

# University of Michigan subreddit censors WSWS articles on suicide of Chinese researcher

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On April 9, the University of Michigan subreddit, r/uofm, removed three posts documenting the FBI interrogation and suicide of U-M Chinese researcher Danhao Wang. The posts had received over 80,000 views and more than 300 comments. Two of the posts included links to *World Socialist Web Site* articles on the anti-Chinese witch-hunt and Wang's suicide.

Wang, a brilliant thirty-year-old scientist, took his own life on the night of March 19, jumping from an upper floor within the G.G. Brown Laboratory building just one day after being subjected to hostile interrogation by FBI agents. For more than two weeks, a conspiracy of silence reigned over Ann Arbor, Michigan and the country. The U-M administration did not even inform the student body and faculty of this tragedy. An internal email not naming Wang was sent to faculty and staff of the Electrical Engineering and Computer Science Department on March 20, but no official communications were sent to the broader university community. The *Michigan Daily* student newspaper published nothing on the event. On April 2, the *World Socialist Web Site* was the first to report the identity of Wang in English-language media.

The death of Wang followed the arrest, prosecution, jailing and deportation of five U-M Chinese researchers since June of last year. The WSWS has extensively covered the cases of Yunqing Jian, Chengxuan Han, Xu Bai, Fengfan Zhang and Zhiyong Zhang at U-M, and Youhuang Xiang at Indiana University. The IYSSE has campaigned for the defense of the Chinese scientists and explained that their persecution by the Trump administration, with the support of the Democratic Party and the complicity of the U-M administration, is part of the assault on immigrants and the democratic rights of the entire population. Its aim is to whip up anti-Chinese racism in preparation for war against China, a nuclear-armed power.

The news blackout by the corporate press on Wang's death was broken only on April 6, when the *Detroit News* and the *Detroit Free Press* published articles on the tragic event. On that day, an r/uofm poster cited the *Detroit News* article and asked why nothing was being said on campus about it. This became the top post and received 160 comments.

On April 7, this writer placed a post on r/uofm that linked to a statement of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) at U-M published by the WSWS that day. This was one of the three WSWS posts removed by the r/uofm moderators two days later.

The removal of the WSWS posts by the moderators was clearly a politically motivated act of censorship. It was accompanied by a large number of comments attacking the WSWS and downplaying the death of Wang. These comments were the apparent result of an orchestrated effort to suppress demands for an investigation and to discredit the WSWS. This writer, who authored the WSWS articles and made the initial posts on r/uofm, sought to obtain an explanation from the subreddit moderators, who are not identified. The moderators never replied.

A subsequent post attempted to bypass the blackout and asked: "Why was the top post from yesterday deleted?" It linked to BBC coverage of Wang's suicide alongside a WSWS article and declared: "The students, researchers, staff, and faculty of uofm must demand a full independent investigation into the death of Danhao Wang and the campaign of fabricated unscientific prosecutions against Chinese researchers... Don't let the mods censor international news at the uofm."

This second post received 5,800 views and 41 comments in just a few hours before it was scrubbed with the automated message: "Your post has been removed from the University of Michigan subreddit because it was either reported as spam and removed by a moderator, or automatically removed by the AutoModerator."

A third attempt was similarly shut down after receiving 7,400 views and 33 comments. This writer then received a seven-day ban from the entirety of Reddit. Moderators have refused to respond to any inquiries regarding these removals.

The censored posts contained criticism of the U-M administration, calls for an independent probe, and poignant testimonials regarding Wang's scientific contributions and his brutal treatment by the authorities. The top-rated comment on the censored April 7 post read: "Not everyone here is affiliated with the CCP. Some of us are just trying to live a normal life..."

Whatever the case, this absurd ‘witch-hunt’ operation targeting Chinese scholars needs to be stopped.”

Right-wing forces trolled the discussion, leveling baseless accusations that the WSWS poster was a “CCP agent” or a chatbot, and falsely claimed that the IYSSE had no organic connection to U-M, despite the organization’s years of continuous activity on the campus.

The WSWS has previously documented its blacklisting by major Reddit communities. In August 2020, moderators of the r/coronavirus subreddit banned WSWS articles to protect the ruling class policy of mass infection. Similar politically motivated bans have been imposed on r/politics and r/railroading.

By censoring WSWS posts on the persecution of Chinese researchers and the suicide of Danhao Wang, the Reddit moderators are aiding and abetting the government witch-hunt, if not directly working in conjunction with the witch-hunters. The US military and intelligence apparatus considers the persecution of Chinese scientists a major component of its war-mongering foreign policy.

This was underscored this past Sunday when Nikki Haley, US ambassador to the United Nations during Donald Trump’s first term and current chair of the right-wing Hudson Institute, called for an escalation of the war against Iran and stepped-up confrontation with China on the CNN interview program “State of the Union.” Haley made a point of promoting the witch-hunt against Chinese researchers, saying, “We knew the students were coming to our universities, working in research, sending information back... We can’t take our eye off of China. There’s a reason they’re helping Iran.”

This is also the agenda of the Democratic Party, exemplified by Michigan Representative Haley Stevens. At a March 26 hearing of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce titled “US Universities Under Siege: Foreign Espionage, Stolen Innovation, & the National Security Threat,” Stevens championed her bipartisan US Research Protection bill. The bill, which amends the 2022 CHIPS and Science Act, broadens the legal definition of partnership with so-called “malign foreign talent programs” to include any program that provides “indirect benefits” to targeted nations such as China. This transforms routine academic exchanges, access to international laboratories, shared research data, or even the co-authorship of scientific papers into potential grounds for federal prosecution, detention and deportation. The hearing was held one week after the suicide of Danhao Wang.

As for the U-M administration, its filthy collaboration with the Trump administration was spelled out by interim President Domenico Grasso at the same March 26 hearing. Grasso boasted of the university’s collaboration in the witch-hunting of Chinese researchers.

He said:

As an engineer and an army veteran, who currently holds a top secret security clearance, I’m deeply committed to protecting our nation’s security... This commitment is illustrated by our decision to end a relationship with a university in China that is seen as a potential threat to America’s interests. We made this decision after discussion with this committee and the House Select Committee on the CCP.

He boasted of terminating the visas of Chinese researchers hit with trumped-up federal charges of smuggling and falsely labeled by Trump officials as spies or even terrorists. He told the committee:

In isolated but serious incidents, a small number of university students and researchers from China have been arrested for unlawful activities... Once alerted, we acted swiftly and decisively—working with federal law enforcement, promptly terminating student and work visas, and severing all ties with those individuals.

The WSWS and the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) demand the reversal of the censorship and the restoration of all posts on the suicide of Danhao Wang. We call on U-M students, faculty, staff and researchers to demand a halt to political censorship on the r/uofm subreddit. The IYSSE at U-M is calling for the formation of a committee of students, faculty and staff to demand an accounting from the university and to undertake an independent investigation into the persecution of Chinese researchers at U-M and the suicide of Wang.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://wsws.org/contact)**