

“The WSWS has stood shoulder to shoulder with rank-and-file educators through every major attack on our profession”

Educators denounce banning of WSWS writer Evan Blake from “Badass Teachers” Facebook group

WSWS Educators Newsletter
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On Friday, the *World Socialist Web Site* reported the fact that WSWS writer Evan Blake has been banned from the Badass Teachers Association (BATs) Facebook group. This act of censorship from a group that presents itself as left-wing has continued, provoking opposition among educators and other workers.

On Sunday, Teachers Against Dying founder and former Texas teacher Michael Hull made a post in his group titled “UNCENSOR EVAN BLAKE FROM BATS.” The post calls for Blake to be readmitted to the BATs group and highlights the role played by the WSWS in reporting on Hull’s experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. This post, as well as another by WSWS writer Benjamin Mateus, garnered over 150 comments, the vast majority opposing Blake’s censorship.

In his post, Hull wrote: “Overall, I’ve always liked Bad Ass Teachers Association (BATS). I have them linked as a recommended group in Teachers Against Dying and I’ve participated in their town halls. ... However, it appears they blocked my friend Evan Blake, and provided no explanation as to why. This came after he attempted to post an article which had statements from epidemiologists condemning the CDC’s guidelines on masks, which is a fair thing to bring up.”

He added, “I don’t agree with all of the political ideology of WSWS, but no other outlet has done better reporting on the school reopening issue. It’s not even close. ... Evan has done tremendous work throughout this crisis and helped expose a lot of things, including Randi Weingarten’s role in the disastrous reopening program. I find it odd that this ban comes after a popular post he made against her which garnered many positive reactions and had many Bad Ass Teachers calling for her resignation as President of American Federation of Teachers.”

Hull concluded, “I’m calling on the Bad Ass Teachers Association to reinstate his ability to post and speak truth to power, or provide a ****good**** reason for the ban. If you are a BAT, I encourage you to contact the admins and ask them respectfully to reconsider this decision or to provide a ****good****

reason for it.”

In response to this principled opposition to the censorship of Blake, BATs administrator Michael Flanagan posted an article titled “Dear Evan Blake: It’s Not Us, It’s You.” The piece defends the admins’ decision to ban Blake from the group, distorts the events that led to the banning and makes clear the underlying political motives involved.

Flanagan writes: “We do not always agree with our union leadership, and we have been vocal about those disagreements. But we are union members, and will support them, even while trying to change certain policies and actions from within.” He proclaims: “we do promote racial and identity politics,” adding, “We advocate under the current political system. In a two party system we have had to choose one party over the other and that has not always been an easy choice-except during this last election.”

With these statements, Flanagan outlines the BATs administrators’ political perspective, which entails subordinating workers to the unions and the Democratic Party.

Over the past 40 years, the unions have been transformed into corporatist bureaucracies that are totally hostile to rank-and-file workers. Weingarten, who nets an annual salary of roughly \$500,000 and sits on the Democratic National Committee (DNC), epitomizes this process. She has been the linchpin of the school reopening campaign, provoking mass opposition among rank-and-file teachers.

For decades, the Democrats have promoted racial and identity politics to provide cover for their right-wing, procapitalist program of unending austerity and war. The WSWS has initiated the fight for rank-and-file committees of educators and other workers, independent of the unions and the Democratic Party, to unite the entire working class against the homicidal policies of the ruling elite.

The subordination of the working class to this party has proven disastrous for workers of every race, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation. Since Biden’s inauguration, Democrats at the federal, state and local levels have cynically justified the reopening of

schools with the invocation of racial politics.

In response to Flanagan, Blake left two extensive comments documenting the real sequence of events that led to his banning by BATs admins, making clear that this was a political decision. He noted: “The WSWS, for which I write regularly, has provided the most consistent and scientific coverage on this issue, with a readership among tens of thousands of teachers. We’ve defended teachers and have exposed the role of the Democratic Party and the teachers unions in implementing school reopenings. I am being banned for these criticisms and the administrators’ political disagreement with these positions and nothing else.”

Blake noted: “Banning me from the group was the most extreme measure that you could take,” adding, “If you have a clear political agenda that does not allow for the expression of left-wing and socialist criticisms of the unions and the Democratic Party, then this must be stated in the BATs group rules.”

He concluded: “We will continue fighting to oppose the censorship of left-wing criticism and we call on all members of Teachers Against Dying and BATs to defend democratic rights. We demand that I be reinstated to the national BATs group, and that posts and comments expressing socialist positions be approved and freely debated in all BATs groups.”

Numerous other teachers left statements of support for Blake on this post and others, calling for him to be readmitted into the group. Many raised that either they themselves or other left-wing teachers had previously been banned from BATs for speaking out against the right-wing policies of the Democratic Party and their backers in the unions.

DJK Freeman, a teacher in Tennessee, submitted the following statement of support for Blake:

As a teacher and activist in Tennessee, I was disappointed in the Badass Teachers Association’s decision to censure World Socialist Website (WSWS) writer Evan Blake from their Facebook page.

The WSWS has stood shoulder to shoulder with rank-and-file educators through every major attack on our profession from the Obama reforms in 2009, the betrayal of teacher-led strikes by their unions in 2018, and now the push by the Biden administration to reopen schools during a global pandemic in 2021.

When teachers in my district were sent into classrooms last fall and our union told us there was nothing they could do, the WSWS shared what was happening in our classrooms with a global audience. They helped us organize ourselves into Rank-and-File Safety Committees to demand safe and humane policies for educators, students, and our families.

The central tenets of the Badass Teachers Association mission statement are “equity” and “teacher-centered”; however, their mission does not seem to include allowing their members to read education news that challenges the positions of the Biden administration, the Democrats or their left-wing, the Democratic Socialists of America. This is just one more example of the so-called “left” in the

United States silencing those with whom they disagree rather than engaging in an honest and open discussion of our differences.

A high school math teacher from Philadelphia sent the following statement:

I am opposed to a group calling itself “Bad Ass Teachers Association”—whose name seems to suggest a willingness to hear strong advocacy against establishment state and administrative action contrary to the best interest of teachers—banning from their Facebook site a voice of someone seeming to voice credibly and respectfully that very advocacy.

I am speaking against BATs taking Evan Blake off their Facebook group. When decisions regarding student, teacher, and public well-being are being made in changing and recently dangerous contexts, this is not the time to stop listening to respectful and credible advocacy for everyone’s well-being, even if a preference for political correctness might still prejudice our listening.

Kuheha, a teacher in Hawaii, wrote:

Transparency is the missing piece that has lowered my confidence in our school, union, and government leadership. Their story is always changing, always shifting to fit their agenda. Given the stakes, an open and balanced debate is the way to move forward to identify challenges and possible solutions. Eliminating voices at the table is harmful and divisive and makes me suspicious of a covert agenda. There have been too many lies and we need to seek the truth. WSWS writer Evan Blake must be readmitted to the BATs FB page. No banning.

The banning of Blake from BATs, based solely on political disagreement with the socialist politics advanced by the WSWS, must be opposed by all class-conscious educators and workers. We demand the lifting of the ban on Evan Blake and encourage educators, parents and other workers who support the right of socialists to express their viewpoints to send statements of support today .



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