



March 17, 2021

Chairman Steve Cohen
2138 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Ranking Member Mike Johnson
2138 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

To Chairman Cohen, Ranking Member Johnson, and Members of the Subcommittee:

The National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum (NAPAWF) is the only multi-issue, progressive, community organizing and policy advocacy organization for Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) women and girls in the U.S. NAPAWF's mission is to build collective power so that all AAPI women and girls can have full agency over our lives, our families, and our communities.

We write this testimony less than 24 hours after a series of deadly shootings in Atlanta businesses that left eight dead, including six Asian American women.¹

Officials now believe the shooter's motivations were based on a "sex addiction" and not based on racial bias.² This is a false characterization. Sexual violence, sexism, and racism are closely intertwined for AAPI women for many reasons, chief among them the false characterization that AAPI women are "docile" and "submissive." As a result, we are continuously fetishized and exoticized.³ In the wake of COVID-19 and the related rise in incidents of hate, this sexist fetishization has become another tool used against us in the incidents of hate.

Our community, including our Georgia chapter, has been reeling as this recent incident comes on the heels of increased violence against the AAPI community, an increase that has caused Asian American women to experience harassment and incidents of hate two to three times more than Asian American men.⁴ COVID has been used against us to enable even more racialized misogyny. New polling commissioned by NAPAWF has revealed that nearly half of Asian

¹ <https://www.cnn.com/us/live-news/atlanta-area-shootings-03-17-21/index.html>

² <https://www.forbes.com/sites/alisondurkee/2021/03/17/atlanta-shooting-updates-suspect-says-was-motivated-by-sex-addiction-and-not-racism-was-planning-to-head-to-florida/?sh=4153d8db5eb2>

³ <https://www.colorlines.com/articles/how-fetishism-and-erasure-silence-asian-american-women-hollywood>;
https://nnedv.org/latest_update/stereotypes-asian-women/

⁴ <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2021-03-16/anti-asian-hate-pandemic>

American and Pacific Islander women have been affected by anti-Asian racism in the past two years.

These acts of harassment, stemming from anti-AAPI sentiment, occur every day on our streets, in front of our homes,⁵ even here in our nation's capital⁶ -- regardless of whether or not the news decides to cover it. Racism intertwined with sexism has always been a part of our lives -- COVID-19 merely laid bare what we used to face unnoticed.

And while we continue to mourn, we can't ignore that anti-Asian acts of hate impacts women disproportionately.

As such, we ask that any action you take must center Asian American women and elders with an emphasis on responding to these attacks through a coordinated interagency effort that systematically addresses the multiple and intersecting barriers and hardships the AAPI community faces, especially in the light of economic devastation as a result of COVID-19.⁷ To center women and elders does not mean that we advocate for ignoring all members of our community who face this hate and violence. Rather, intentional centering of women and elders must result in true aid, community support, government support, and an emphasis on our lived experiences, such that relief flows to those who need it most due to our experiences. The data do not lie --nor do our stories and lives-- and thus, centering Asian American women and elders must occur.

The federal government's response must be holistic and an interagency effort. We are not asking for more law enforcement -- time and time again, more law enforcement did not lead to protection and safety. It instead led to more violence aimed at and control of Black and Brown communities, including our own community members.

We ask for an interagency response that is based in the needs of the communities on the ground, based on tackling the systemic racism and white supremacy that continues to plague our nation, and addressing the needs of the survivors, such as increased culturally informed victim support that is language accessible, community support, meaningful physical and mental health access including for all immigrants, and economic assistance that focuses on those who need it most.

We are also asking for preventative measures aimed at stopping anti-AAPI harassment among adolescents. Eight out of ten Asian American children have reported bullying or verbally harassed.⁸ Murder and physical violence is the end of a spectrum that includes taunting, harassment, isolation, and other forms of bullying. To prevent further attacks, we need to start by educating our adolescents so acts like this do not occur.

⁵ <https://secureservercdn.net/104.238.69.231/a1w.90d.myftpupload.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Stop-AAPI-Hate-National-Report-200805.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.metroweekly.com/2020/05/asian-american-groups-and-lgbtq-allies-demand-response-to-anti-asian-harassment-amid-covid-19-crisis/>

⁷ <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/why-asian-american-women-have-had-highest-jobless-rates-during-n1255699>

⁸ <https://stopaapihate.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Stop-AAPI-Hate-Report-On-Youth-Incidents-9-17.pdf>

Additionally, we also ask for disaggregated data of our AAPI community. For too long, our issues have been erased in favor of averages that do not accurately reflect our realities.⁹ The AAPI community is a vast and incredibly diverse group encompassing numerous ethnicities. There are critical differences and lived experiences that these ethnicities face. Yet lumping us all together not only fails to acknowledge that, it also erases many of our distinct issues that must be addressed.

Thank you for your time and attention to this pressing issue.

Sincerely,

National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum

⁹ <http://aapidata.com/blog/ethnicity-data-is-critical/>