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Dr. Youqin Wang is a senior lecturer and the director of Chinese Language Program in the Department of East Asian Languages & Civilizations at the University of Chicago. Over the last decades, she interviewed one thousand people who experienced the Chinese Cultural Revolution (1966-76) and published a series of articles and a book entitled “Victims of the Cultural Revolution: An Investigative Account of Persecution, Imprisonment and Murder” to reconstruct the unpublicized aspect of the Revolution. In 2000, she started a web memorial for victims of the Cultural Revolution with three hundred names arranged alphabetically and more were added later. Clicking onto a specific name brings a victim’s personal information, such as age, gender, death date and location, photos and details about how they were killed at so-called “struggle sessions” or committed suicide after being tortured and insulted. The web memorial has reached many Internet readers in China and in the world and received a lot of feedback. In 2002, Beijing authorities blocked the web memorial.

Her topic is

“A Prohibited Web Memorial for Victims of the Cultural Revolution: Why”

Forty years ago, in May 1966, Mao Zedong ordered to start a new revolution named the “Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution”. The Revolution lasted for ten years until Mao died in 1976. Millions of Chinese were killed during the ten years. Among the victims, many were teachers. They were killed by their students, the Red Guards, a teenager organization established in the summer of 1966.

However, victim names were not reported during and after the Revolution. After the Revolution, only a small number of victims who were in very high positions or were celebrities were mentioned in Chinese media.

Over the last decade, I have been conducting interviews and collecting documents in an attempt to understand how the persecution against ordinary people played out across China during the Cultural Revolution. I have interviewed about one thousand people who experienced the Revolution and found many names of victims who were beaten to death at so-called “struggle sessions” or committed suicide after suffering serious tortures. Two years ago, I published a book entitled “Victims of the Cultural Revolution: An Investigative Account of Persecution, Imprisonment and Murder.”

In October of 2000, I started a web site recognizing those who died from persecution during the Cultural Revolution – a cyberspace memorial for victims. Currently, more than a thousand names, arranged alphabetically, appear in the memorial and more will be added. Clicking onto a specific name brings a victim’s personal information, such as age, gender, death date and location, photos and details about how they were killed.

I adopted the format of a web site for the memorial, just because I was not able to put the names into a real architecture museum or print a book. Thanks the computer technology that can provide an affordable way for individuals like me to do such a project.

The web memorial has reached many Internet readers in China and in the world and I have received a lot of feedback. But in 2002, Beijing authorities blocked the web memorial. Since then, when people in China type the address www.chinese-memorial.org, they see the message “the page cannot be displayed.”

Who blocked my web site? Why did they block the web memorial?

Since Beijing authorities have never told which office is in charge of the Internet censorship, we cannot know who blocked the web memorial. But we can understand why they did if we know the contents of the web site.

This is Mrs. Bian Zhongyun, a vice principal of a girls middle school in Beijing, mother of four. On August 5, 1966, she was beaten and tortured to death by the Red Guards in her school. She is the first person killed by the Red Guards.

Two weeks later, August 18, Mao Zedong met a million Red Guards on Tiananmen Square. The head of the Red Guards of her school presented a Red Guard armband to Mao Zedong. The Red Guard's name literally means "elegance." Mao Zedong commented: "be violent." Then she changed her name into "be violent."

After the rally, two thousand of teachers and city residents were killed by the Red Guards within two weeks in Beijing alone. As we have known, Beijing has a history of three thousand years.

I brought six pictures of the victims on the web site. They were teachers, female teachers in high schools and elementary schools.

I also found five victims who studied in the University of Chicago before 1949. This is Professor Rao Yutai. He graduated from the University in 1918 as physics major. He started the first physics department in China's university. He was held in great respect in physics circle in China. In 1968, he was 77 years old. He was attacked severely as so-called "capitalist academic authority." He hanged himself on the campus of Beijing University.

This is Dr. Guangyan Xiao's dissertation. He received his Ph.D. in chemistry from the University of Chicago in 1946. I found his dissertation in Crerar library of the University. During the Cultural Revolution, he was accused of a "spy" without any evidence. 7 scientists were tortured to death under one "spy" accusation in his research institute. After Dr. Xiao died, his wife and their 15 year old daughter committed suicide together. A family was completely destroyed and only his dissertation is left in our university's library.

In 1966, after Mrs. Bian Zhongyun was killed, her family was even not allowed to cry for her death. One year later, her family builds a secret memorial for her in a closet at home. They pasted Mrs. Bian's picture on the back wall of the closet and present a flower in front of her picture. The door of the closet was always closed. Nobody knew about the memorial in a closet except her husband and her four children.

40 years have passed. We finally can remember her on the Internet, on a web memorial which has been banned in China. Fortunately, more and more Chinese people got Internet access and they just copy and past my articles about victims on their web sites after the web memorial was blocked. Searching my name through Google, two years ago one could see 6,000 results and now one can see more than 26,000 results. The number indicates that my articles have been duplicated at so many web sites.

My book was published in Hong Kong and it is very difficult to bring the book into China's mainland. Some young people in mainland got my book and xeroxed it. They made 100 copies to circulate it. Because it is a 570 page book, they had to make their duplicated version into two volumes. Someone emailed me the photo of the book which is marked "volume I."

One person's effort is very limited and the victims I found are only a very small proportion. But I am glad to see that more and more people have started to help me. Now I really believe that one day we will be able to build a real memorial in the real world for the victims because we have started one on the Internet and at people's heart.

Thank you.