

United States & Atlanta Murder Spree: ‘Stop the Hate’ Asian Americans fight back

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Twenty-one-year-old white man, Robert Aaron Long, bought a handgun on March 16, and went on a murder spree in metropolitan Atlanta, Georgia.

Long killed eight people, including six Asian women, at three massage parlours. Their ages ranged from 33 to 74.

The next day, white county sheriff Jay Baker defended the murderer, saying he was a “sex addict” who had a “bad day”.

Baker said nothing about those Long had murdered. It later emerged that Baker had been promoting anti-Chinese T-shirts on social media in March last year, blaming China for the COVID-19 pandemic.

Meanwhile, the victims of anti-Asian hate crimes are dehumanised and minimalised.

The killer travelled 43 kilometres from one Asian-owned business to two other Asian-run massage parlours. He was captured by police on his way to Florida. He claimed he was a sex addict, as justification for his killing spree, and wanted to “eliminate” these places.

The sheriff and other law enforcement officials claimed it was not a hate crime, even before any investigation had begun.

Sexism, misogyny and racism have historically gone hand in hand.

Those shot and killed were ordinary people: Delaina Ashley Yaun, 33; Paul Andre Michels, 54; Xiaojie ‘Emily’ Tan, 49; Daoyou Feng, 44; Soon C Park, 74; Suncha Kim, 69; Yong Yue, 63; Hyun Jung Grant, 51. The one survivor, Elcias R Hernandez-Ortiz, 30, is still hospitalised.



Main targets are Asian women

Activist and author Helen Zia told [CBS This Morning](#) the killer's excuse that Asian women were a "temptation" was incredible.

"Hypersexualisation of Asian American women is part of the racism towards Asian Americans," said Zia.

"To say that sexual addiction is an excuse, or a reason, to go on a mass killing rampage is ridiculous."

That sentiment was echoed by Sung Yeon Choimorrow, executive director of the National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum, who told [told CBS](#): "There is a long arc of racialised sexism, racialised misogyny that is directed at Asian American women.

"You cannot separate the two in the incident that took place in Atlanta."

The "white man from Woodstock, Georgia, is not the first high-profile suspect to make such a claim," said Choimorrow.

"[Convicted rapist] [Harvey Weinstein](#), serial killer [Ted Bundy](#), and [Ariel Castro](#), who kidnapped three teenagers and held them captive in his Cleveland basement, have all defended their criminal actions by claiming they were addicted to sex or pornography."

Nationwide protests

Impromptu memorials were set up at the site of the killings. Thousands joined a "Stop the Hate" rally at the state capitol in Atlanta on March 20.

Protests took place in cities across the country with participants from the Asian community, allies in the African American and Latino communities and many anti-racist whites.

In Washington's Chinatown neighbourhood, protesters marched through the streets carrying banners and signs that read, "Asian Lives Matter" and "#StopAsianHate!", while chanting "Stop the Hate!".

United States President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris expressed empathy for the victims' families by travelling to Atlanta on March 19.

"Because our silence is complicity," Biden said. "We cannot be complicit. We have to speak out. We

have to act.”

Harris, whose mother was born in India, said: “For the last year, we’ve had people in positions of incredible power scapegoating Asian-Americans. People with the biggest pulpits spreading this kind of hate.”

68% attacked are women

A report by [Stop \[Asian American and Pacific Islander - AAPI\] Hate](#) documented 3795 racially-motivated attacks against Asian Americans between March 2020 and February 2021. The report noted that the number is likely to be a fraction of the attacks that have occurred, because many were not reported to the group. Sixty eight percent of those attacked are women.

Stop AAPI Hate co-founder Cynthia Choi said: “We need to reckon with both the historical and ongoing impact that racism, hate and violence are having on our community, especially on women, youth and seniors, who are particularly vulnerable.”

Choi and others appealed to the public to report hate attacks.

Russell Jeung, a Stop AAPI Hate co-founder and professor of Asian American studies at San Francisco State University referred to former President Donald Trump’s use of the terms “kung flu” and “China virus” in an interview with *Los Angeles Times* journalist Anh Do.

In San Francisco, a 76-year-old Chinese woman was attacked as she was waiting to cross the road. She fought back with her walking stick and the assailant was arrested.

Residents in Oakland’s Chinatown have faced a series of anti-Chinese attacks. The police provide little protection, so the community hired its own security firm.

In New York City, a Filipino man was cut ear to ear with a box cutter at a subway station. He survived.

Asian American leaders are warning that a deepening geopolitical confrontation between the US and China is contributing to heightened suspicion, prejudice and violence against their communities in ways that could continue to intensify even after the pandemic begins to subside.

The broadening conflict among the world’s two largest economies — on trade, defense, 5G networks, cybersecurity, the environment, health security and human rights — has contributed to a growing number of Americans calling China the “greatest enemy” of the US, according to [a Gallup poll](#)

We are people, not foreigners

“We’re not really Americans, we’re perpetually foreigners, and that idea plays out with women ... being oversexualised,” said Helen Kim Ho, a Korean American and a founder of the advocacy group Asian Americans Advancing Justice in Atlanta.

“All of that had to have played out in [Long’s] own mind, In addition to the unspoken notion that Asian people are easy targets,” Ho told *The Washington Post* on March 17.

Democratic representative for New York State Grace Meng tweeted out the names of every

Republican House member who voted “nay” on her resolution to curb anti-Asian hate crimes. “There is blood on their hands,” she wrote on Twitter.

“I put forth that resolution last year not for any partisan purpose of attacking anyone,” she said on March 17. “I wanted to show the Asian community that Congress, your leaders on both sides of the aisle, condemn this sort of bigotry. I never expected it to be partisan.”

The rhetoric the legislation tried to squash, she said, “certainly contributes to these sorts of violent actions”.

The House Judiciary committee held a hearing on anti-Asian violence two days after the murders in Atlanta — the first time in more than three decades.

History of exclusion and hatred

Historically, Asians have faced racist attacks. The first exclusion laws were directed at Chinese immigrants. California led the way.

The *Anti-Coolie Act* was adopted in 1862. It was passed by the California legislature in an attempt to appease rising anger among white labourers about wage competition created by the influx of [Chinese immigrants](#) at the height of the [Californian gold rush](#).

Congress passed the *Page Act* in 1875. It was the first restrictive [federal immigration law](#) in the [US](#), which effectively prohibited the entry of [Chinese women](#), marking the end of [open borders](#).

Congress adopted the *Chinese Exclusion Act* in 1882. It was the first, and remains the only law implemented to prevent all members of a specific ethnic or national group from immigrating to the US.

The *Pigtail Ordinance* was adopted in 1873, to force [prisoners](#) in [San Francisco](#) to have their hair cut to within two centimetres of the scalp.

The Los Angeles Times recalled on March 20 the Chinese massacre of 1871 - a race riot that occurred on October 24, in LA, when a mob of about 500 [whites](#) entered [Old Chinatown](#), attacking, bullying, robbing and murdering [Chinese](#) residents in cold blood.

Nineteen Chinese were killed by the racist mob - 10% of the tiny Chinese population.

During World War II, Japanese Americans were put in mass internment camps for being of Japanese descent.

Resist, resist

Unity of the discriminated and oppressed communities is key to building broader antiracist resistance. Asian Americans can and should organize, rally and proclaim, “Never again” and “Asian Lives Matter”.

The attitudes of many Asian American women was best expressed by Jiayang Fan, a staff writer for *The New Yorker* on March 19: “It is an unbearable irony how acquainted I am with the feeling of shame.

“Every time I am called a “chink” or hear a part of my body appraised by a stranger; I feel a familiar heat rising within me. In group texts, my Asian-American friends and I have expressed gratitude for masks and hats and bulky winter coats, which shield us from *covid-19* and the Northeast winter but also from our own Asian faces.

“We agonise about how best to protect our older, more vulnerable loved ones. We wonder if we should make contingency plans to evacuate elsewhere if the violence gets much worse. We worry if too steely a show of solidarity will slide into tribalism. We worry that our worry might make us weak.”

It does not matter if anti-Asian attacks are legally declared “hate crimes” - they are. Asian Americans have been targeted by white racists for generations.

The lesson of anti-police protests in 2020 is the importance of solidarity by all ethnic and racial communities. The Asian community, led by women activists, is key to winning broader unity and a successful fight back.

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P.S.

• Green Left. Issue 1302 March 22, 2021:
<https://www.greenleft.org.au/content/stop-hate-asian-americans-fight-back>