

The Department of Film and Media Studies
University of California, Santa Barbara
April 9th, 2021

Soon Chung Park, Hyun Jung Grant, Suncha Kim, Yong Yue, Delaina Ashley Yaun, Paul Andre Michels, Xiaojie Tan, Daoyou Feng. The Department of Film and Media Studies conveys our solidarity and shared grief with our Asian and Asian American students and their communities who may be feeling targeted, fearful, and angry at the escalating anti-Asian violence throughout the pandemic. This latest unspeakable devastation to the AAPI community in Atlanta recalls the troubling history of violence targeting minority communities in this country. We stand with colleagues across our campus and condemn all forms of racialized and gender-based violence and discrimination. Black Lives Matter has mobilized a movement to challenge expressions of white supremacy and build local power to intervene in the state-sanctioned violence inflicted on Black communities. We heed their call and stand against the far reaching injustices impacting BIPOC families, neighborhoods and communities, from the killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and other Black Americans at the hands of police officers to the separations of families at the US-Mexico border.

Between March 2020 and February 2021, Stop AAPI Hate reported 3,795 incidents of harassment or violence against Asian American and Pacific Islander communities in the United States, with 68% of reported crimes targeting women. It is important to recognize that hate crimes are historically underreported in minority communities, and thus these numbers do not reflect the full magnitude of the problem.

As educators, filmmakers, and scholars of film and media studies, we cannot ignore how the tragic violence witnessed in Atlanta is rooted in racism and sexism entangled in the long history of objectification and othering of Asians in American film and media. In particular, Asian women are routinely hypersexualized and demonized in stereotypes that strip them of agency. Over the past year of the pandemic, popular media caricatures of Asians have been dangerously re-animated in political rhetoric circulated through social media and news coverage to foment virulent xenophobic expressions.

Attacks on AAPI communities are not isolated events but rather reveal an acquiescence to expressions of white supremacy in civic culture. The last four years have witnessed the escalation of long-standing, endemic anti-Black, anti-immigrant, anti-Latino, anti-Muslim, anti-Indigenous, anti-Semitic, and anti-Asian violence. It has been amplified by the multiple roles media play in these incidents, the analysis of which is an integral feature of our work in film and media studies. This has included the circulation of reductive stereotypes, filtering content through biased algorithms, and enabling direct contact, bullying, misinformation, and incitement to violence on social media platforms. News media not only “cover” or report on these events but often sensationalize and profit from them.

Through our work as researchers and instructors, we seek to prepare our students to address systemic injustices and examine systems that proliferate racism, sexism, misogyny, economic inequality, and state-sanctioned violence. We express our solidarity with the campus administration in seeking to challenge and redress contexts for systemic racism and implicit bias. Toward that end, we pledge to build on the department’s long-term commitments and re-examine the biases and inequities that persist within our midst.

Resources

To report Anti-Asian incidents, see:

<https://stopaapihate.org/>

<https://www.standagainsthatred.org/>

For Bystander training on how to safely intervene and de-escalate incidents of racist violence, see:

<https://www.ihollaback.org/bystander-resources/>

<https://www.advancingjustice-aajc.org/events>

Stop AAPI Hate Report 2020-2021

<https://secureservercdn.net/104.238.69.231/a1w.90d.myftpupload.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/210312-Stop-AAPI-Hate-National-Report-.pdf>

