

## **EALC Graduate Student Statement on Hate Crimes against Asians and Asian Americans in the US**

We, the graduate students of the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures, condemn the sharp rise in harassment and violence against Asians, Asian Americans, and Pacific Islanders over the past year. We are outraged and saddened by the murder of Soon C. Park, Hyun J. Grant, Suncha Kim, Yong A. Yue, Delaina Ashley Yaun, Paul Andre Michels, Xiaojie Tan, and Daoyou Feng at two Atlanta-area spas less than one week ago.

We are outraged and saddened but ultimately not surprised to see violence against AAPI escalate to murder. Of the eight victims of this shooting, six were women of Asian descent. Regardless of the murderer's stated motives, his actions show that he shares with the perpetrators of the [more than 3,800 attacks reported to Stop AAPI Hate](#) since March of 2020 many of the same racist attitudes toward Asians – treating Asians as a “foreign” threat to society, treating Asian women in particular as hypersexualized and exoticized objects, and dehumanizing Asian sex workers. The story of anti-Asian racism is bound up with the history of immigration in the US since the nineteenth century--for example, the Anti-Chinese movement, the Chinese Exclusion Act, and the Japanese-American internment camps during WWII. During recent years, the hostile policies and hate speech perpetrated by the Trump administration have spurred a rapid increase in racist and xenophobic language and actions.

The history that lies behind the crime committed in Atlanta also shows itself in the dismissive and victim-blaming reactions by police and media. This incident was a brutal mass murder, a hate crime on multiple levels, yet the initial briefing from the sheriff's department [asked us to sympathize with the killer](#), who, they said, was having a “bad day.” Such messages only serve to normalize white supremacy and its crimes, and to mirror its valuation of some lives above others. We condemn those who make excuses for crimes of hate, and call for attention to be redirected to the multiple structures in our society that perpetuate these crimes.

Although this statement is a response to the issue of anti-Asian racism in particular, we need to address the underlying cause behind this tragedy: the institutional racism (as well as sexism) ingrained in our society. We do not want to forget that the police falsely detained [the Latino husband of Delaina Ashley Yaun](#), one of the victims, for four hours. He was left uninformed about the death of his wife while the murderer continued carrying out his heinous actions. Regardless of race, ethnicity, sex, gender, and class, an attack targeting one group or minority harms us all, since institutional racism (as well as other forms of discrimination and inequality) affects our entire community. This is the truth spoken again and again by the numerous incidents we have seen throughout history, and more recently by George Floyd's death last summer and now by the deaths of the eight victims.

It is incumbent on UC Berkeley to create a meeting ground for the Bay Area public and for Berkeley students and employees to combat racism, sexism, and xenophobia. There have been more than [700 cases of anti-Asian hate incidents reported in the Bay Area](#) alone since the start of the pandemic, with the actual incident rate likely even higher. We recognize the likelihood that students or members of our community have directly experienced or feel targeted or unsafe because of anti-Asian hate. [29% of students enrolled at UC Berkeley identify as AAPI and 75% of Berkeley's international students \(17% of the total student body\)](#) are from South and Central Asia, East Asia, and the Pacific Islands. In recognition of the centrality

of these communities to the university, we urge the university to implement curriculum reform aimed at uniting scholars of East Asian studies, Asian American studies, Critical Race studies, and Gender and Women's studies to confront the intersectional nature of violence and justice. As humanist scholars who research and teach about East Asian communities, we stand with our students and reaffirm our commitment to confronting different forms of racism within our communities and to fostering mutual understanding, sympathy, and solidarity within our classrooms.

We must come together right now, and work together in solidarity for our future.

Signed,

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