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We Mourn, but We Are Not Shocked

A Response to the Killing of Six Asian Women in Atlanta

As our community is rocked by the murders of seven women and one man this Tuesday, Men Stopping Violence mourns for the lives taken, the families, communities, and workplaces harmed, and the fear many of us feel as mass shootings, having fallen out of the news cycle after the COVID-19 pandemic began, assert themselves again.

We stand with women and with Asian and Asian-American communities against the scourge of white supremacist and misogynist male violence against them. Additionally, while there is no evidence yet that any of these women were engaged in sex work, the alleged shooter's assumption that they were is part of his own explanation as to why he murdered them, and we wish to make clear that we stand with all women on the margins, including sex workers.

While we do not yet know the alleged shooter's history, we know that most mass shooters have also engaged in intimate partner violence at some point in their lives. Further, the narratives already being used to explain the alleged shooter's violence are familiar to those of us engaged in ending intimate partner violence:

- *"He has mental health issues,"* though people with mental illness are less likely than the general population to engage in violence of any type.
- *"They were sex workers,"* as if her behavior is somehow explanatory of his choices.
- *"[It] was a really bad day for him,"* perhaps the most plainly ridiculous, as if murdering eight people or battering a partner somehow follow rationally from an experience of difficulty.

We look for these explanations to avoid what is staring us in the face: That every shooter and every batterer are reflecting values they have learned from us. He *has to* be mentally ill, so we do not have to face the white supremacy we taught him. The women *have to* have done something wrong (or at least illegal), so we do not have to face the misogyny we taught him. He *has to* have fallen through the background check system's cracks, so we do not have to face the ease with which our national hobby of gun ownership facilitates mass murders.

All of these must be true, so we do not have to acknowledge the ways that American leaders have cultivated anti-Asian sentiment for centuries, and especially in the past year since the pandemic began. These explanations stretch credulity, but we are willing to accept them because, at some level, the mirror they help us avoid is terrifying to us.



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Working together for a change.

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We must look in this mirror, or our choice “not to know” what is clearly in front of us will continue to make space in our culture for this violence against women, against Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC), and against any hope of safety our communities have.

So what can we do? Here are some suggestions to start with:

1. If a woman or racial minority tells you she is being threatened, harmed, or abused, *listen to her*. Take what she says seriously and offer her your support without telling her what to do.
2. If a man in your life, whether at the bar, at a family gathering, on the street, or in a boardroom is behaving in an abusive or controlling way, *speak to him* about it. Tell him you care about him and don't want to see him hurt himself or the people around him.
3. If a man in your life tells you he is contemplating violence, *believe him*. Stay connected, ask him to not harm anyone, remind him that he has a choice and there is a better way, connect him with help or, if necessary, consequences, warn potential victims, and support his (or others') efforts to remove his firearms, if he has any.
4. Be accountable: While most of us will not commit murder, all of us can do harm when we seek to control others. Own up to what you've done, and where possible, seek to make restitution for it.

Men Stopping Violence continues its stand against male and white supremacist violence, both of which were expressed so viciously in this attack on Atlanta's Asian women and asks men everywhere to stand with us in clarity, courage, and conviction, and end this violence forever.

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