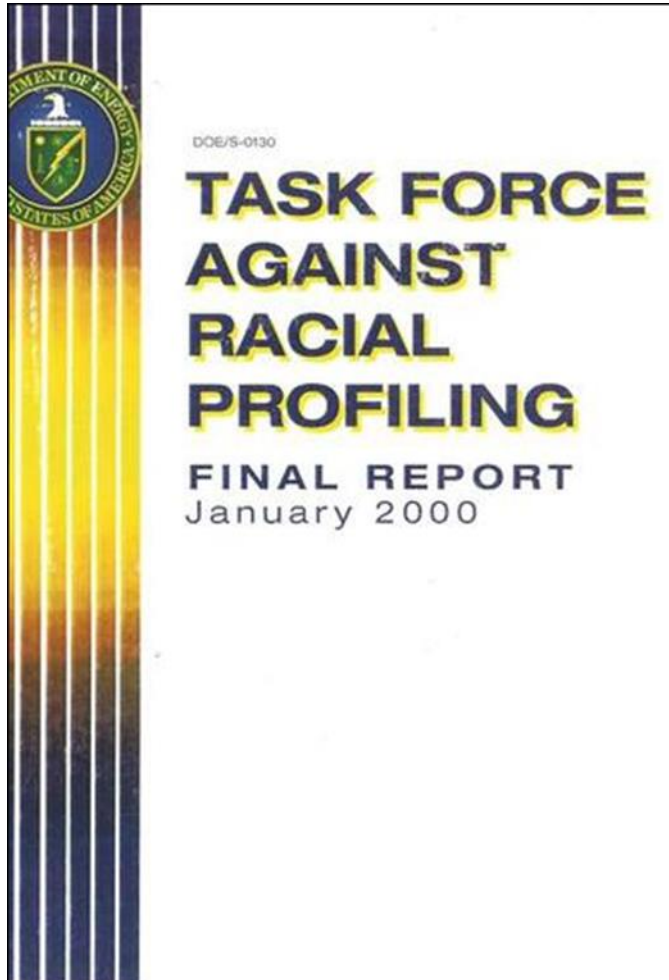


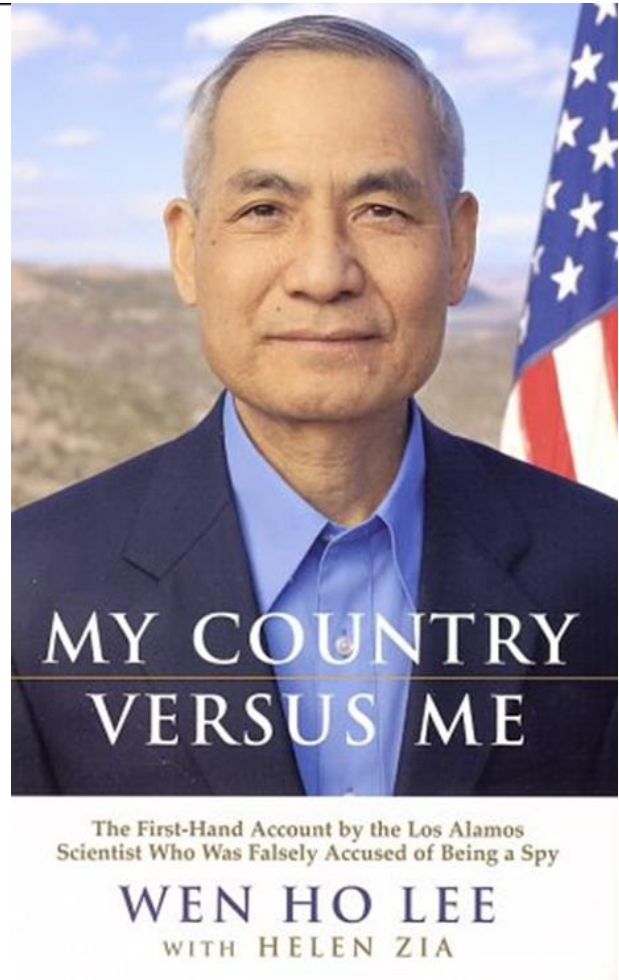
## FEATURE

# Bill Richardson and Dr. Wen Ho Lee 李文和



On September 1, 2023, Bill Richardson, 75, passed away in Chatham, Massachusetts. He was a Member of US House of Representatives (1983-1997), US Ambassador to the United Nations (1997-1998), Secretary of Energy (1998-2001), and Governor of New Mexico (2003-2011).

Born in Pasadena, California, in 1947 to a Spanish-born mother and a Nicaraguan-born father, Bill Richardson grew up in Mexico City before attending boarding school in Massachusetts. In 2002, he became the only Hispanic leader of a US state when he won the New Mexico governorship.



By any measure, Bill Richardson was an extraordinary American politician and diplomat.

He won admiration for his commitment to securing the release of US citizens detained around the world, including journalists Laura Ling 凌志美 (Lisa Ling 凌志慧's sister) and Euna Lee 유나리 from North Korea in 2009 and basketball star Britney Griner from Russia last year. In 2011 he launched his non-profit foundation, the Richardson Center for Global Engagement, where he renewed his work seeking the release of detained Americans. He was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize several times.

Bill Richardson's tenure as Secretary of Energy was marred by the prosecution of Dr. Wen Ho Lee 李文和, a Chinese American nuclear physicist at the Los Alamos National Laboratory who was wrongly accused of spying for China.

Dr. Lee was later cleared of espionage charges and released with an apology from Judge James Parker, who passed away last year. Eventually, Dr. Lee won a \$1.6 million settlement against the federal government and several news outlets for the accusation. While admitting to making some mistakes, Bill Richardson did not apologize for his role in the matter which remains a deep wound in the Asian American community.

In a LinkedIn post, Parag Mehta, a staff member of the first White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) under the Clinton Administration in 1999, recalls his experience in working with Bill Richardson to draft an "apology" he could use in his confirmation hearings for Secretary of Commerce under the Obama Administration. Parag Mehta tried three times to craft language for the Governor. Each time, he was rebuffed because Bill Richardson did not want to use words like "sorry" or "apologize." The issue became moot when he withdrew his nomination.

During one heated exchange, Parag Mehta told Bill Richardson's handler, that history would remember, that Wen Ho Lee would be in the Governor's obituary. It was up to him if it was to be a story of shame or redemption. Today, Parag Mehta remembers a man whose ego got in the way of admitting what is still so painfully obvious: "he was wrong."

Dr. Jeremy Wu, Founder and Co-Organizer for APA Justice, served as National Ombudsman and Director of the Office of the Ombudsman under Secretary Bill Richardson at the Department of Energy.

#### References and Links:

- Wikipedia: Bill Richardson <https://bit.ly/44AAe9S>
- Wen Ho Lee with Helen Zia: My Country Versus Me: The First-Hand Account by the Los Alamos Scientist Who Was Falsely Accused of Being a Spy <https://amzn.to/2MLV7Ak>
- 2023/09/03 LinkedIn by Parag Mehta: Bill Richardson <https://bit.ly/3Ps8foB>
- 2000/01 Department of Energy: Final Report: Task Force Against Racial Profiling <http://bit.ly/2T8UGvJ>
- 2000/01/19 Department of Energy: Richardson Releases Task Force Against Racial Profiling Report and Announces 8 Immediate Actions <https://bit.ly/3LnXoYy>