

SCBA Representatives Join Leading Chinese-Americans to Highlight Concerns on Racial Profiling Associated with Rising U.S – China Tensions

SCBA representatives among nearly 300 leaders in science, technology, government, education, and business convening to address the human impacts of geopolitics

The SCBA was established with the guiding principle of promoting the career of bioscientists of Chinese descent in the US and worldwide. Scientists of Chinese descent comprise a large proportion of US scientific workforce. A vast majority of them are law-abiding citizens. They have made (and will continue to make) significant contributions to the advancement of biomedical sciences in the US.

The SCBA strongly opposes racial profiling. There have been numerous incidences in recent years in which Chinese American scientists were unfairly targeted. We believe that Chinese Americans are Americans and should not be treated otherwise. These unfair targeting based on racial profiling have created a great deal of frustration and confusion among the Chinese American scientist community at large. Targeting scientists of Chinese descent hurts American scientific research and biomedical industry. These concerns prompted the SCBA, along with the participation of two other organizations, to publish an open letter in Science earlier this year (<https://science.sciencemag.org/content/363/6433/1290>).

On September 28th, 2019, three co-authors of the Science letter, Shan Lu, Zhe Han and Hui Zheng, along with SCBA President Paul Liu and member Paul Chiao joined a group of leading policy makers, legal experts, educators, business leaders and scientists in a conference in Silicon Valley to tackle the impact of rising U.S. – China tensions on the Chinese American community and American society as a whole.

Brought together by the Committee of 100 (C100), a non-profit American organization of prominent and extraordinary Chinese Americans, the participants of the conference detailed a heightened rise in scrutiny of Chinese Americans and people of Chinese descent, especially those who work in science and technology, and the chilling effect on civil liberties, as well as American science, technology and research initiatives. Research conducted by C100 in 2017 shows that the percentage of people of Chinese heritage charged under the Economic Espionage Act (EEA) tripled from 2009 to 2017, and that defendants of Asian heritage convicted of espionage received sentences over twice as severe as those of other ethnicities. SCBA member Paul Chiao comes from MD Anderson Cancer Center, where several Chinese American scientists were recently investigated and forced to depart from the institute. Scientific collaborations with Chinese scientists were severely affected at the MD Anderson.

At the conference, invited speakers detailed the negative impact of a climate of fear and suspicion on individual scientists and researchers, as well as on a wide range of industries, universities, research institutions and businesses critical to U.S. innovation and economic leadership. Below are quotes from some of the speakers.

- **Gary Locke, former U.S. Ambassador to China and former U.S. Secretary of Commerce:** “The U.S. – China relationship is the world’s most consequential bi-lateral relationship. We must be concerned about security concerns and condemn illegal activity, but in recent years there have

been many cases of wrongful prosecution. Our pride in our heritage does not mean we are any less loyal or patriotic to America.”

- **Professor Susan Shirk, Chair, 21st Century China Center at the School of Global Policy & Strategy, UC San Diego, and former U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State:** “China and the U.S. wove together a dense fabric of trade, technology, and education – forming a nexus of what became globalization. To preserve America’s open society and vibrant research environment, we should double down on American openness, not put limitations on scientific collaboration.”
- **Dr. David D. Ho, Renowned HIV Scientist; Scientific Director, Aaron Diamond AIDS Research Center; Former Time Magazine Man of the Year:** “There’s a chill in the air for Chinese and Chinese-American scientists. Over 250 scientists are being investigated in over 60 institutions, many of whom are Chinese or Chinese-American. Science depends on open and free exchange. Science has no borders. Science by definition is global. The real threat is not from occasional cases of espionage; the real threat is not believing in science, and the creation of a toxic environment that drives away talented Chinese and Chinese-American scientists.”
- **Thomas F. Rosenbaum, President, California Institute of Technology:** “The strength of the United States as a scientific, technological and economic power has depended crucially on immigration. Recent demonstrated examples of violations of scientific ethics, coupled with fears for U.S. economic competitiveness and national security, may well lead to governmental restrictions that broadly and severely restrict the flow of people and ideas.”
- **Dr. John L. Hennessy, Chairman, Alphabet Inc.; President Emeritus, Stanford University:** “Immigrants come to this country to make America a better country. There are a number of important American companies with foreign born founders. If you cut that off, you cut off an important part of our nation’s economic vitality.” “There might be a few “bad apples”, but it is definitely not an epidemic. Over treatment of these “bad apples” is even worse than an epidemic disease.”

As an output of the conference, C100 will generate recommendations to share with congressional leaders, the scientific and educational communities, law-enforcement, businesses, and civic organizations and communities. At a roundtable meeting at the end of the conference, SCBA President Paul Liu stated that government policies need to be fair, justifiable, consistent, and transparent, and clear guidelines are needed for engagements with China at all levels, such as collaborations, travels, meetings, and exchange programs. Dr. Liu expressed the desire for SCBA to work with C100 and other organizations representing Chinese American scientists to advocate for the rights and welfares of our members.