

WSWS writer Evan Blake banned from “Badass Teachers Association” Facebook group

WSWS Educators Newsletter
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On Monday, *World Socialist Web Site* writer Evan Blake was banned from the national Facebook group “Badass Teachers Association” (BATs) with no explanation. This act of censorship took place shortly after Blake attempted to post the WSWS Perspective, “Survey of epidemiologists exposes lies that children do not spread COVID-19,” which explained the dangers involved with school reopenings and the decision by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to end masking guidelines. The article calls for educators and the entire working class to oppose these policies.

This censorship occurs the same week that substantial sections of the leadership of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) unleashed a series of threatening tweets celebrating the assassination of Leon Trotsky, the co-leader of the Russian Revolution and the greatest strategist of world socialist revolution. Many members of the BATs Facebook group are either members of the DSA or sympathetic to its politics, with most likely unaware of the leadership’s vicious anti-communist tweets.

BATs administrators are attempting to stifle the growing opposition of teachers to the policies of the Biden administration and the complicity of the unions. Last Friday, Blake had posted a separate article he wrote on a speech given by American Federation of Teachers (AFT) President Randi Weingarten, during which she demanded the full reopening of schools this fall. This post garnered a large response, with over 150 reactions and over 150 comments, the vast majority condemning Weingarten and calling for her to be removed from her position.

All class-conscious workers must oppose the growing censorship of left-wing political organizations, of which the WSWS is the principal target. While internet censorship has been spearheaded by the state and the giant tech monopolies Google, Facebook, Twitter and Amazon, there are growing efforts among middle-class, pseudo-left elements such as the BATs administrators to silence a genuine socialist

perspective.

BATs was created in June 2013 as a forum for dissident teachers and a pressure group focused on opposing the school privatization and standardized testing regimes that deepened under the Obama administration. It quickly attracted a large following, ballooning to over 25,000 members within a few months. This led to the creation of a Twitter feed, a website, a blog and separate Facebook groups in every state. Today, the national Facebook group has roughly 68,800 members.

From the start, BATs has been politically subordinate to the Democratic Party and the teachers unions and heavily promotes racial and identity politics. BATs has official caucuses in the AFT and the National Education Association (NEA), as well as in numerous locals across the US. Weingarten herself is a member of the national BATs Facebook group.

Censorship of the *WSWS Educators Newsletter* began during the powerful West Virginia teachers’ strike of 2018 as it was winning wide support for the development of independent rank-and-file committees. From the beginning, this strike erupted in opposition to the unions. School workers wildcatted in the southern coal counties and spurred a statewide movement to demand an end to the gross underfunding of the healthcare insurance program which the AFT and NEA had tolerated.

The West Virginia strike galvanized immense support from teachers and other workers worldwide. It marked the beginning of a teachers strike wave that spread across the US, from Oklahoma to Arizona, Los Angeles, Oakland, Washington, Chicago, Denver, and other cities and states. AFT President Randi Weingarten and NEA President Lily Garcia flew from state to state to snuff out strikes and corral teachers behind the slogan “Remember in November,” demanding they subordinate their struggles to Democratic Party politicking.

BATs administrators joined in behind the union

executives. They sought to revive illusions in the discredited unions and began to censor WSWS coverage of these struggles, claiming that the *WSWS Educators Newsletter* was “anti-union.”

In a widely viewed Facebook event, WSWS Labor Editor Jerry White debated a West Virginia BATs representative and detailed the strike-breaking and anti-teacher policies embraced by the entire AFT and NEA. White explained that it was the unions that were anti-worker and elaborated the way forward, including uniting with the powerful strike by Frontier Communications workers in West Virginia, as well as autoworkers, coal miners and other workers internationally.

The latest act of censorship by BATs takes place under the unprecedented conditions created by the COVID-19 pandemic. The most recent estimates by the *Economist* place the global death toll at roughly 10.2 million people—three times the official figure of 3.4 million deaths. Worldwide, hundreds of millions of students and educators have been sent back to unsafe classrooms in order to compel parents back to work producing profits. This has led to an untold number of infections and deaths and is a major factor behind the deepening, horrific spread of the virus worldwide.

Throughout the past year, the WSWS has been the sole voice of opposition for educators in the US and globally, writing continuous exposures of the homicidal campaign to reopen schools, which has been facilitated by the teachers unions every step of the way. In the process, we have assisted educators in forming a network of rank-and-file safety committees that are wholly independent of the unions and both big-business parties.

Since President Joe Biden’s inauguration, only the WSWS has deepened the fight to oppose the reopening of schools that is now directly orchestrated by the Democrats, the unions, the CDC and the media, all of which have distorted science to fit their pro-corporate agenda.

The BATs administrators, who are far more conservative than most group members, could not stand further criticism of the unions and the Democrats to whom they are deeply tied.

Following his banning from the group, Blake wrote a letter to the seven BATs administrators, demanding his readmission into the group and the democratic right to freely post WSWS articles. He noted, “Nothing in my post violated any of the group’s rules, indicating that my removal was based on political disagreement with the perspective outlined in the article.”

Blake added: “The WSWS is the only news outlet in the world that has regularly and consistently advocated for schools and nonessential workplaces to remain closed until the pandemic is contained. Our education articles have

attracted a very wide readership over the past year, including an article I wrote on February 17. This was the only article to expose the blatant lies that Joe Biden told a second-grader live on CNN, when he stated, ‘Kids don’t get ... COVID very often. It’s unusual for that to happen.’ The NEA BAT Caucus even created this meme quoting from the article.”

He concluded, “The issues raised in Monday’s WSWS article on the lifting of mask mandates and the full reopening of schools are life and death questions confronting educators and all workers in the US and globally.”

In response to Blake’s letter, three of the BATs administrators personally blocked him on Facebook, refusing to readmit him to the group or engage with any of the issues involved. Only one administrator responded by stating: “Sorry, I don’t have the power to do that. And without knowing the particulars of what the issues were, I wouldn’t want to countermand the people who made the decision anyway. Our guidelines are stated clearly on our page, and as a private page, we can choose who we allow in our space.”

The dividing lines between the working class and the capitalist ruling class—including all its agents in the Democratic Party, the unions and their pseudo-left promoters—are becoming clearer each day. In banning Blake from their group and blocking him individually, the BATs administrators aim to minimize the ability for a socialist perspective to reach the thousands of increasingly radicalized teachers in the group.

The *WSWS Educators Newsletter* urges all educators and other workers to oppose the censorship of the WSWS on BATs, and to call for the readmission of Blake into the national BATs Facebook group. Send statements of opposition to this censorship to educators@wsws.org and share this article with coworkers and on social media.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

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