

In This Issue #290

- Rise and Fall of McCarthyism with The Media
- Historical Media Bias Against U.S. Persons of Asian Origin
- Role of Media in The Wen Ho Lee Case and The Yanping Chen Case
- Media's Role in a Modern McCarthyism - The "China Initiative"
- McCarthyism Expanding to Beyond Scientists
- News and Activities for the Communities

During "China Week" in September 2024, Representative **Judy Chu**, Chair of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC), took the House floor to denounce efforts to revive the "China Initiative," calling it a New McCarthyism.

This is a special edition on McCarthyism and The Good, Bad, and Ugly Roles of The Media.

Rise and Fall of McCarthyism with The Media



Edward R. Murrow - See It Now (March 9, 1954)

According to a *PBS* report on McCarthyism from August 23, 2006, in the late 1940s and 1950s, America was gripped by fears of communism's spread, particularly in Eastern Europe and China. Capitalizing on these anxieties, on February 9, 1950, 41-year-old Senator **Joseph McCarthy** delivered his infamous "Enemies from Within" speech in Wheeling, West Virginia, claiming to have a list of 205 "card-carrying" communists in the U.S. government. Although he never substantiated this claim, it fueled the Red Scare and set the stage for McCarthyism, an era of intense political repression and paranoia.

The media played a significant role in amplifying and spreading McCarthyism. Newspapers, radio, and television often reported McCarthy's accusations uncritically, lending credibility to his unverified claims. For instance, the *New York Times* covered McCarthy's "205 communists" allegation without questioning its validity. Historian **Margaret Brennan** noted that McCarthy's numbers changed frequently, saying, "he had no list. He had no names. It was all a big lie." Yet, the impact was horrific, 6,000 federal employees left the government in the last two years of the **Harry S. Truman** Administration. At the end of the McCarthy era, "there was never anybody

in government that they could prove to be a card-carrying communist," Brennan said.

Sensational headlines and broadcast coverage heightened public fear, reinforcing McCarthy's portrayal of Communism as a pressing internal threat. Television brought the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) hearings and the Red Scare directly into American homes, magnifying McCarthy's influence. The McCarthy-Army hearings, televised from April to June 1954, marked a turning point. Over 36 days, an estimated 188 hours were broadcast, reaching a large national audience. During these hearings, Army counsel **Joseph Welch** famously rebuked McCarthy, asking, "Have you no sense of decency, sir, at long last?" This moment is widely viewed as the beginning of McCarthy's downfall.

Most journalists initially refrained from challenging McCarthy due to Cold War tensions and fears of being labeled Communist sympathizers. However, broadcast journalist **Edward R. Murrow** played a pivotal role in countering McCarthyism. On March 9, 1954, Murrow's *See It Now* broadcast exposed McCarthy's fear-based tactics, marking a major turning point in public opinion.

The following is a transcript for a 2-minute excerpt of Murrow's broadcast:

"No one familiar with the history of this country can deny that congressional committees are useful. It is necessary to investigate before legislating, but the line between investigating and persecuting is a very fine one, and the junior Senator from Wisconsin has stepped over it repeatedly. His primary achievement has been in confusing the public mind as between the internal and the external threats of communism. We must not confuse dissent with disloyalty. We must remember always that accusation is not proof, and that conviction depends upon evidence and due process of law. We will not walk in fear, one of another. We will not be driven by fear into an age of unreason, if we dig deep in our history and our doctrine, and remember that we are not descended from fearful men—not from men who feared to write, to speak, to associate, and to defend causes that were for the moment unpopular.

This is no time for men who oppose Senator McCarthy's methods to keep silent, or for those who approve. We can deny our heritage and our history, but we cannot escape responsibility for the result. There is no way for a citizen of a republic to abdicate his responsibilities. As a nation, we have come into our full inheritance at a tender age. We proclaim ourselves, as indeed we are, the defenders of freedom—wherever it continues to exist in the world—but we cannot defend freedom abroad by deserting it at home. The actions of the junior Senator from Wisconsin have caused alarm and dismay amongst our allies abroad and given considerable comfort to our enemies. And whose fault is that? Not really his. He didn't create this situation of fear; he merely exploited it—and rather successfully. Cassius was right: "The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves.

Good night, and good luck."

Edward R. Murrow profoundly shaped broadcast journalism, setting standards with his commitment to factual reporting, democratic principles, and the press's role as a vigilant watchdog. The Edward R. Murrow College of Communication at Washington State University continues this legacy, promoting ethical journalism, strategic communication, and digital media, all inspired by Murrow's unwavering dedication to integrity and accountability in the media.

References and Links

Edward R. Murrow College of Communication at Washington State University: [website](#)
2017/04/23 YouTube: [Edward R. Murrow - See It Now \(March 9, 1954\)](#) (2:02)
2014/12/16 C-SPAN: [Senator Joe McCarthy's "Enemies from Within" Speech](#) (14:59)
2006/08/23 PBS: [McCarthyism](#)

Historical Media Bias Against U.S. Persons of Asian Origin



Throughout U.S. history, media have often depicted Americans and immigrants of Asian origin through biased and derogatory stereotypes, particularly during times of geopolitical tension. Their coverage has fueled harmful public perceptions and policies with lasting impacts on Asian communities.

Notwithstanding the 61-year Chinese Exclusion era (1882-1943) and the Alien Land Law period from the first state law in California in 1913 to the mid 1950s, American newspapers contributed to the anti-Japanese sentiment by portraying Japanese Americans as disloyal spies or saboteurs. Headlines warned of a "Fifth Column" within the U.S., stoking fear and prejudice. This coverage, often based on unsubstantiated claims, helped garner public support for the internment of 120,000 persons of Japanese heritage, about two thirds of them U.S. citizens.

No Japanese American was ever proven to have committed espionage for Japan during World War II, despite extensive U.S. government investigations.

Before his children books, Dr. Seuss (**Theodor Seuss Geisel**) worked as a political cartoonist and propagandist during World War II, creating cartoons and illustrations that were published in newspapers and used in military training films. One of his infamous cartoons on February 13, 1942, shows Japanese Americans lined up as the "Fifth Column" along the West Coast, awaiting "the signal from home," playing into widespread fear and prejudice and helped to justify Japanese American internment and other discriminatory measures.

On February 21, 1942, two days after President **Franklin D. Roosevelt** signed Executive Order 9066 authorizing internment, the *Los Angeles Times* published an editorial endorsing it, asserting that Japanese Americans posed a national security risk. Along with other outlets, the LA Times shaped public opinion by promoting fear-based narratives questioning Japanese American loyalty.

Seventy-five years later, on February 19, 2017, the *LA Times* formally recanted its 1942 editorials. Acknowledging the paper's role in promoting internment, it expressed regret for fueling anti-Japanese sentiment and drew parallels with current issues of xenophobia, discrimination, and anti-immigrant rhetoric. The 2017 editorial warned against repeating such injustices, highlighting the need to protect civil liberties for all.

References and Links

Wikipedia: [Dr. Seuss](#)

2017/02/19 *LA Times* editorial: [Looking Back with Shame](#)

2012/02/21 *The Daily Mirror*: [Times Editorial Praises Japanese Evacuation](#)

Role of Media in The Wen Ho Lee Case and The Yanping Chen Case



History repeated itself before the *LA Times* issued its 2017 editorial.

On March 6, 1999, the *New York Times* identified Chinese American nuclear scientist Dr. **Wen Ho Lee** as a suspect in alleged espionage at Los Alamos National Laboratory. Using alarmist language, anonymous sources, and unsubstantiated allegations, the report relied heavily on stereotypes and ethnic background, fueling widespread public suspicion of Dr. Lee and, by extension, other Chinese Americans in the scientific community.. Dr. Lee was arrested nine months after the *New York Times* report and imprisoned in solitary confinement for nine months before charges were dropped. U.S. District Judge **James Parker** apologized to Dr. Lee, condemning the government’s handling of the case.

On September 26, 2000, the *New York Times* published an editorial acknowledging its role and errors in uncritically accepting government claims, but it stopped short of a full apology.

In 2006, Dr. Lee settled a privacy lawsuit, accusing government agencies of leaking sensitive information. The U.S. government paid \$895,000, and five media organizations—the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Los Angeles Times*, *ABC News*, and *Associated Press*—contributed \$750,000 to protect their reporters from being compelled to disclose their sources.

Dr. Lee’s case highlighted issues in journalistic ethics and transparency, but similar patterns emerged when Dr. **Yanping Chen**, a Chinese American academic and founder of the University of Management and Technology in Virginia, became the target of a federal investigation in 2010. Although no charges were filed, leaked details of the closed investigation surfaced in a series of *Fox News* reports in 2017, making misleading insinuations to accuse her of spying for China.

In 2018, Dr. Chen filed a lawsuit against federal agencies, alleging Privacy Act violations and racial profiling. Her case raised broader concerns about government leaks and anti-Asian prejudice. Dr. Chen subpoenaed *Fox News* reporter **Catherine Herridge** to identify her

sources. The U.S. District Court imposed a fine of \$800 per day until Herridge complied. Herridge has appealed.

On July 29, 2024, the Asian American Legal and Education Defense Fund (AALDEF) and a coalition of 11 organizations filed a 43-page amicus brief with the U.S. Court of Appeals in support of Dr. Chen. The brief addresses issues of racial prejudice and the negative stereotyping of Asian Americans, particularly in the context of government actions against Dr. Chen.

The U.S. Appeals Court for the District of Columbia Circuit will hold a hearing of oral arguments on Dr. Chen's case on November 18, 2024.

References and Links

CourtListener: [Chen v. Federal Bureau of Investigation \(1:18-cv-03074\)](#)

2024/08/07 AADEF: [The Red-Baiting of Dr. Chen and the Dangerous Target It Puts on All Asian Americans](#)

2024/07/29 Chen v FBI 1:18-cv-03074: [Brief of Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund and Asian American Advocacy Organizations as Amici Curiae in Support of Plaintiff-Appellee](#)

2006/06/03 *Washington Post*: [Wen Ho Lee Settles Privacy Lawsuit](#)

2003/01/08 Wen Ho Lee and Helen Zia: [My Country Versus Me: The First-Hand Account by the Los Alamos Scientist Who Was Falsely Accused of Being a Spy](#)

2001/02/04 *New York Times*: [The Making of a Suspect: The Case of Wen Ho Lee](#)

2000/09/26 *New York Times*: [From The Editors; The Times and Wen Ho Lee](#)

2000/09/14 *New York Times*: [Statement by Judge in Los Alamos Case, With Apology for Abuse of Power](#)

1999/03/06 *New York Times*: [BREACH AT LOS ALAMOS: A special report.; China Stole Nuclear Secrets For Bombs, U.S. Aides Say](#)

Media's Role in a Modern McCarthyism - The "China Initiative"



In March 1950, **Herb Block**, a political cartoonist known as "Herblock" for the *Washington Post*, coined the term "McCarthyism" shortly after Senator Joseph McCarthy delivered his "Enemies Within Us" speech. This term describes the practice of making unfounded accusations of subversion, disloyalty, or treason without sufficient evidence. Today, McCarthyism symbolizes any campaign or movement that seeks to silence or punish dissent or perceived disloyalty through fear and intimidation, rather than through fair, evidence-based processes.

Launched by the Department of Justice in 2018, the "China Initiative" reflects contemporary McCarthyism through its reliance on broad suspicion and racial profiling under the guise of national security. It was joined in effect by the National Institutes of Health in the name of research security and integrity. These initiatives then shifted focus from security concerns to profiling Chinese academics and scientists, fostering an atmosphere of fear and a chilling effect within academic and research communities. Many researchers of Chinese descent reported feeling unfairly targeted solely due to their ethnicity or international connections.

The consequences of the "China Initiative" have been severe; even when charges were eventually dropped, individuals faced damaged careers, personal trauma, financial ruin, and even loss of life. Hundreds, if not thousands or more, of Asian Americans and immigrants, particularly those of Chinese origin, have been subjected to surveillance, investigations, and threats of prosecution. Many more endure daily assaults, hate incidents, and discrimination as a result.

The media's role in the "China Initiative" brought a range of both positive and negative impacts.

Jamie Satterfield, an investigative reporter for the *Knoxville News Sentinel*, played a crucial role in highlighting the wrongful accusations against Dr. **Anming Hu**, a University of Tennessee professor prosecuted under the "China Initiative." Her reporting exposed significant flaws in the government's case, illustrating how the FBI targeted Hu based on unfounded suspicions and employed aggressive tactics, including attempts to coerce him into espionage.

Satterfield documented the trial proceedings in 2021 meticulously, revealing key admissions from FBI agents about false accusations and fabricated evidence against Hu. Her work not only drew national attention to the injustices faced by Hu but also sparked broader discussions about racial profiling, due process, and fairness within the framework of the "China Initiative," emphasizing its detrimental impact on innocent Chinese American academics.

On December 2, 2021, *MIT Technology Review* published two investigative reports.

The first report revealed that the "China Initiative" deviated from its national security goals. Key findings include a lack of official definition for the initiative, a shift from economic espionage to "research integrity" issues, and a high dismissal rate for cases. Notably, only about 25% of those charged were convicted, with about 90% of defendants being of Chinese heritage.

The second investigative report highlighted gaps in the information provided by DOJ. *MIT Technology Review* constructed a database to track every case made public under the "China Initiative." Shortly after *MIT Technology Review* requested comments, DOJ updated its webpage, removing cases that contradicted its narrative of success.

Less than three months after the *MIT Technology Review* reports, DOJ announced the formal end of the "China Initiative."

Both Satterfield and *MIT Technology Review* exemplify the positive role of investigative journalism, utilizing facts and evidence to expose the overreach, profiling, and flaws of the initiative. Their efforts raised public awareness and sparked dialogue about racial bias in government investigations, holding agencies accountable and prompting policymakers and civil rights organizations to reconsider the initiative's efficacy and ethics, ultimately contributing to its termination in 2022.

In contrast, some media outlets resorted to alarmist and sensational language, reinforcing stereotypes and depicting Asian Americans and immigrants—particularly those of Chinese descent—as potential threats. Headlines often emphasized national security concerns without adequate context, exacerbating public fears about espionage and fostering an atmosphere of suspicion. By uncritically repeating government statements, some of these outlets lent the initiative unwarranted credibility. They frequently overlooked the scientific and academic contributions of Chinese and Chinese American professionals, sidelining their valuable work and contributions to the American society.

References and Links

APA Justice: [11. MIT Technology Review Investigative Reports](#)

CourtListener: [United States v. Hu \(TV1\) \(3:20-cr-00021\)](#)

2021/12/02 *MIT Technology Review*: [The US crackdown on Chinese economic espionage is a mess. We have the data to show it.](#)

2021/12/02 *MIT Technology Review*: [We built a database to understand the China Initiative. Then the government changed its records.](#)

2021/06/13 *Knox News*: [Trial reveals federal agents falsely accused a UT professor born in China of spying](#)

McCarthyism Expanding to Beyond Scientists

There are continuing attempts by Republican members in Congress to reinstate the "China Initiative" or under a different name. Alien land laws are being revived and expanded at both the federal and state levels that will risk reinforcing racial discrimination.

"Enemies Within Us" against immigrants in a nation of immigrants has resurfaced as a prominent topic in the lead-up to the November 5, 2024, U.S. presidential election, framing a focus on Chinese influence in America. Media, politicians, and campaign ads are again promoting anti-Asian rhetoric and harmful political narratives and stereotypes about Chinese Americans as perpetual foreigners or national security risks.

On September 3, 2024, The *Washington Post* released a report titled "How China Extended Its Repression into an American City," alleging Chinese government interference within U.S. communities.

As explained in the *Asia Times*, "The *Washington Post*'s Witch Hunt on Chinese Americans" lacks evidence. An October 4 opinion argues that the *Washington Post* report fosters distrust toward Chinese American communities by selective use of biased sources—primarily anti-CCP activists and U.S. government entities. By failing to represent voices within the Chinese American community who have diverse views on China, the opinion contends, the report risks fostering harmful stereotypes and echoing historical patterns of profiling minority groups based on geopolitics. A more balanced approach would involve perspectives from diaspora organizations that may experience complex, often nonpolitical relationships with Chinese institutions. It also warns against blanket assumptions about the loyalties of Chinese Americans, potentially leading to unfounded public suspicion of these communities.

On October 21, 2024, a *Wall Street Journal* report alleged China of using hometown organizations in New York City's Chinatown to influence local communities, pressure Chinese Americans, and advance its political goals. Without evidence of specific influence activities, Representative **Grace Meng**, the only Chinese American congresswoman from New York, was implicated in the *Wall Street Journal* report because of her association with Chinatown and hometown organizations.

Chinatowns in the U.S. emerged as ethnic enclaves largely because of social, economic, and political conditions in the U.S. in the mid-19th century dating back to the Qing Dynasty. These communities offered safety, employment, and a cultural connection to home for new immigrants

facing systemic discrimination and harsh labor conditions. Discriminatory laws forced segregation and led to the establishment of Chinatowns and hometown associations as self-sustaining neighborhoods where immigrants could find mutual support, housing, work opportunities, and Chinese-owned businesses, fostering community resilience against external hostilities.

Guilt by association, the unfair assignment of blame to individuals based solely on their affiliations rather than on concrete evidence, was a central tactic of McCarthyism. While WWII-era suspicions focused on a supposed "Fifth Column" of internal threats, the "Thousand Grains of Sand" theory arose during the Wen Ho Lee case in the 1990s, insinuating alleged widespread infiltration efforts by Chinese agents. The term evolved to "Non-traditional Collectors" as the "China Initiative" began, with scrutiny directed toward Chinese and Chinese American scientists and academics suspected of espionage.

Now, with media coverage increasingly emphasizing potential links to foreign influence in Chinese American communities, guilt by association appears to be broadening beyond scientists and researchers. With the *Washington Post* and *Wall Street Journal* already linking community organizations or elected officials to foreign interference based on limited or circumstantial connections, guilt by association, or a new McCarthyism, may become more pervasive again with the assistance of media.

"We must not confuse dissent with disloyalty. We must remember always that accusation is not proof, and that conviction depends upon evidence and due process of law. We will not walk in fear, one of another. We will not be driven by fear into an age of unreason," - Edward R. Murrow

References and Links

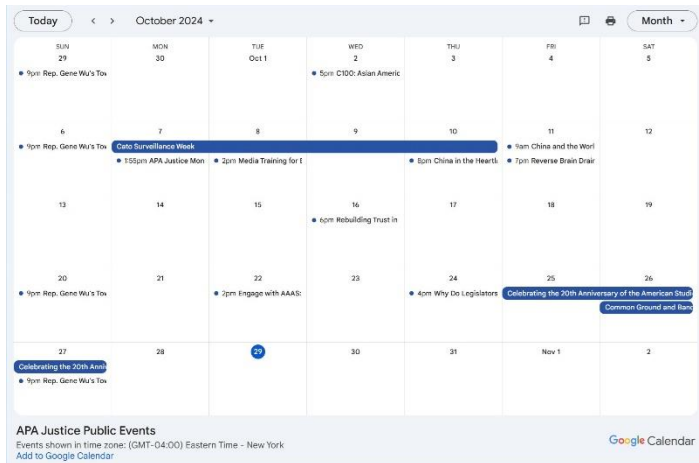
2024/10/21 *Wall Street Journal*: [How Beijing Recruited New York Chinatowns for Influence Campaign](#)

2024/10/04 *Asia Times opinion*: [The Washington Post's witch hunt on Chinese Americans](#)

2024/09/03 *Washington Post*: [How China extended its repression into an American city](#)

News and Activities for the Communities

1. APA Justice Community Calendar



Upcoming Events:

- 2024/11/03 Rep. Gene Wu's Town Hall Meeting
- 2024/11/06 Asian American Women in Media and Music
- 2024/11/10 Rep. Gene Wu's Town Hall Meeting
- 2024/11/12 Threats to International Engagement and Academic Freedom
- 2024/11/14 An Advice and Networking Event (Financial Services, Investing and Consulting)
- 2024/11/15 Yangtze-Mississippi Regional Dialogue
- 2024/11/15-17 AAASE Inaugural Annual Summit
- 2024/11/17 Rep. Gene Wu's Town Hall Meeting
- 2024/11/18 APA Justice Monthly Meeting
- 2024/11/24 Rep. Gene Wu's Town Hall Meeting

Visit <https://bit.ly/3XD61qV> for event details.

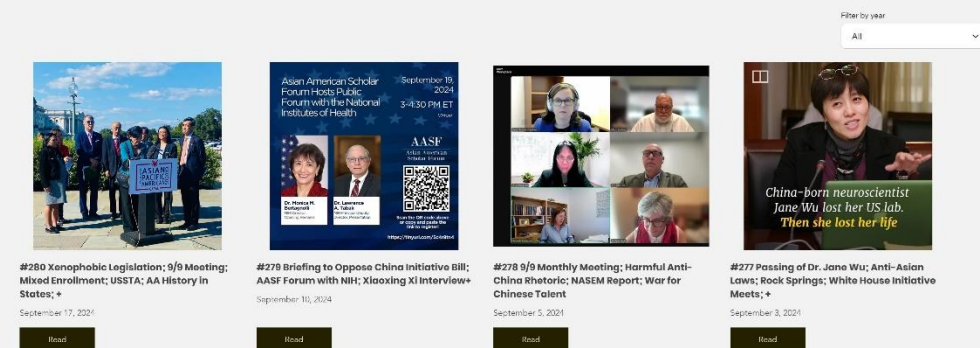
NOTE: Because the regular scheduled day falls on the eve of Election Day, we have moved the next APA Justice monthly meeting to Monday, November 18, 2024. The virtual monthly meeting is by invitation only. It is closed to the press. If you wish to join, either one time or for future meetings, please contact one of the co-organizers of APA Justice - **Steven Pei** 白先慎, **Vincent Wang** 王文奎, and **Jeremy Wu** 胡善庆 - or send a message to contact@apajustice.org.

2. APA Justice Newsletter Web Page Moved to New Website

Newsletters

APA Justice began publishing a free periodic newsletter about 4-7 times a month in July 2020. You can subscribe [here](#). Visit the [Virtual Library](#) to search the entire collection.

Filter by year
All



The screenshot shows a grid of four newsletter items. Each item has a thumbnail image, a title, a date, and a 'Read' button. The items are:

- #280 Xenophobic Legislation; 9/9 Meeting; Mixed Enrollment; USSTA; AA History In States; +**
September 17, 2021
- #278 Briefing to Oppose China initiative Bill; AASF Forum with NIH; Xiaoxing Xi interview+**
September 10, 2024
- #278 9/9 Monthly Meeting; Harmful Anti-China Rhetoric; NASEM Report; War for Chinese Talent**
September 5, 2021
- #277 Passing of Dr. Jane Wu; Anti-Asian Laws; Rock Springs; White House Initiative Meets; +**
September 3, 2021

As part of its continuing migration to a new website under construction, we have moved the Newsletter webpage to <https://www.apajusticetaskforce.org/newsletters>. Content of the existing website will remain, but it will no longer be updated. We value your feedback about the new webpage. Please send your comments to contact@apajustice.org.

Copyright © 2024 APA Justice, All rights reserved.

You are receiving this email because you opted in or have expressed interest.

Our mailing address is:

APA Justice
P.O. Box 1242
McLean, VA 22101

[Add us to your address book](#)

We do not share, sell, rent or trade any of your information with third parties unless you provide explicit consent. [Read our Privacy Policy here](#).