



## **CALDA Files Lawsuit Exposing Government’s Law Enforcement Program Unfairly Targeted Chinese American Professors**

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**San Francisco, California** — Today, the Chinese American Legal Defense Alliance (CALDA), a non-profit organization based in California and New Jersey, filed a lawsuit under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) against the Department of Energy (DOE) at the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. The purpose is to force the DOE to release data on how it has unfairly investigated and prosecuted Chinese-American professors for espionage-related claims under the now-defunct program called the “China Initiative”.

The China Initiative was a law enforcement program launched under the Trump administration to counter Beijing's theft of American intellectual property. Accordingly, dozens of federal agencies aggressively targeted Chinese-American professors who had collaborated with their Chinese counterparts on academic and research projects. In reality, such cross-border collaboration was encouraged by the American universities and has been a common practice within the academic circles. But the federal government chose to cast a wide net in search of “spies”, investigating and prosecuting a large number of Chinese-American professors.

The government has yet to succeed in convicting a single Chinese-American professor for espionage claims. For example, in September 2021 a federal judge fully acquitted Prof. Anming Hu of University of Tennessee, and in February 2022 the government had to drop a high-profile case against Prof. Gang Chen of MIT due to lack of evidence. However, this has not stopped the government from bringing criminal charges against these professors for technical and innocuous violations such as failing to check a certain box on academic grant application forms, which have little to do with being a “spy” or “agent” working for the Chinese government. After many civil rights groups have raised concerns about the racial bias of the China Initiative, in this February the Department of Justice (DOJ) announced that it was ending this controversial program.

“However, the DOJ is still actively pursuing criminal cases against the professors, continuing creating a climate of fear among Asian Americans, and helping to fuel a narrative of intolerance and bias against Asian Americans,” said Clay Zhu, president of CALDA.

The FOIA lawsuit will help expose the practice that the government has undertaken and reduce racial bias against Asian Americans in future law enforcement actions. Besides today’s lawsuit against the DOE, CALDA plans to file similar FOIA actions against at least two more federal agencies in the coming months.

**Chinese American Legal Defense Alliance**