

Hundreds demand justice for Asian victims of hate crimes

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Protesters hold placards during a 'Stop Asian Hate' rally in Atlanta, Georgia, on March 20, days after deadly shootings at three local spas. (Photo: Shannon Stapleton/Reuters)

Atlanta, March 21 (RHC)-- Hundreds of people have demonstrated outside the Georgia state capitol building to demand justice for the victims of fatal shootings in the Atlanta area last week, as well as an end to anti-Asian racism and misogyny.

Eight people, including six women of Asian descent, were killed when a gunman opened fire at three separate spas on March 16, sending shockwaves across the United States.

Holding signs reading, “Hate is a virus”, “Stop Asian hate” and “I am not your model minority”, the demonstrators demanded action to stop discrimination against Asian Americans. “The women who perished, ... I see my family in them,” Timothy Phan, a protester who drove eight hours from Florida to attend the rally in Atlanta on Saturday, told CNN. “I feel like far too often, we’re just erased.”

While the alleged attacker told police his actions were not “racially motivated”, Asian-American community members say decades of racism, misogyny and the objectification of Asian women in particular all played a role in the deadly shootings.

The killings came after Asian-American advocacy groups had warned that hate incidents targeting members of the community were rising during the COVID-19 pandemic, in part due to racist language used by political leaders, including former US President Donald Trump. Trump has called the coronavirus the “China virus” and “kung flu.”

Bernard Dong, a 24-year-old Georgia Tech student from China, told the Associated Press news agency that he joined the protest to demand rights for all minorities. “Many times Asian people are too silent, but times change,” he said, adding that he felt “angry and disgusted” by the shootings and the violence that Asians, minorities and women face.

In a report published last week, the Stop AAPI Hate Reporting Center documented 3,795 hate incidents aimed at Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders between March 19, 2020 and February 28 of this year. Most of those incidents involved verbal harassment, while physical assault accounted for just over 11 percent.

President Joe Biden, who met with Asian-American leaders in Atlanta on Friday, condemned the shootings as well as anti-Asian racism. “Too many Asian Americans have been walking up and down the streets and worry, waking up each morning this past year fearing for their safety, the safety of their loved ones,” Biden said. “They’ve been attacked, blamed, scapegoated, harassed. They’ve been verbally assaulted, physically assaulted, killed.”

Authorities charged the 21-year-old alleged shooter with murder in the attacks. They also have released the names of the eight victims. The first to be named were 33-year-old Delaina Ashley Yaun, 54-year-old Paul Andre Michels, 44-year-old Daoyou Feng and 49-year-old Xiaojie Tan, who owned one of the massage businesses.

The Fulton County Medical Examiner’s Office also identified the other four women on Friday, the Atlanta Journal-Constitution reported: 74-year-old Soon C Park, 51-year-old Hyun J Grant, 69-year-old Suncha Kim and 63-year-old Yong A Yue.

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