

Chinese activist Chen Guangcheng gets U.S. platform to promote human rights

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WASHINGTON (RNS) Blind Chinese activist Chen Guangcheng has joined three American organizations to further his human rights advocacy, including advocating for religious freedom in China.

As part of a three-year partnership, Chen will be distinguished visiting fellow of the Institute for Policy Research & Catholic Studies at Catholic University, a distinguished senior fellow in human rights at the Witherspoon Institute in Princeton, N.J., and senior distinguished adviser at the Lantos Foundation for Human Rights & Justice in Concord, N.H.

“Mr. Chen’s valiant advocacy for human rights in China has awakened the world to the barbarity of China’s one child policy and to the cruel reality of forced abortions in China,” said Catholic University President John Garvey.

“Mr. Chen’s commitment to protecting the rights of the poor and vulnerable resonates with our mission at the Catholic University of America.”

The Witherspoon Institute is an independent research center that focuses on religious freedom around the world.

Chen gained attention in the West after escaping house arrest in 2012, fleeing from China to the United States. Chinese authorities first arrested Chen in 2005 after he filed a class-action lawsuit for women who said they had undergone forced abortions and sterilizations as part of China’s one-child policy.

Chen has been embraced by many anti-abortion activists in the U.S., but he has not crusaded against abortion per se but rather forced abortions and “lawlessness” in his homeland.

“We will make concerted efforts to defend freedom for all mankind, including the Chinese people,” Chen said of his new partnership. “I am sure this seed of freedom and democracy will take root in the land of China, germinate and eventually — in the future — will bear beautiful fruit.”