

SOC/ANT STATEMENT ON ANTI-ASIAN HATE AND VIOLENCE

The Department of Sociology and Anthropology condemns the murders of eight persons at two spas in Atlanta, GA on March 16, 2021, six of whom were women of Asian descent.

It bears repeating: As a department we are committed to anti-racist pedagogy and believe strongly in the mission of CUNY to educate to empower the children of immigrant and poor New Yorkers of all racial, ethnic, and religious groups to challenge these systems and effect change. As faculty at CUNY, we celebrate diversity and recognize the manifold benefits and richness that a diverse community offers. CUNY is an institution founded on principles of equal access to higher education; we cannot remain silent in the face of systemic and institutionalized racism.

Our pedagogy and approach in the department is empirical and intersectional. While anti-Black and anti-Asian racism are joined by the historical and structural umbrella of American white supremacy, there are also important particularities that must be addressed. For example, we find it to be of certain sociological and political interest that Asian-American women were disproportionately targeted by this act of domestic terrorism and that a substantive majority of hate crimes reported last year by Asian-Americans were reported by women. It must also be admitted that at least some of the victims of the mass shootings were sex workers, who suffer forms of social marginalization that put them at extreme risk for violence.

As the late cultural critic, Edward Said, so deftly argued, Western imperialism, colonialism, and political domination have, from the start, had recourse to patriarchal notions of women as sexual objects to be explored, conquered, subdued, and, ultimately, owned, much like "Oriental" territories and cultures, themselves. In short, in the logic of Orientalism, the specific form Western white supremacy takes with respect to the Asian world and its diasporic peoples, domination, annihilation, and misogynized sexual desire go hand in hand. Beyond this, as it becomes clear that the shooter was, at least in part, motivated by ideas of sin and temptation, the religious dimensions of the tragedy can by no means be ignored.

We condemn, too, the 2019 shootings in El Paso, TX that targeted Mexican-Americans and Mexicans and the specific forms of racism and hate that Chican@ and Latino/a/x persons and communities face in early twenty-first century American society. We also continue to condemn the examples of Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, and transphobic violence that are also on the rise, in New York City and beyond.

This statement is by no means exhaustive but we hope that it sends the signal to our students at Baruch and at CUNY that we are a safe space and that we stand with our students, who remain heroic in their dedication to their studies despite continued challenges

that threaten their physical and mental health. We are here for you and are available at Gregory.snyder@baruch.cuny.edu.