



Committee of 100

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Committee of 100 Expresses Concern About Unfair Prosecution of Chunzai Wang

(New York, NY, March 2, 2018) – In another example of the harsh treatment of Chinese Americans, United States District Judge Cecilia Altonaga recently criticized the federal government for prosecuting Chunzai Wang. Judge Altonaga, who presided over the case involving Wang, said "[m]y only regret . . . is that I have to adjudicate Mr. Wang." The judge, whose court is located in Miami, Florida, holds a lifetime appointment from President George W. Bush, confirmed by the United States Senate.

Accepting a plea deal in which Wang, a naturalized citizen of the United States, was sentenced to one night in jail, which he served while being held prior to the case starting, the judge added, "given the nature of Mr. Wang's contributions to an area that is at the forefront of our daily review of news, climate change, given the nature of the research he conducts and – and the information he supplies and how valuable it is to all of us, certainly he made certain mistakes here, but it's regrettable that it could not have been taken care of, I think, by some type of pretrial diversion so that he would not be an adjudicated felon." She added, " And I wish you and your family the best of luck," and reminded him that "you are a citizen of this country and should be able to come back and enjoy time with your family." (These statements were made in an open hearing on Tuesday, February 20, 2018. The transcript, which is a verbatim record, is [available here](#).)

The judge's sentiments should not be surprising. Wang was charged with supplementing his income in violation of law, because while on annual leave from a federal civil service job, he was a Guest Professor at a Chinese university and was paid a small fee per diem for mentoring students and helping them with their research.

In the American system of checks and balances, the independent judiciary serves to ensure due process, equal protection, and fairness. At a time of prejudice toward Chinese Americans, even those who have served the interests of the United States, officials such as Judge Altonaga are crucial to protect our principles. Like Wen Ho Lee, Sherry Chen, and Professor Xiaoxing Xi, Wang has been subjected to unfair treatment. He has had the benefit of a judge taking unusual measures to explain the situation. His predicament also shows the importance of being aware of all of the rules governing the American workplace, some of which can be technical in nature.

The lawyer for Wang, Peter Zeidenberg, has stated, "Dr. Wang was unfairly targeted and victimized by his own government, a fact recognized by the judge in his case. He is collateral damage in the United States government's campaign against Chinese-American scientists."

[In a letter to the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus](#), Zeidenberg added that the prosecutors had issued a press release with unproven allegations presented as if they were established facts. He commented, "There can be only one reason to issue a false and misleading press release: not satisfied with making Dr. Wang unemployable in the U.S., the government now seeks to vindictively impact his job prospects in China. It should disturb all Americans who believe in the rule of law that the Department of Justice violated its own policies to smear Dr. Wang in order to extract an extra-judicial penalty in a case that the Court believed should never have been brought." Zeidenberg, who successfully represented Chen and Xi, has defended against many unfair prosecutions being conducted against Chinese immigrants and Chinese Americans.

The Committee of 100 reiterates its support for protection of our national security and commitment to civil rights. The United States is harmed, not helped, by turning away and rejecting people who can make it more competitive. These cases are damaging the lives of people who are innocent and people who are being punished even when others who have done worse are not.

The Committee of 100 (C100) is a non-profit leadership organization of prominent Chinese Americans in business, government, academia, and the arts. Founded by world renowned architect I.M. Pei and internationally acclaimed cellist Yo-Yo Ma, among others, it is an institution for U.S. citizens of Chinese heritage to join by invitation based on their extraordinary achievements. For over 25 years, C100 has served as a preeminent organization committed to the twin missions of promoting full participation of Chinese Americans in all aspects of American life, and encouraging constructive relations between the peoples of the United States and Greater China. www.committee100.org

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