

## Statement on Atlanta Murders and Anti-Asian Racial Violence

The Department of History & Critical Race and Ethnic Studies is deeply anguished and condemns the killing of eight people in Atlanta, GA on March 16, 2021. Six of the eight killed were Asian/Asian American women. Yet, law enforcement officials and the media have refused to call this mass shooting for what it is: white supremacist violence fueled by the intersection of racial, gendered, sexual, class, and religious ideology. We send our condolences, love, and support to the victims and their loved ones. We acknowledge the trauma, outrage, and fear that this violence has caused for our Asian and Asian American community at UC Merced, in Merced, nationally, and for those outside the U.S.

We stand in solidarity with the movement to #StopAsianHate. AAPI Hate reports that nearly 3,800 incidents of anti-Asian hate have been reported in the last year. The recent despicable murders were *not* isolated but part of the systemic and state-sanction anti-Asian violence that has existed for more than 170 years in the United States but that traditionally goes unacknowledged. Government officials at the highest level, including the former president, inflamed anti-Asian sentiments by blaming the pandemic on China, sentiments that have long existed due to racism and xenophobia tied to disease.

The anti-Asian violence that occurred in Georgia has its roots in the 1875 Page Act, which barred Asian women who were deemed immoral and diseased sex workers. Racial, gendered, and sexualized representation in U.S. media along with U.S. imperial projects in Asian countries such as Korea, Vietnam, and the Philippines and the Pacific Islands contributed to the social construction and objectification of Asian and Pacific Islander women as two-dimensional, hypersexual, and submissive. Although not all of the Asian women killed were massage workers, the killer targeted working class Asian immigrant businesses, where Asian women are especially vulnerable as racialized and sexualized service workers.

We are outraged by the increased policing in response to these murders and anti-Asian violence. History has shown that policing does not protect Black, Indigenous, and im/migrant communities. Predominant news reporting about the murders which cite that the perpetrator had a “sex addiction” and that the neighborhood where two of the spas were located was considered the “red light district” draws greater police surveillance to an already hyper-policed space.

We support Asian immigrant and Asian American communities, acknowledge sex work as work, and call for the protection of sex workers. The movement to #StopAsianHate is tied to larger movements to end white supremacist, heteropatriarchal, xenophobic, and ableist structures. It requires our “accompliceship” -- to take risks and abandon self-interests -- to work toward our collective liberation and justice.

In Solidarity,  
History & Critical Race and Ethnic Studies Department