

An Open Letter: Members of California’s AAPI Community Call Out Racialized Misogyny and Hypersexualization in American Society

We, the undersigned, are calling out a legacy of hypersexualization and fetishization of Asian American and Pacific Islander women. Because it’s time to talk about it.

The white supremacist terrorist attack in Georgia, where the gunman targeted three Asian businesses and killed mostly Asian women, highlights the sexualized racism Asian women have endured for years, including right here in California. And when sexual addiction, not racism, is cited as the root issue, it shows just how pervasive fetishized and hypersexualized stereotypes of Asian women are within our culture.

Over the last year, nearly 3,800 anti-AAPI hate incidents have been reported to the Stop AAPI Hate reporting center. Of those incidents, roughly half occurred in California, making our state the first in the nation for hate incident reports. And the evidence shows that women are disproportionately targeted, making up 63% of all recorded occurrences.

Media and law enforcement in Georgia, and across the nation, have been slow to name this most recent attack as both sexist and racist, furthering the trauma Asian women continue to experience. We have been hypersexualized and fetishized for centuries. It’s become a practice that has been so normalized, we are forced to carry this trauma on our own, day after day. This racist sexualization is a particular kind of dehumanization for Asian women. From sexual come-ons ignorantly intended as a joke or even a compliment, to toxic stereotypes that reinforce submissiveness, to violent assaults, Asian women are locked in a society that has profited off of and perpetuated our hypersexualization.

The stereotypes perpetuated throughout our culture, the criminal justice system, the media, and in Hollywood — they impact our everyday lives and how we navigate our way through society. Repeated portrayals of either a “China Doll” or a “Dragon Lady” as well as forced submissive, hypersexual, or exotic representations, have contributed to an intersection of racism and misogyny uniquely dangerous to Asian women. Worse, it is so normalized in our culture, our institutions remain complicit in what can ultimately lead to violence.

The racialized misogyny experienced by Asian American and Pacific Islander women dehumanizes us and is rooted in white supremacy and hate.

It’s time to call out hate when we see it. It can no longer be ignored or tolerated.

We’re calling out the hypersexualization of Asian women in movies. We’re calling out harmful stereotypes in our schools. We’re calling out racist comments in our workplaces. We’re calling out the headlines in the media that dismiss racist behavior against Asian women.

We’re calling out for our friends, families, and colleagues to join us in our anti-racism work. We’re calling for an end to the widespread rhetoric that spurs violent acts of hate. We’re calling out for help in fighting back against a patriarchal, misogynist system and societal mentality that exploits and victimizes women in our communities.

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