

“Badass Teachers” Facebook group administrators uphold ban on WSWS writer Evan Blake

WSWS Educators Newsletter
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Administrators for the national Facebook group “Badass Teachers Association” (BATs) have voted in secret to uphold their ban on *World Socialist Web Site* writer and Socialist Equality Party (SEP) member Evan Blake. This decision was made without any personal communication with Blake himself and was only made public in a comment by BATs administrator Michael Flanagan on a post in the Facebook group “Teachers Against Dying.”

Responding to the post, which encouraged members to express their views on the banning, Flanagan commented: “I appreciate the enthusiasm in BATs and the publicity of a second article in WSWS. I did advocate for Evan’s reinstatement but it was a vote and the vote was no, not at this time. We are not here to be demanded of. You got the wrong people for that. But best of luck. Peace.”

Flanagan is the same administrator who wrote an article that falsified what led to the banning and sought to smear Blake using language associated with sexual predators. He also allowed a slanderous post to be made in BATs, which smeared the WSWS and Teachers Against Dying as racist and sexist, which he then “liked” and defended. It was a transparent lie to say that he advocated for Blake’s reinstatement.

The ban on Blake was clearly a politically motivated act of censorship. It took place within days of him posting an article he wrote that was deeply critical of American Federation of Teachers (AFT) President Randi Weingarten, which provoked a flood of opposition and calls for her immediate resignation as the national union president. Weingarten herself remains a member of BATs and faces no criticism from the group’s leadership, who are themselves tied to the union bureaucracies and support the Democratic Party.

The *WSWS Educators Newsletter* continues to demand the readmission of Blake into the national BATs Facebook group and for the ability of socialists to voice their opinions in the group, which claims to be left-wing. We received the following statements from educators and other workers in the US opposing the banning of Blake.

Kathy a school bus driver from the Philadelphia region and member of the Pennsylvania Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee, connected the banning of Blake to the broader growth of opposition within the working class, which the unions and their pseudo-left backers seek to contain, including through threats of violence by leaders of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), who are themselves deeply connected to the Democratic Party. She commented:

This is not right; Evan Blake should not be sanctioned. Evan and the rank-and-file committees are defending teachers and students against the pandemic. By trying to silence them you might as well be with the administration supporting the murder of teachers and

students.

What the rank-and-file committees are doing is good, it is for the working class, it is making significant gains. I think the capitalists are getting scared, they are starting to realize the impact that the committees are having upon the workers. The workers are starting to realize that they have an alternative source than the unions. They see what the unions have done and that they don’t stand for workers. And they see that the SEP is standing for them.

BATs see what is happening. They realize the momentum and they see the impact that we are having and are afraid of it. The same is the case with the DSA twitter supporting Stalin’s murder of Trotsky. Showing ice picks, they are threatening those who are seeking to build an opposition.

A teacher from Maryland’s Eastern Shore stated, “It’s clear that the main goal of our unions is to actually keep us from uniting in solidarity to demand better treatment. Now the corporate leadership is even infiltrating our social media spaces and trying to censor and squash any criticism of how they have failed to represent our best interests for years now and especially during this pandemic.”

Michael Hull, a former teacher from Texas who was victimized and driven out of the profession after founding the opposition group Teachers Against Dying, wrote:

I am highly disappointed that the leadership of BATs decided to uphold the ban on Evan Blake.

I’ve been nothing but supportive of BATs in the past, but I believe this ban deprives their audience of important perspectives, not to mention his coverage of stories facing teachers that would otherwise go unheard. In fact, Evan is one of the only journalists who interviewed me regarding my traumatic experiences as an educator during the pandemic. Moreover, few outlets or journalists have made the accurate connection between unsafe school reopenings and the corporate state’s desire to prop up the stock market through a subsidized daycare.

I have come under criticism for not censoring the WSWS from my group Teachers Against Dying, and for being featured in some of their articles. However, I support their advocacy of teachers and their unapologetic exposure of corruption. As a democratic space committed to good faith discussion, we will continue to feature Evan Blake and allow members to voice conflicting opinions and perspectives as well.

I applaud anyone on the BATs Board of Directors who voted in

favor of lifting Evan Blake's ban, but ultimately this was an unsettling decision, especially considering Randi Weingarten is still a member of the group despite lying to me, a cancer survivor and caretaker, about helping with an accommodation and dismissing safety concerns facing teachers on a forum that BATs sponsored.

If Evan broke any group rules as they allege, I know it was either inadvertent or out of a passion for advocacy. More importantly, it could not have caused anywhere near the harm Weingarten has (which Evan Blake has exposed). I call on BATs to ban Randi Weingarten from the group and to write a story exposing her lies and capitulation with the same amount of vigor that they devoted to writing about Evan Blake's purported rule breaking.

Deja Dorrough, a member of Teachers Against Dying, commented:

It's absolutely disgusting that Evan Blake has been censored and even more disgusting that he has been lied on just because Sad Ass Teachers doesn't agree with his political beliefs, despite his accurate reporting during the pandemic. A fellow teacher's character was slandered because they can't differentiate between political dissent and personal attacks. These fake leftists get offended when someone speaks facts that don't align with their "truth" and that's messed up. Evan Blake has done nothing but report on the realities facing teachers, exposing the establishment and their capitulators, which has nothing to do with his political background. This looks like a personal vendetta to me.

Michael Hull, who is not even a socialist, has been in many of their articles because they recognize the same problem with the system that we have. Sadass Teachers Association sees the problem and then turns their heads. They recorded the exchange between Randi Weingarten and Michael Hull, but they didn't release it or even talk about it. However, they were very quick to slander Evan Blake with lies.

They don't seem too interested in educating teachers about the crimes that have been perpetrated against them. Evan has done that, but they write a hit piece on him and ban him with no evidence that he did anything wrong.

Michael and his group members have fought valiantly against the political establishment and sellout national union bosses who herded teachers to their deaths. BATs should remove the vile post that slanders the WSWs and Teachers Against Dying, and by implication all their members and supporters, as racist and sexist. Also, where is their article on what happened in BATs between Michael Hull and Randi Weingarten? She lied to him and basically told Texas teachers to pound the sand as their homicidal governor herds them back into deadly conditions. You know who did report on that? Evan Blake. BATs have been silent though, but I guess violating some group rules is worse than selling out dues paying teachers. They should get their priorities straight on this.

Bridget, a teaching credential student at a Southern California university, commented:

BATs should not censor anyone who tells the truth. Their prevention of democratic discussion manufactures consent: the consent to reopening schools without listening to the science. This is the sort of thing that gets people killed.

BATs seems really pro-union. I noticed one of the admins had a 'unions work' sticker as her Facebook profile. Before I learned about how blatantly the AFT was backstabbing actual workers, I was pro-union mainly because I thought they still had the interests of workers in mind and historically they did get things like the 8-hour workday. I just hadn't read any more recent history. The fact that they censored the WSWs writer shows that they are trying to push a liberal agenda by refusing to allow political discussion. If someone disagrees with them and gets censored or banned, that just shows you that the BATs is just doing what Democrats do. WSWs writer Evan Blake must be allowed to post on BATs.

James, a mental health care worker, sent the following comment:

As a key worker in mental health, I wholeheartedly oppose the banning of Evan Blake from the Badass Teachers Association (BATs) Facebook group. It is an act of draconian political censorship based on nothing but disagreement with Evan's socialist politics, to which the BATs administrators wish to deny access lest educators and other workers should become radicalized through it.

In that case, these educators and other workers would cease to subordinate themselves to the Democratic Party and the union apparatus, whose rightwing politics are masked as progressiveness through their compulsive insistence on the dictates of identity politics.

It is this political independence of educators and other workers that the BATs administrators are concerned above all to preempt through banning Evan. And they won't make this agenda clear in their membership rules, since it would remove the cover that enables their anti-socialist reaction to operate with secure impunity, that is, under the radar.

Beverly, a retired public service employee in Northern California, wrote:

BATs administrators have refused to readmit Evan Blake to their group or to engage with any of the political issues involved with his banning. One administrator simply responded to Blake's demand for readmission by stating: "[W]ithout knowing the particulars of what the issues were, I wouldn't want to countermand the people who made the decision anyway," as if ignorance is sufficient to justify blind obedience to authority.

It seems to me that a response more in keeping with the goals and methods of the educational profession would be to educate oneself about those issues, and attempt to factually rebut the WSWs article, if indeed, facts in rebuttal can be found. But this is not what you did.

In a move reminiscent of Joseph Stalin's tactics, you chose instead to censor any views that deviate from the BATs political line, and to purge their author from your group. I must conclude that if this is how "badass teachers" model intellectual inquiry and critical debate for their students, our educational system is in a condition more deplorable than I imagined.

I look forward to having you prove me wrong. Stop the censorship of World Socialist Web Site articles immediately, and readmit Evan Blake to the national BATs Facebook group.



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact