

ACS and ESJ Statement on Anti-Asian Violence Education & Social Justice Minor Advising

The collective faculty and staff of American Cultural Studies (ACS) and Education and Social Justice (ESJ) co-write this letter with a deep sense of pain and rage. By now we know that the violent events of March 16th in Cherokee County Georgia have taken the lives of eight individuals – Soon Chung Park (74), Hyun Jung Grant (51), Suncha Kim (69), Yong Ae Yue (63), Delaina Ashley Yaun (33), Xiaojie Tan (49), Daoyou Feng (44), Paul Andre Michels (54)- six of whom were Asian women. Some members of our collective learned the meaning of community from the Asian immigrant women who raised us. Others approach our work as scholars and educators from a political commitment to collective liberation for all oppressed people.

We also know that the pain we feel at this moment is shared by many of our students. The majors and minors of our programs often turn to our classes in search of the intellectual tools to not only understand the world in which they live, but also to change it. As our hearts go out to victims' families and loved ones, we also want to acknowledge the deep emotional trauma that this horrific event has placed upon our students. As a collective, we extend our hands in support and solidarity to all our students.

As we are reeling from the pain of losing more members of our communities to racist and gender-based violence. We know that the events of March 16th in Cherokee County, Georgia are nothing new. Rather, they are the outgrowth of a violence we are all too familiar with that has deep roots in the United States as a country built upon slavery, settler colonialism, border imperialism, heteropatriarchy and perpetual war. In this case, we bore witness to a particular form of racialized, gender-based violence that is a product of Asian American and Asian immigrant women being hypersexualized, devalued, and dehumanized in this country. Seattle community organization API Chaya notes that this global and state violence facilitates the police surveillance, labor exploitation, trafficking, fetishizing and stigma that impacts daily life for the “immigrant and migrant Asian women [working] at the intersections of care services and sex industry.” In reference to the actions of the perpetrator of this violence, Robert Aaron Long, pioneering Asian American Studies scholar Elaine Kim recently remarked, “I think it’s likely that the killer not only had a sex addiction but also an addiction to fantasies about Asian women as sex objects.”

It also bears remembering that this violence begins with a racialized and gendered U.S. imperialism in Asia. The murders that took place in Cherokee County, Georgia occurred on the 53rd anniversary of the My Lai Massacre, the mass murder of South Vietnamese civilians during the Vietnam War. In both instances, the lives of Asian women were deemed disposable. These historical comparisons remind us that our critique of Anti-Asian violence has to be expansive. In the same breath that we decry the violence that occurred in Cherokee County Georgia, we must denounce the recent police murder of Filipinx American Angelo Quinto, as well as the “slow violence” of the many Asian Americans dealing with housing insecurity, laboring as essential workers, and navigating unjust systems of immigration, detention, and deportation.

Moreover, the collective pain we all feel is heightened by a public narrative of white innocence: Law enforcement initially attributed Long’s actions to having a “bad day.” We know Long represents the

white terrorism our communities endured for centuries. Law enforcement's response is familiar: violence against our communities is dismissed, or justified by framing our communities as a physical or moral threat.

This atrocity is part of a historical litany of violent systems that thrive on cultivating divisions and tensions in our communities and justice movements. We look to the legacies of resistance and intersectional (Crenshaw 1990) movement-building within and between our communities. As the Seattle civil rights and labor activist Tyree Scott said, there can be “no separate peace.” As we move forward and seek justice, we must collectively refine the meaning of justice in ways that not only allow all of our communities to survive, but also allows us to fulfill the full potential of our humanity.

In the face of racist and gender-based violence, we are reminded of why we have committed our lives to being educators. As we work to expand our respective programs, as well as build an institutional space for Ethnic Studies on campus, we are committed to creating classrooms and community spaces that are rooted in joy, healing, and revolutionary love.

In solidarity,

The collective faculty and staff of ACS and ESJ