

21080 *FBI under pressure to tackle anti-Asian hate crime in wake of Atlanta shootings*

By Ed Pilkington, *The Guardian*, 18th March 2021

Federal and local law enforcement agencies are under pressure to increase efforts to combat the rising tide of hate crimes against Asian Americans in the wake of the Atlanta, Georgia, spa shootings that left eight people dead, six of them women of Asian descent. The FBI and other police forces are facing criticism for levels of reporting of hate crimes that remain abysmally low, despite several attempts by Congress to highlight the outrages.

Asian American community leaders expressed dismay on Wednesday, a day after the shootings at three massage parlors, that the discrimination and harassment historically faced by their communities continued to be downplayed. "It's taken six Asian American women dying in one day to get people to pay attention to this," Sung Yeon Choimorrow, executive director of the National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum (NAPAWF) told the *Guardian*. "Record keeping of hate crimes against Asian Americans is so low because they are not even willing to accept that we are discriminated against and harassed because of our race."

In the latest statistics for hate crimes compiled by the FBI for 2019, a total of 4,930 victims were identified where race or ethnicity was the motive. Of those, 4.4% were victims of anti-Asian bias, compared with 48.5% of anti-black and 14.1% of anti-Hispanic bias. The data is widely accepted to be a gross understatement of the hate crime problem in America today, including for Asian Americans. A federal law has been in place since 1990 requiring records to be kept on hate crimes, but it is largely ineffective as individual police forces are under no obligation to participate. On top of that, a federal report released in February found that more than 40% of hate crimes are never reported to authorities.

In the absence of any credible official figures, Asian American groups have attempted to fill the void by collecting self-reported data themselves. Choimorrow said that there had been a surge in hate incidents during the pandemic. Her group has conducted a soon-to-be-published survey that found that about 50% of Chinese American women in the sample had experienced racist slurs in public, rising to 64% of Korean American women.

She said that she could personally attest to that. "I have experienced racism directed at me around the pandemic just walking around my Chicago neighborhood. I've had a man chasing me and my daughter down the street yelling 'Go back to China and take your virus with you!'"

407 words