

In response to the charges being pursued by the District Attorney's offices of Fulton and Cherokee County in Georgia for the murders of *Xiaojie Tan, Delaina Ashley Yaun Gonzalez, Daoyou Feng, Paul Andre Michels, Soon Chung Park, Hyun Jung Grant, Yong Ae Yue, and Sun Cha Kim* on March 16, 2021. **Red Canary Song and Survived & Punished** released the following statement:

In 2017, Yang Song, a Chinese migrant woman and massage worker, died as a result of violent criminalization from the NYPD after being sexually assaulted by a police officer. In the same year, Yihwa Kim, a Korean woman who fled her home country of South Korea because of a lifetime of sexual abuse at the hands of her father was detained, called "North Korean slave" and compared to an insect by detention officers, and forcibly returned to South Korea for seeking asylum in the United States. While Red Canary Song and Survived & Punished hold the stories and lives of these women close and have supported Asian migrant sex workers, massage workers, and survivors of domestic and sexual violence for years, a mass public outcry in reaction to violence towards migrant Asian women is undoubtably unprecedented. As this unprecedented outcry brings more attention to the violence Asian migrant women are subjected to, this increased visibility and the community reaction as a result could help or harm the very migrant Asian women we are concerned with supporting.

On March 16, a white man killed eight people in a shooting spree across three massage businesses outside of Atlanta, Georgia. Six of those who were killed were migrant Asian women who worked in those massage businesses. This act of violence against migrant Asian women connected to sex work belongs to the foundational history of the U.S. where, for centuries, sexual violence and misogyny have been tools of white supremacy, anti-Asian racism, imperialism, and colonialism. This massacre exists in a sea of continued highly-publicized anti-Asian attacks during the COVID-19 pandemic, but it should not be collapsed or simplified to fit into the mainstream narratives around anti-Asian violence. These women who were killed faced specific racialized and gendered violence for being Asian migrant women and massage workers. Whether or not they ever provided sexual services, we know that as massage workers, they were subjected to sexualized violence stemming from the hatred of sex workers, Asian women, working class people, and immigrants. Every facet of their identities informs the violence they and other migrant Asian women were and are subjected to. While we do see these killings as racially-motivated and gender-based, we disagree with the call for more hate crimes sentencing as a solution for violence against Asian women and communities. As long-time advocates for survivors of violence who have been criminalized, prosecuted, jailed, or even deported for defending themselves against abuse, we have a clear view into the dishonesties of the criminal legal system that purports to keep people safe but deals out immense violence towards so many vulnerable communities and individuals. In solidarity with those survivors, with the family of Christian Hall, and all victims of both racial and carceral violence, we reject the demand for increased policing and prosecution in our names.



The Fulton County District Attorney's office has moved forward with pursuing a hate crime enhancement for the sentence of the shooter's existing charges of 4 counts of murder. Meanwhile, an anti-Asian hate crimes bill has just passed through the Senate. Though these events may feel momentous to some in our communities, we see these as facile efforts by the government to re-legitimize itself as an authority on violence. District Attorney Fani Willis seeking the death penalty is the ultimate show of the state trying to rehabilitate its own authority and image by publicly punishing an individual white supremacist with what Willis herself calls "the ultimate penalty" when in actuality the death penalty is mostly imposed on Black and Latinx people. On the federal level, this bill would merely expedite the Department of Justice's review of hate crimes cases. On a local level, Georgia's hate crime law, which was only signed into law last summer in reaction to the tragic death of Ahmaud Arbery, works as a "sentence enhancer"—not a standalone charge. One cannot be arrested for "hate"; rather, "hate" is a designation added onto other charges by prosecutors as a means to seek harsher punishment. Given the history of hate crime laws in the United States and how they have widely been used to criminalize people of color for "hate crimes" against whites, and even how laws against lynching have been used to prosecute Black activists, we see these efforts to link racial violence to criminal consequence as symbolic gestures for the State in efforts to rehabilitate its own image and reaffirm its own legitimacy as the ongoing crises of police violence, abuse within prisons, and children in detention camps rage on.

It is far easier to blame the violence of racism on individual actors in place of challenging the broader culture and structures of society that produce such individuals. While Asian people face racialized labor exploitation, rampant workplace abuse, criminalization within the workplace, targeted sexual violence, routine refusal of language access, immigration detention and deportation, and xenophobic media attacks domestically, the United States wages military occupation, military sexual violence in host nations, environmental destruction, and extractive and coercive trade/economic policies abroad in countries across Asia. It is from this context that every form of violence against Asian people in the United States springs forth, both the insidious and quotidian, as well as the extreme and hypervisible.

Hate crimes legislation and sentence enhancements in our name are not progress, and leave the status quo of everyday anti-Asian violence untouched. Rather, they bolster the roots of policing and prisons, a cornerstone of American white supremacy. They also legitimize the system of criminalization that target the most vulnerable of our communities, particularly migrant Asian sex workers, massage workers, and low wage workers. Moreover, they do not help women like Yang Song, Xiaojie Tan, Daoyou Feng, Soon Chung Park, Hyun Jung Grant, Yong Ae Yue and Sun Cha Kim, who lived and breathed each day at the crosshairs of racialized sexual violence and American policing. We know and love women like them, who are often battling stigma, violence, and discrimination even from within their own communities; who fight to survive and provide for their loved ones nonetheless. We hold all of them and their names close to us, and in honor of them all, we push on for a more just world.

