



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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STATEMENT RE: ONGOING INCIDENTS OF ANTI-AAPI VIOLENCE AND BIGOTRY

(Chicago, IL) - It is with great sadness that the Filipino American Lawyers Association of Chicago (FALA Chicago) mourns the senseless loss of life in the multiple attacks that took place on the evening of March 16, 2021 in Atlanta, Georgia and which left eight people dead, six of them Asian American women. In extending our deepest condolences to the family, friends, and colleagues of Soon Chung Park, Hyun Jung Grant, Suncha Kim, Yong Yue, Delaina Ashley Yaun, Paul Andre Michels, Xiaojie Tan, and Daoyou Feng, FALA Chicago calls for a thorough investigation of these killings, including any evidence that may point to racial animus as a motivating factor. The heinous events of last week necessitate timely and impartial justice.

While the details behind the deadly shootings are still being uncovered, the perpetrator's targeting of businesses that were owned and operated by Asian Americans is especially difficult to ignore given the larger context of increasing reports of racist violence against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) over the past 12 months. [Stop AAPI Hate](#), for example, logged just under 3,800 [anti-Asian hate incidents](#) in the period spanning from March 19, 2020 to February 28, 2021. The Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism at California State University, San Bernardino also analyzed preliminary police data from the 16 largest U.S. cities and found that while the rate of reported hate crimes went down overall between 2019 and 2020, anti-Asian hate crimes actually [skyrocketed an astounding 149%](#) over the same time period. Researchers further observed the confluence between these trends and the popularity of terms such as "China virus" and "Kung Flu" to describe the novel coronavirus in public discourse.

The scapegoating of Asians for the COVID-19 pandemic over the past year – oftentimes condoned by the irresponsible rhetoric of elected officials – coupled with renewed demands for the equitable treatment of Black lives by our country's political and legal institutions have only served to highlight a common root of these societal problems: America's history of white supremacy and the contemporary manifestations of that legacy. Just as FALA Chicago stood with the National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA) in [urging Congress to denounce anti-Asian racism](#) and [teamed with the Asian American Bar Association of Chicago and fellow affinity bar organizations](#) in pressing [state](#) and [local](#) authorities to protect the civil rights of AAPIs and provide urgent support to victims of hate crimes in 2020, we also declared our [solidarity](#)

[with the Black community](#) by insisting on accountability for the countless African Americans whose lives have been damaged by ongoing systemic racism and violent bigotry, the origins of which stretch back for generations, predating even the founding of the United States. Conversely, Filipinos have themselves faced murderous lynch mobs, discriminatory legislation, and exploitative labor abuses throughout their over two-and-a-half centuries of continuous presence in America. At key points in this narrative, alliances with other marginalized groups were instrumental in righting some of these structural wrongs. It is through our shared struggle – Black, Brown, Indigenous, and committed allies – that we fulfill the storied promise of liberty and justice for all.

Amid the persistent tide of overt xenophobic intolerance that has coincided with the outbreak of COVID-19, FALA Chicago has endorsed the [“Stand Against Hate”](#) campaign launched by our umbrella organization the National Asian Pacific American Bar Association (NAPABA). In this denunciation of “anti-Asian hate, violence, and racism related to the coronavirus,” FALA Chicago joins over 150 bar groups, law firms, and other private sector businesses as signatories to NAPABA’s initiative. “That we as members of the AAPI community again feel compelled to call for an end to hatred directed towards us is a sad indictment of our degraded political and social climate,” said Mark J. Calaguas, FALA Chicago President. “We will not beg for recognition of our basic humanity. America is our home too.”

“With respect to the current pandemic, COVID-19 is a global challenge and Filipino Americans in particular make up a significant portion of this nation’s critical healthcare infrastructure,” noted Calaguas. “While certain public figures continue peddling the illusion that juvenile name-calling is somehow a clever form of foreign policy analysis, this cheap attempt to score points at ideological adversaries, whether real or imagined, cruelly paints a bullseye on the backs of AAPI families everywhere across the country, including our own innocent children and grandparents.”

To the survivors of these most recent high-profile attacks, FALA Chicago holds your grief with pain in our hearts. For those looking for ways to support the community in Atlanta during these challenging times, we encourage everyone to consult the information shared by the [Asian American Leaders Table on COVID-19 Racism](#), a coalition which includes organizations based in Georgia and their allies. Looking ahead to the coming weeks and months, other suggested advocacy opportunities on a national scale include [signing on](#) to NAPABA’s Stand Against Hate and reviewing their [hate crimes resources](#), as well as participating in the [#StopAsianHate Day of Action](#) coordinated by [APIAVote](#) on March 26 and the [3rd Annual National AAPI Day Against Bullying+Hate](#) organized by [Act To Change](#) on May 18. Locally, victims of hate crimes may seek assistance from the [Illinois Attorney General’s Civil Rights Bureau](#) and the [Victim Witness Assistance Unit](#) of the Cook County State’s Attorney’s Office. Additionally, [Asian Americans Advancing Justice | Chicago](#) currently offers [bystander intervention training](#) sessions to equip individuals with the skills to safely maneuver harassment, discrimination, and hate incidents.

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The Filipino American Lawyers Association of Chicago (FALA Chicago) is a professional network of attorneys, judges, law students, and supporters that facilitates career development, learning opportunities, and fellowship within the Chicagoland legal community.