is what we in the US claim to believe in. If their crime is simply soaking up ideas, that is what education is all about and most assuredly that is what science is all about. If certain areas of research are classified, then scholars working in those areas should be screened and get classifications. And if the US does not want CSC-sponsored students here, then reasons should be given and no more visas allowed. None of that has been done. The students were found guilty of something, they know not what, and dismissed!

Although UNT may not be well known nationally, it is [rated](#) as an “R1” or [top tier research university](#), one of about 130 institutions falling into that top category and receiving federal research funding. It is troubling that such action by an institution in this category and the beneficiary of federal largesse has not drawn more condemnation for its action. And it is even more troubling that this occurs in an atmosphere of anti-Chinese hostility in the wake of Covid-19, marked by physical attacks on Chinese Americans.

Have we forgotten the racism directed against Chinese and codified into federal law the [Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882](#), the *only* US law ever enacted to prevent all members of a specific ethnic or national group from immigrating to the US? Other such legislation followed, such as the Immigration Act of 1924 which effectively barred all immigration from Asia, including of course Chinese. The rationale given by the politicians for all such heinous legislation was that Chinese were stealing “our jobs”. Sound familiar? Notoriously the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 gave rise to the “Driving Out” period where Chinese were physically attacked to the point of brutal massacres designed to drive Chinese out of unwelcoming communities, the most infamous being the Rock Springs and Hells Canyon Massacres.

The anti-Chinese and anti-Asian sentiment has continued down the years in one form or another but it has had a resurgence recently with the meme that China’s prosperity has been at the expense of Americans. This narrative does *not* remind us that US corporations and investors offshore jobs for greater “returns,” but claims that Chinese are pilfering our technology.

Some time back The Committee of 100, a prestigious organization of leading Chinese Americans, commissioned [a study on Chinese and other Asians charged under the Economic Espionage Act \(EEA\)](#), covering a period from 1996 to 2015. Some of its conclusions are as follows:

1. Up to 2008, Chinese were 17% of the total defendants charged under the EEA; from 2009-2015 under Obama this percentage *tripled* to 52%.
2. 21% of Chinese were never convicted of espionage, twice the rate for non-Asians.
3. In roughly half the cases involving Chinese the alleged beneficiary of the espionage was an American entity; roughly one third had an alleged Chinese beneficiary.

In sum a much higher rate of indictment for Chinese but a lower rate of convictions. So the additional “attention” given Chinese was not warranted. It seems that something changed after 2009. What was it? This time was the period when Obama’s Asian Pivot was put into play. The Pivot targeted China both militarily by moving 60% of US Naval forces to the Western Pacific and economically with the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) designed to isolate China from its neighbors. Is the increased harassment of Chinese under the EEA another aspect of the strategy expressed openly in the Pivot?

This legal attack on Chinese has continued under the present administration, but the NTU case adds a new wrinkle. Here there was no legal action, but an action apparently taken by the University. However, hidden pressure to oust the students came from a federal agency or agencies. This should be no surprise since it fits in with FBI Director Christopher Wray’s “Whole of Society” approach to confronting China unveiled last February and [reiterated in July](#) when he said, “We’re also working more closely than ever with partner agencies here in the US and our partners abroad. We can’t do it on our own; we need a whole-of-society response. That’s why we in the intelligence and law enforcement communities are working harder than ever to give companies, *universities*, and the American people themselves the information they need to make their own informed decisions and protect their most valuable assets.” (Emphasis, *jw*) It looks like the FBI and or its “partner agencies” gave UNT officials “the information they needed” to throw out the Chinese students without any reason given or charge made.

Consider the position of those UNT officials when they found themselves visited by federal “authorities” and “asked’ to cooperate. When the FBI “asks” for cooperation, it is making an offer that is perilous to refuse. It would take considerable courage to say “no”. But that is precisely what the UNT administrators should have done if they were to live up to the presumed values and ideals of our society and universities. The question also arises as to how many other universities have been approached to take similar steps. It seems unlikely that UNT is alone. But it is very likely that other Universities, wealthier and with a bevy of VP’s for BS and C, might have handled the whole matter in a discrete way and in a way that makes it appear that such suspensions are not a wholesale matter. Perhaps other more “polished” university authorities would not own up to the dirty deeds but keep them as secret as possible.

Let us take it a step further. What if you were approached by one of these federal agents and “requested” to keep an eye on a Chinese colleague, friend, neighbor or co-worker. Would you have the courage to refuse? And as the confrontation with China heats up, a peace movement is arising to counter it. In fact, anti-interventionists are popping up across the spectrum on left and right to oppose policies that take us on the road to war with China. Will the peace advocates be targeted in the same way, on the sly as well as within a “legal” framework by the FBI and other federal agencies? And will the precedent established in cases like the UNT case make such federal actions more acceptable? Will those working for peace be labeled as puppets of Xi?

“First they came for the Chinese,” it might be said. And in the future, under the “Whole of Society” approach, they may come for anyone who chooses to work for peace with China rather than take a path to war. Anti-Chinese racism, repugnant in and of itself, is also one part of setting the stage for a new and more dangerous McCarthyism. It is time to stop the madness before it devours us all.

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