

NASP Condemns Violence Against AAPI Communities, Urges Schools to Reinforce Students' Safety, Well-Being

Bethesda, MD—Acts of violence against members of Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities across the country—punctuated by yesterday's shootings in Atlanta, GA—have escalated dramatically over the past year. Such violence is horrific and deeply troubling on many levels. Our deepest sympathies are with those affected by the trauma and loss. NASP condemns this hate-driven violence and calls upon our leaders to act now to stop it.

While the exact motives in the Atlanta shootings are unknown, they come in the wake of a wave of attacks on AAPI individuals, many of whom have lost their lives, including Vicha Ratanapakdee, Juanito Falcon, Christian Hall, and Angelo Quinto. In a recent report, the group STOP AAPI Hate cites 3,795 anti-Asian hate incidents between March 19, 2020 and February 28, 2021. Common across many of these incidents is the influence of White supremacy, xenophobia, and racism that has been stoked through unfounded fears and stigma associated with the pandemic. Individuals of Chinese and Asian descent have experienced “coronavirus racism,” which includes anti-Chinese and anti-Asian scapegoating for the spread of the virus (which is simply untrue) and other xenophobic reactions. Both children and adults have been targets of verbal harassment, microaggressions, avoidance, exclusion, and, increasingly, physical attacks.

Falsehoods, racism, and violence against AAPI communities must stop.

In all respects, we must address the underlying causes of hate-based speech and White supremacy ideologies and behavior that undermine our collective sense of decency and security as a nation, and that threaten the sense of personal safety for millions of people in targeted populations across the country. It is imperative that we change the tone of our national discourse, including condemning hate speech of all kinds at all levels of society. Failure to do so puts children and families at grave risk.

Role of Schools

It is particularly concerning that our children and youth are experiencing and witnessing this wave of violence in the midst of what already is a stressful and challenging reality, especially for our AAPI and BIPOC communities. Adults in these communities have served on the frontlines of fighting COVID-19, with many also struggling against the challenges of economic and social inequities, racism, and increased risk of illness. Children can be deeply affected by this reality and the understanding that they and the people they love may not be safe.

Schools play an essential role in countering racism and xenophobia, and in reassuring children and youth that they are valued and safe. Whether in person or virtually, we must create positive school communities in which violence is not tolerated; people at risk are identified and helped; inequity is addressed; problem solving, rather than blame and disregard for challenges, is the norm; and people of all backgrounds, races, religions, and cultures are valued and engaged as equals.

Schools must prevent bullying and harassment of any kind, with particular attention to students who may feel especially vulnerable right now. School personnel need to be prepared to prevent and to intervene quickly and effectively in the presence of abusive behaviors toward any students. This includes reassuring children that adults will take care of them, modeling and teaching desired behaviors, countering misinformation and stigma with accurate information, speaking up against racist comments or behaviors, and reinforcing acceptance and appreciation for diversity as core values. Schools have a legal and ethical responsibility to uphold all students' civil rights, which includes preventing all forms of bullying, harassment, and racist intimidation or behavior.

It is important to note that adults in AAPI and BIPOC communities understandably may feel vulnerable as well. NASP acknowledges that many adults need support, including K–12 educators, family members, and school psychologists serving in a variety of roles, including university faculty and graduate students.

NASP has a number of resources to help families and educators address these issues. Indeed, school psychologists play a critical role in helping schools create supportive learning environments. They work with school staff and families to establish positive school climates; prevent bullying, harassment, and violence; establish equitable and culturally responsive policies and practices; and support students' mental health. We will be developing additional resources to support K–12 and graduate education communities.

Related NASP Resources

- [Countering Coronavirus Stigma and Racism: Tips for Teachers and Other Educators](#)
- [Countering Coronavirus Stigma and Racism: Tips for Parents and Caregivers](#)
- [Talking to Children About Violence: Tips for Parents and Teachers](#)
- [Supporting Marginalized Students in Stressful Times: Tips for Educators](#)
- [Supporting Vulnerable Children in Stressful Times: Tips for Parents](#)
- [Bullying Prevention and Intervention Among School-Age Youth](#)
- [Racism, Prejudice, and Discrimination](#)

###