

STATEMENT BY THE SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF SOCIAL PROBLEMS (SSSP) ON ANTI-ASIAN HATE, DISCRIMINATION, AND VIOLENCE

The Board of Directors of the Society for the Study of Social Problems (SSSP) condemns the most recent resurgence of anti-Asian racism in the United States and shares its grief with those impacted by subsequent racial violence, and especially with the families and friends of those murdered in Atlanta by another mass shooter. We would also note that this brutal act targeted Asian American women principally; a group targeted historically by racial and gender violence accompanying colonial and cultural conquests, and by what Asian-American feminists have called the “everyday experiences of sexual violence” among Asian American and Pacific Islander [AAPI] community women. SSSP stands in solidarity with the AAPI community and specifically with AAPI women as they continue the struggle against violence and repression.

SSSP is an interdisciplinary community of scholars, students, activists and practitioners committed to applying critical, scientific, and humanistic perspectives to the study of vital social problems. This year has witnessed an almost 150% rise in anti-AAPI hate crimes, with nearly 4000 reported acts of violence against AAPI people. Mounting evidence links increased anti-AAPI hate crimes to anti-Asian political rhetoric and overall support for White supremacist activities. Thus, we are especially appalled by, and condemn, the manner in which politicians and other public figures have used the COVID-19 pandemic to drum up or inflame hate against our AAPI brothers and sisters. We express our unequivocal support for, and solidarity with, these and other communities targeted by the bigotry and brutality engendered by white supremacy and enflamed by political opportunism. No one should live in fear simply because of what they look like.

The United States has a long history of anti-Asian hate and violence. Perhaps most notable were the misogynist *Page Act of 1875*, which prohibited the importation of unfree laborers and women brought for “immoral purposes,” but which was used to target principally and prevent the entry of Chinese women; the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the first law in the United States to prohibit immigration on the basis of race; and the internment of over 117,000 Japanese-Americans during World War II, the majority of whom were U.S. citizens. But American imperialism and its attendant dehumanizing rhetoric fueled brutal military endeavors from the theft of Hawaiian sovereignty in 1893 to the ensuing invasion of the Philippines through the multiple American war crimes perpetrated in Southeast Asia from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s. Anti-AAPI racism and violence is especially deplorable given the long history of Asian Americans’ and Pacific Islanders’ extraordinary contributions to a country that so often and for too long has treated them with contempt. A glaring example of this hypocrisy was the 442nd Regiment during WWII, comprised almost exclusively of second-generation Japanese Americans, who became the most decorated unit of its size in U.S. military history. The men of this regiment received 4000 Purple Hearts, 4000 Bronze Stars, and 21 Medals of Honor. Many of them fought and died defending the same country that simultaneously forced their families into dehumanizing concentration camps, where they endured years of unimaginable fear and despair. This rise in anti-AAPI hatred and violence is unconscionable, albeit not surprising, in light of the last decade’s rise in white supremacy and violence. From increased racist mass shootings and other forms of violence, to increased legislative attacks on voting rights, the United States stands at a critical juncture in the history of our movement toward civil rights and a “more perfect union.”

This statement is a call for action and an expression of solidarity with organizations on the front lines of these struggles, and therefore applaud a recent memorandum by the White House on actions to respond to anti-Asian violence, xenophobia, and bias. Furthermore, the SSSP calls for communities of color and their white brothers and sisters to come together, and harness their political and economic power *collectively*, to force this country to live up to its professed values and ideals. This letter is one of many calling on legislators and law enforcement at every level to protect the civil and human rights of every person in the United States, regardless of their race, ethnicity, and country of origin, and to put an end to the misogyny that contributes to alarming levels of violence against women, which we have little doubt contributed to the brutal murder of Delaina Ashley Yaun Gonzalez, Xiaojie Tan, Daoyou Feng, Hyun Jung Grant, Suncha Kim, Soon Chung Park, and Yong Ae Yue in Atlanta on March 16th.

(A copy of this statement with references can be found on the SSSP website SSSP1.org, along with a list of resources for those who want to get more directly involved.)