

Testimony of Alex Li

My name is Muzi Li (or Alex). I am from Bijie City, Guizhou Province, China. My father is Yuanlong Li, a man who was sent to jail for two years for publishing four articles online. I came to the U.S. on December 28, 2009 and became an undergraduate student at Bowling Green State University. I am majoring in Economics and minoring in Philosophy. Due to my fear of the Chinese Government's Ministry of State Security, I applied for political asylum in the US in December 2010. I was approved on March 8, 2011.

My family bought a computer when I was in middle school. My father didn't know how to use a computer, so I taught him. He learned some basic skills, such as how to use the internet. However, my father and I found that we could Google some websites, but we could not visit them because those websites' opinions differed from the Chinese government's. At the beginning of 2005, I got Freegate from a friend. Freegate is proxy software; through Freegate, I could cross the firewall to visit foreign websites with different ideas. Later on, my father published his articles overseas through Freegate's software.

Unfortunately, those four articles became my family's nightmare. The nightmare lasted for two years and five days. On the morning of September 9, 2009, my stepmother called me and told me not to come home until that afternoon. In the afternoon, I went back home and saw that the computer was missing and my house had been searched. My stepmother was weeping. Then I found out my father was arrested that day at his working place by the agents from the Ministry of State Security without any notice. Meanwhile, another group of agents visited my stepmother at her work place. They drove her home and rummaged through my home in front of her. She told me not to go home in the morning because she did not want me to be scared.

Later the agents found out that I taught my father how to operate the computer; they decided to interrogate me. I was 17 in 2005, not yet an adult. They took me to a hotel to interrogate me without my parents' permission; they did not allow my mother or my stepmother to stay with me during the interrogation. During the interrogation, the agents tried to prove that I was an accomplice of my father. They asked me some question such as, "How much you know about your father's articles?" "Did you help your father write the articles?" They told me that my father had already told them what he did. They wanted me to tell them what I knew. If our stories matched, my father would be safe, and nothing would happen to him. In that case, I told them that I taught my father how to use the computer, and how I got the Freegate software. The agents lied; they threw my father to the jail then.

A few weeks later, the agents came to my home. They asked me a confusing question: "How did your father publish those articles? Did he use your email address?" I explained that everyone knows to publish an article on a forum website, instead of using email, all you need to

do is copy and paste. Besides, my father had a Yahoo! email account, so he didn't even know my Hotmail password. How could he have used my email address to publish articles on a forum? Thus, I told the police officers it was impossible for him to have used my email address. The reason why the agents could see my omegacepearee@hotmail.com email address was because I used it to register for our family's Windows software. So, when the agents found my IP address, they found the email address for the operating system, and assumed it was what my father used to post the articles.

Nevertheless, the agents heard what they wanted, and ignored the rest. They ignored my answer about the email address. They also adopted my words during the first interrogation as part of their evidence.

The reasoning behind the sentencing was that my father published four articles, which were viewed 1,532 times and received responses from over 25 people. The court stated my father was guilty of "inciting subversion of state power and overthrowing the socialist system." First of all, my father posted his articles on foreign-operated websites. Without a proxy, people in China could not visit them. In 2005, few people knew of and made use of proxy software. Secondly, I could not imagine a nation with 1.4 billion people would be overthrown by an article with 1,532 views and responses from 25 people. So, I believe the agents were just using this as an excuse to persecute my father.

Moreover, I suspect China's judicial system. While my father was detained, the Ministry of Police and State Security, the Court and the Procurator spoke with one voice; they all thought my father sinned by publishing four articles. They threatened me saying that if I talked of my father's case to overseas media, the penalty for my father would be even more serious.

This is the disparaging situation and terrifying government that I faced in while in China. Finally, my father advised me to leave the country. He sacrificed by selling his house to pay my tuition in the U.S. He repaid the house mortgage with the help of the Yahoo! Foundation, and then he sold it. In the U.S., I took part in some activities like the memorial event for Tiananmen Square. The agents in China knew exactly when and where I was and what I did at these activities.

I do not believe the agents could get this detailed information without collaborating with an information technology company of the likes of Cisco Systems, who has built China's Golden Shield from the ground up.

This is my testimony.