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Chinese-Canadians 'suffering in silence' as China's United Front reaches into Canada



BY [SAM COOPER](#) - GLOBAL NEWS

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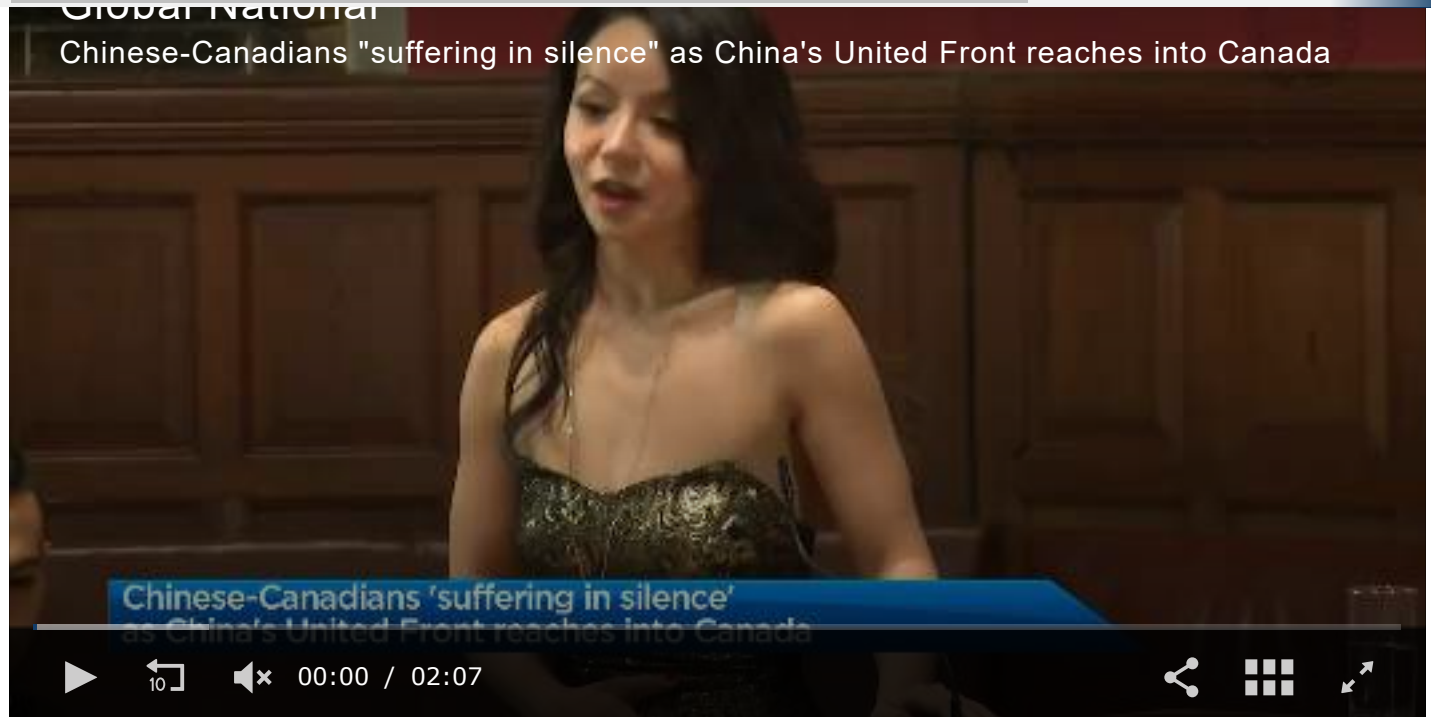
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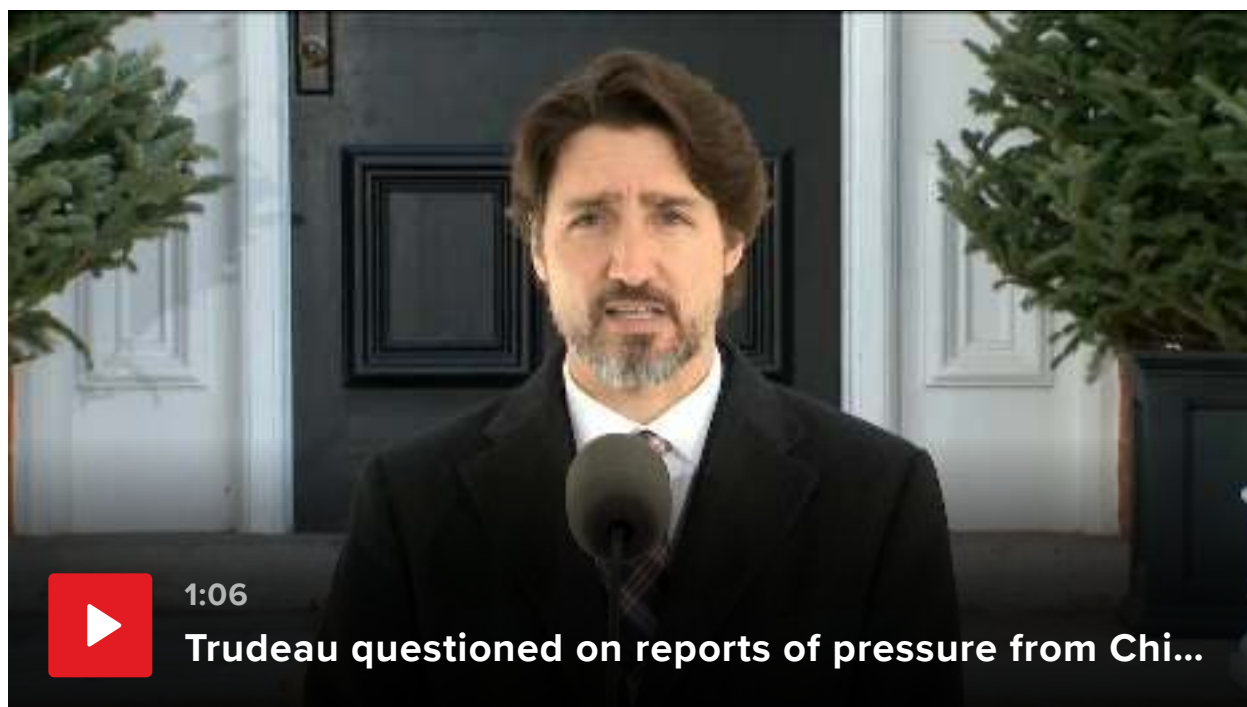
— WATCH ABOVE: Chinese-Canadian Anastasia Lin, a vocal opponent of the Chinese Communist Party and human rights abuses, is now speaking out against the so-called 'United Front,' the networks the Chinese government uses to influence government policy in the West. Robin Gill reports.



For Anastasia Lin, the breakthrough came shortly after her speech at Oxford University in early February.

The 30-year-old [Chinese-Canadian](#) actress and beauty pageant winner had been speaking for years about the Chinese Communist Party's worldwide influence operations, and its human rights abuses. But she had never received vocal support from her community, she says, until her [widely shared speech](#) struck a nerve amidst Beijing's [coronavirus](#) response.

Born in Hunan, China, her family immigrated to Vancouver, B.C. when she was 13.



— Trudeau questioned on reports of pressure from Chinese government on Chinese-Canadian citizens

When she started to take acting jobs, almost by accident, some of the roles drew her into a community of Chinese dissidents and human rights advocates. She describes a process of “awakening” to the indoctrination of her education in China, where citizens are taught to view the West as an enemy and the Communist Party as the sole guardian of Chinese people worldwide.

Lin became so vocal in her criticism of the Communist Party's influence tactics in Chinese immigrant communities, that after she was crowned Miss World Canada in 2015, and she sought a visa to compete for the world title in China, authorities there denied her application.

READ MORE: [United Front groups in Canada helped Beijing stockpile coronavirus safety supplies](#)



— Chinese-Canadian community leader asks Ottawa to offer support against Beijing influence networks

But Lin kept speaking out. And in 2018, the MacDonald-Laurier Institute named Lin as the Ottawa think-tank's new [ambassador](#) on Canada-China policy.

For the University of Toronto graduate, speaking about China's politics came at a personal cost.

She says her family has been harassed and called "anti-Chinese." Even more stunning, for Lin, her mother in Vancouver, informed her that Chinese national security agents had questioned a family business colleague in China.

“My mom told me her colleague was visited by Chinese Secret police and they asked about me, in recent years,” Lin said.

“It just made me think, how do they even know about me and care that much?”

 TWEET THIS

The Chinese consulate in Ottawa has not responded to a request for comment on the allegations in this story.



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Since winning the Miss World Canada title in 2015, Lin has come to the belief — through quiet conversations among trusted friends and colleagues — that most Chinese-Canadians are opposed to the Chinese Communist Party’s so-called “United Front” networks that seek to control immigrant groups. But in her words, many Chinese-heritage citizens worldwide are “suffering in silence and in isolation.”

“If I speak up, people of my background would feel tremendous fear. Many people have tremendous anger towards the Chinese Communist Party, but

also tremendous fear,” Lin said. “After I won Miss World Canada, I would run into Chinese in supermarkets in Scarborough. They would come up to me and tell me in secret, just in a very quiet voice, ‘what you are doing is brave.’”

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Even with this quiet support, while Lin grew into her role as a Chinese-Canadian leader, she says it was painful to read comments about herself online. She says “trolls” that criticize what they term as “anti-Chinese hostile forces” can be especially vicious toward women.

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But something changed for Lin after her speech at Oxford, on February 6.

Her message resonated powerfully, and thousands responded positively. Whether the rest of the world understood it or not, China was engaged in a cold war with democracies, Lin said.

“In considering Communist China’s threat, we could talk about many angles,” Lin said in her speech. “We can talk about how its censorship of information endangers global health, and now the coronavirus outbreak is a perfect example. I can tell you personally how the Chinese Communist Party targets family of political opponents abroad.”

And Lin took direct aim at the Communist Party’s influence networks.

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“Beijing backs numerous front organizations and civil-society groups in Western societies, including Chinese student and professional associations. These groups act as extensions of the state and party apparatus. They are mobilized to influence the outcome of local elections and influence government policy in the West,” Lin said.

“These groups are controlled and financed by the Chinese government through the United Front Work Department and the Office of Overseas Chinese Affairs, but these connections are concealed from the public.”

 TWEET THIS

Within days of the speech, she had 25,000 new Instagram followers. A YouTube recording of her speech posted April 14, has been viewed over 600,000 times. And according to YouTube statistics, 23,000 viewers have approved of Lin’s message, while 2,600 disapproved. About 6,600 have commented. And for the first time, Lin says she feels empowered to read the comments, without feeling attacked.

“I’m daring to read the comments,” she said.

“They are saying things like ‘This is such a historical speech. You are our proudest daughter.’”

 TWEET THIS

Lin believes it is the Communist Party's handling of the coronavirus outbreak, which has triggered an unprecedented moment of openness for the Chinese diaspora.

"I think the community is being more willing to be vocal about the pandemic coverup and that gave more ordinary Chinese people and diaspora courage to speak up for the first time," she said. Lin said she estimates a majority of Chinese are against Beijing's attempts to censor information and manage the pandemic.

"Really, the influence issue is just an extension of that," she said.

Support from Ottawa

Lin and a Chinese-Canadian academic that asked not to be named, and Canadian journalist Jonathan Manthorpe, an expert on China's United Front diaspora influence operations, all told Global News they believe that Canadian leaders and the broad society need to recognize the pressure exerted on Chinese-Canadian community groups.

The Chinese-Canadian academic — who is studying Beijing's influence networks — asked to remain anonymous, due to concerns that officials in Chinese consulates in Canada could interfere with research. The academic said Beijing's efforts to control citizens have recently increased, due to the pandemic crisis.

"It is very complicated — many people are silent because the crackdown in China is harsh right now," the academic said. "It is very much like what happened in the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s and '70s, right now."

The academic said they believe Canadian society at large needs to make greater efforts to understand the diverse political views of the Chinese diaspora. Also, the academic said a multiplicity of voices from Chinese-Canadians in mainstream media, would improve understanding.

“I think the Canadian government and public needs to be educated about China’s attempts to influence the overseas population,” the academic said.

“You see that the Chinese embassy and consulates are trying to get members of the diaspora to work on its behalf. The increasing control of the media in Canada is part of the United Front, how they are reporting. It is important, for the sake of this country, for us to research this.”

In an interview regarding the United Front’s influence networks in Canada, Manthorpe said the United Front has been vastly increased under President Xi Jinping and seeks to control the Chinese diaspora and use community members — only on the basis of their Chinese ancestry — as foreign agents for Beijing’s strategic goals.

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But Manthorpe said the United Front diaspora control operations have only been successful “to a limited degree.”

“It certainly hasn’t been very successful amongst the Canadians of Chinese heritage. I mean, the antipathy towards Beijing in Richmond, Scarborough, wherever, is huge and building,” Manthorpe said.

And yet, Canada has largely failed in exposing United Front operations and protecting Chinese-Canadians from the pressure exerted on them, he said.

“I think we need a lot more openness from Ottawa, identifying these United Front organizations,” Manthorpe said.

“And I think it’s also important to give support to Canadians of Chinese heritage

who are under attack by these infiltrators.”



Lin also said leadership from Ottawa has been lacking on the United Front threat.

“The public voice of Canadian authorities is so crucially needed,” she said. “The fear to speak up (in the Chinese-Canadian community) is enlarged by the silence in the mainstream society. Because the Chinese Communist Party are so good at speaking into the race identity politics, that if you speak against China’s government, you are racist, or you are xenophobic. All the people that want to speak up, Chinese Canadians and around the world, they fear they are not being supported to speak up.”

After this story was published Global News asked Prime Minister Justin Trudeau if his government is doing anything to expose United Front influence networks that are pressuring Chinese-Canadians.

“The Canadian government has always highlighted concerns around human rights and respect for basic human democracies and liberties with every country that we engage with around the world including China,” Trudeau said. “We will continue to defend human rights while at the same time looking to protect Canadians everywhere around the world.”

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Lin says through her personal struggles, she has learned a “secret” to share with Chinese-Canadians that have been pressured to fall in line by Beijing’s agents.

“They fear strength,” Lin said. “They can’t bully everyone. We need to form a united front ourselves.”

Canadian cases

CONFIRMED

71,146

(Today: +1,176)

DEATHS

5,169

(Today: +176)

RECOVERED

34,055

(Today: +1,048)

1,199,208 tests administered (Today: +23,361)

Updates may take up to 10 minutes to appear in the table.

Last Updated: EDT

Sources: [How we got the data](#)

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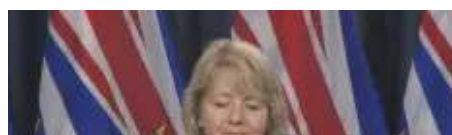
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**Corneliu Neil**

That's happening and happened in all communist countries for the last 100 years. Nobody in the West knew that by now???

Like · Reply · 22m

**Sukh Hayre**

Sukh's Thoughts: Would it be fair to ask if Ms Lin's family is one of the many families bringing millions of dollars into Canada? Why do you think China allowed families to leave the country with millions of dollars in the first place? They know that you leave behind many, many close family members. Once the mob has you, they don't let you retire, keep your millions, and live your life in peace, just because you want to. That is not how the game is played.

Like · Reply · 3 · 1h

**Ted Mead**

It is unfortunate that the current PM seems to hold such fondness for the Chinese communist dictatorship that he cannot even bring himself to speak up against anything they do or say....willfully naive....I think not.

Like · Reply · 7 · 2h

**Ryan Zacher**

We need less influence from CCP and the UN in Canada, not more.

Like · Reply · 7 · 2h · Edited

**Ed Art**

Foreign secret police are welcome by Ottawa any time. All this nonsense instead of Canada worries about public toilets for all 50 genders.

Like · Reply · 3 · 3h

**Kathy Nesbitt**

not so Ed there is only 48 genders

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