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March 19, 2021

Dear Friends,

This week has brought yet another reminder of the connection between white supremacy and dehumanization and violence. The cost for these reminders is so high: families left without their beloveds, communities living in fear. And there is a cost to white people, too. As my friend and colleague, Victor Lee Lewis, says in “The Color of Fear” documentary to a white man: “You’re dying, too. You just don’t know it yet.”

In The New Yorker today, in [an article about the Atlanta shooting and the dehumanization of Asian women](#), the violence against the AAPI community is noted:

“This past January, in San Francisco, an eighty-four-year-old Thai man died after being assaulted while on a walk; across the bay, in Oakland’s Chinatown, a seventy-five-year-old Asian man died after being assaulted and robbed. In both cases, law enforcement has been hesitant to connect the killings to racial bias, instead labeling them as incidents of ‘elder abuse.’ Anti-Asian hate incidents—and hate

crimes, more generally—have historically been underreported, but they appear to be on the rise in the U.S.: since last March, Stop A.A.P.I. Hate, a nonprofit organization that formed near the beginning of the pandemic to track discrimination against Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders, has received nearly thirty-eight hundred reports of incidents ranging from verbal harassment to physical assault.”

The Atlanta murders this week are not a one-off. They are not the result of one lone gunman with, as he says, “a sex addiction.” Instead, they are the most recent representation of a history of discrimination and violence against our AAPI friends and neighbors, exacerbated by the pandemic that our ex-president insisted on calling the CHY-NA virus and the “kung flu.”

It is a hate crime, like so many others. And the unwillingness of law enforcement to name it is just one part of a longstanding problem. The law enforcement spokesperson who suggested that the shooter was just having “a very bad day” recently posted on Facebook about t-shirts for sale that also blamed COVID on “CHY-NA.” As someone mentioned on Twitter, **“white supremacists make soft beds for their kind.”**

Here was my assessment of the situation on Facebook the day after the killings:

- 1) A white man (not a kid as he is being called to infantilize him and absolve him somehow), drove to three businesses owned by Asians and opened fire, killing 8 people, including 6 Asian women.
- 2) According to a law enforcement officer (who himself recently posted t-shirts for sale on Facebook that blamed COVID on China), this white killer was having "a bad day." Please note: women and minorities often die when white men are having hard days.
- 2a) He was arrested without incident because he is white. Had he been Black, he likely would have been killed on the spot.
- 3) News agencies are humanizing the killer with headlines about his church-going. Innocent BIPOC people killed by the police often are reported on with headlines about their shortcomings, not their church-going. Their reputations are maligned to justify the killing; the white man's reputation was uplifted after killing 8 people.
- 4) He now blames this on his "sex addiction," not racism. People appear to be forgetting the insistent fetishization and dehumanization of Asian women by white men WHICH IS INEXTRICABLY TIED TO RACISM.
- 5) The killer says he is not racist. Shall we let his racist actions speak louder than his own self-assessment?
- 6) This is a hate crime.

White supremacy--our creation of it, our relentless maintenance of its myth of superiority--kills. It is, in itself, a hate crime.

LINKS YOU MIGHT ENJOY

A year ago, [a poet named Molly](#) died by suicide. Her husband wrote [an extraordinary essay about her](#). Please note the trigger warning at the top of his essay, and stay away if it will be triggering for you.

Ann Patchett has done it again. [This story](#), like [an earlier one I sent on letting go](#), is a must-read.

UPCOMING CLASSES

The killings in Atlanta of 8 people, including six Asian women, is yet another example of how whiteness operates in the U.S. Learn more by attending one of our Hard Conversations courses, beginning at the end of March. Both are five-week, online courses that I teach with Victor Lee Lewis and you can choose from (or join both) **Hard Conversations: Whiteness, Race, and Social Justice** (starts March 30) and **Hard Conversations: Deep Dive Into Racism and Its Undoing** (starts April 29). [Go here for information and to register](#).

FREE THINGS!

FREE WRITING PROMPTS FOR 2021 - Do you want to get back to a consistent writing routine in the New Year? I am offering free writing prompts **every Monday-Friday** in 2021. If you'd like to receive them, you can do so in either of the following ways:

By text: Text "writing prompts" to me at 828-248-7513 to sign up for free. Your first prompt will arrive via text the day after you sign up (Monday - Friday).

By email: [Go here](#) to sign up for free. Your first prompt will arrive the day after you sign up (Monday - Friday). We added this method because some of you couldn't participate by text. I hope it is helpful!

I'll see you next Friday from my Orange Desk. In the meantime, stay safe, speak up, and examine the ways you might be complicit in upholding white supremacy.

I'll see you next Friday from my Orange Desk!

Patti

Sent to: _t.e.s.t_@example.com

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Patti Digh, LLC, 638 Spartanburg Highway, Suite 70 #337, Hendersonville, NC 28792, United States

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