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**Foundation Against Intolerance and Racism (FAIR)**

JANUARY 2022

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

### MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

#### JANUARY

##### Zoom Meetup

Thursday, January 27, 6:30 - 8:00 pm

#### FEBRUARY

##### Chapter General Meeting (Virtual)

Wednesday, February 2, 6:00 - 7:00 pm

##### In-Person Meetup

Sunday, February 13, 1:00 - 3:00 pm

##### Zoom Meetup

Tuesday, February 8, 6:30 - 8:00 pm

Thursday, February 24, 6:30 - 8:00 pm

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# CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS

## New Resource Added to FAIR Austin's Website!

Easily keep track of FAIR Austin chapter events with our [new calendar](#).

And, if you know of other events that fit with FAIR's mission happening in Central Texas, let us know. Please send us the information via the web form beneath the calendar or email [austin@fairforall.org](mailto:austin@fairforall.org).

FAIR Austin calendar: <https://www.fairforall.org/austin/fair-austin-calendar/>



## A Win in Round Rock

FAIR Austin's recent efforts helped shelve a troubling resolution of the Round Rock Independent School District (ISD) School Board of Trustees, which they had planned to vote on at their December 16, 2021, meeting. This resolution could have had a chilling effect on parents' right to challenge the appropriateness of teaching materials, a right expressly granted by the Texas Education Code.

The resolution, titled, "Resolution Condemning Actions That Divide Our Community and Incite Hatred," contained vague language and admonished that "any groups and individuals who promote hate, violence, discord, and intolerance are rejected and condemned and will not interfere with the Board of Trustees' efforts to address, engage and lead the district on issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion..."

While it is laudable that the ISD wants to condemn those who promote hate and violence, FAIR Austin was concerned with including the terms, 'intolerance' and 'discord.' The word "intolerance" was not defined, and therefore was subject to broad interpretation. For example, people who question particular policy or worldviews may have been considered, under the resolution, 'intolerant.' 'Discord' means disagreement. In a pluralistic society, we should expect disagreement as part of a positive and constructive process toward action.

Early on December 14, we received an email from a FAIR Austin member who has children in the Round Rock school district. She gave us the link to the proposed resolution. We immediately contacted FAIR National's Legal and Policy Team for assistance. Local FAIR Austin volunteers worked with FAIR National to develop a well-reasoned objection to the resolution, requesting that the Board of Trustees consider revising the language to provide more specifics and better define the terms used. (See the text of the original resolution and FAIR's response [here](#).)

By December 15, we had a document ready. And by the morning of December 16, FAIR Austin contacted each Round Rock ISD Board Trustee member introducing our chapter and outlining specific concerns regarding the language.

In addition, FAIR Austin volunteers worked with Round Rock parents to draft testimony for the December 16th public hearing. One parent noted after the meeting that she and others found the proposed statement particularly beneficial. It made speaking up less overwhelming and helped them maintain composure at the hearing. She also believed their well-reasoned testimony encouraged the Board of Trustees to take them more seriously.

We heard back from two of the seven Round Rock Board Trustees we contacted. Board Trustee Cory Vessa wrote that the district administration crafted the resolution at her behest. She had wanted some language that condemned anonymous, hateful messages posted on Trustee Xiao's Facebook page this past April. She said that she could not edit the resolution before the Board of Trustees meeting but hoped to modify it so that the intent was clear. She also said that she is always open to constructive feedback. Board Trustee Danielle Weston wrote she had no explanation and assured us she played no role in drafting it.

We were surprised to learn that the resolution had been drafted in response to anonymous, hateful comments on social media instead of a more general promotion of "diversity, equity, and inclusion." And, as we noted in our official response, what concerned us most was the declaration that "any groups and individuals who promote. . . discord . . . are rejected and condemned and will not interfere with the Board of Trustees' efforts..." because undoubtedly, such language would have a chilling effect and inhibit or discourage parental participation.

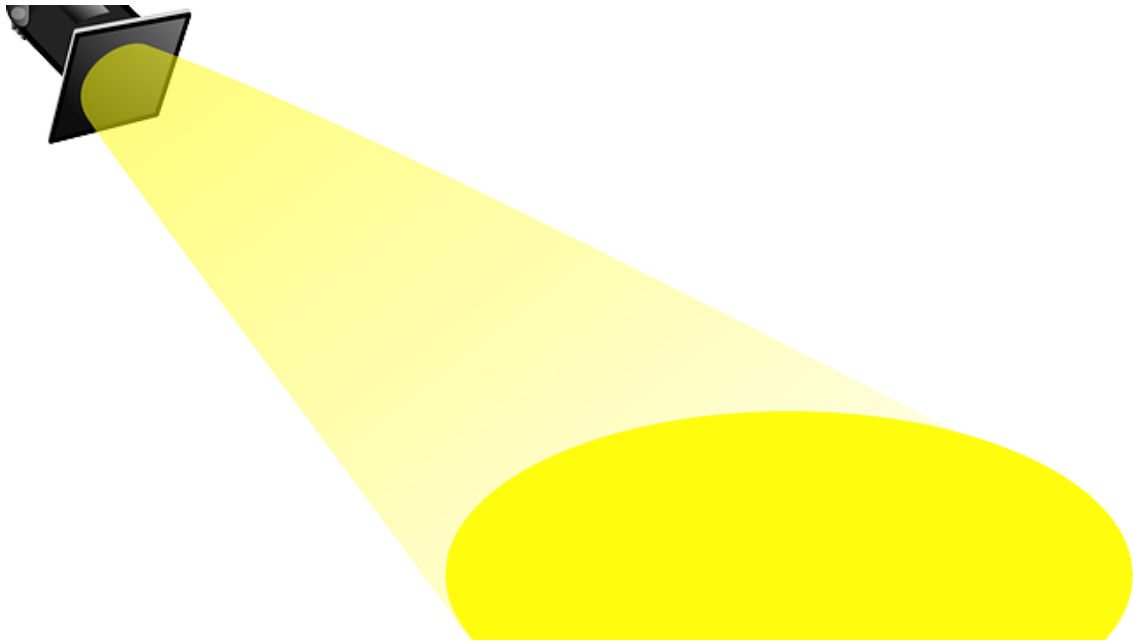
When Trustee Vessa introduced a new version of the resolution that removed much of the offending language at the December 16 public meeting, several Hispanic parents testified that they were offended by the inclusion of the term LatinX. The Trustees voted to shelve the adoption of the newly drafted resolution until a later meeting in January to incorporate changes following all public comments. We applaud the Board's willingness to listen and respond to our community's concerns. We at FAIR Austin will continue to work within our community to promote civil rights and liberties for all.

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**“We hold these truths to be self-evident:  
that all men are created equal. . .”**

— Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776

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## **Member Spotlight: Weijing**

*by Pamela Vaughn, FAIR Austin Chapter Communications Volunteer*

Meet Weijing. He's a 57-year-old Chinese American who emigrated to the U.S. on a student visa in 1989. On a Sunday afternoon in December, I spoke with him for more than an hour about his experiences growing up during the Cultural Revolution in China. From 1966 until 1976, tens of millions suffered public humiliation, imprisonment, torture, hard labor, seizure of property, and sometimes execution or harassment that led to suicide. More than 1 million schools and all of China's universities closed. Schools reopened in 1969, but

universities didn't reopen until 1972. Even then, admissions were based on recommendations from local party leaders and favored party members. China didn't reintroduce merit-based entrance examinations for higher education until 1977. This was the backdrop for his formative years.

Weijing's parents (both teachers) were labeled counter-revolutionaries, and the family was relocated to a mountain village in western Fujian. During those years, his family experienced extreme poverty. Food lines and rationing, no running water or heat, and no access to medical services were part of life. Even matches to cook were rationed. Given the 6-day work week in China, he spent most days in daycare and was picked up on Saturday afternoons. His early education was focused on practical skills and becoming an effective worker. The family moved back to Fuzhou, the provincial capital, in 1974, and life returned to something resembling normalcy.

Then in the spring/summer of 1989, the events at Tiananmen Square unfolded. Students protested for greater accountability, constitutional due process, democracy, freedom of the press, and freedom of speech. Chinese authorities responded by declaring martial law and mobilizing troops that killed or wounded thousands of demonstrators and bystanders on that fateful June 4.

Later that same year, Weijing entered the University of Louisiana, where he studied computer science. After college in the U.S., he relocated to Dallas to work as a software engineer. There he met his Chinese wife, also in the U.S. on a student visa. He and Ji later moved to Austin to raise their two children. He has thrived here in Austin and became a naturalized citizen in 1999, voting in a national election the following year.

He was not politically active for the next few years and only voted occasionally. He once thought of elections as referendums on taxes and social welfare. But over the last few years, he's witnessed what he considers a disturbing authoritarian trend, reminiscent of his youth in communist China. This issue intensified for him in the summer of 2020 as protestors destroyed and burned property and tore down statues. Not only did police stand down, but people were arrested for defending their homes. These events brought back memories of the Cultural Revolution and the Red Guards, a student-led paramilitary social movement that destroyed books and art, attacked temples and shrines, desecrated cemeteries, and inflicted physical and psychological harm on people. There was a directive to stop police intervention in these activities during that time. Then, on January 6, 2021, a violent mob attacked the U.S. Capitol while a joint session of Congress certified the 2020 election results. Weijing found this act, or more acutely the government's response to what happened that day, eerily familiar. In his view, why is it acceptable for these protestors to be jailed without recourse while dozens of federal cases against Portland rioters were dismissed?

He asserts that there is a kind of cultural revolution in our educational institutions and our workplaces, too. Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (DEI) executives demanded participation in self-critique sessions in his workplace. They expected attendees to confess past sins of so-called privileges and listen to grievances of so-called oppression. He recalls Saturday afternoon' struggle sessions' during the revolution years, often held at the workplace of the accused, which were aimed at public humiliation. In today's America, these self-critique-style sessions are held in public and private schools, promoting the idea that people are born into either the privileged caste or the oppressed caste by virtue of their skin color. When did merit become unfashionable? Education is a top concern of his, especially for Asian children.

Weijing joined FAIR Austin to support our grassroots movement to protect civil rights and liberties for all. FAIR Austin is proud and grateful to him for sharing his experience and insights and for his efforts to promote the pro-human alternative to fighting racism and intolerance in all of its forms.

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**“This will remain the land of the free so long as it is  
the home of the brave.”**

— Elmer Davis

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**Have feedback? Let us know at [austin@fairforall.org](mailto:austin@fairforall.org)**



**Fairness. Understanding. Humanity.**