

Statement of Solidarity One Year After Indianapolis Shooting

One year ago, on April 15, 2021, eight lives were taken and many more were forever altered when a gunman attacked the FedEx ground facility in Indianapolis. Today, we pause in solemn remembrance of those we lost: Matthew R. Alexander, Samaria Blackwell, Amarjeet Kaur Johal, Jasvinder Kaur, Jaswinder Singh, Amarjit Sekhon, Karli Smith, and John "Steve" Weisert.

We also recognize that half of these names belong to members of the local Sikh community--and that the facility targeted by the gunman, a former employee, was well known for employing a largely Sikh workforce. As details about the shooting and the victims emerged, a common refrain grew louder in the hearts of Sikhs across the nation: "Please, not again."

This is the fear of every member of an underrepresented community when we learn that another act of mass violence has taken those who look like us, pray like us, or come from where our family came from. It is rooted in generations of trauma and a deep understanding of how it feels to be hated and targeted for being 'other.' Our familiarity with that fear, and our ability to persevere with dignity in the face of it, makes it no less exhausting to weather.

Oak Creek. Charleston. Orlando. Pittsburgh. Poway. El Paso. Atlanta. Indianapolis. Across our nation, time and again, marginalized communities bear the brunt of mass violence. Sometimes, when the hate is unequivocal and undeniable--perhaps due to an attacker's vicious words during the act, or in a virulent manifesto left behind--law enforcement, elected officials, and the wider public understand the connection. But all too often, they do not grasp what we instinctively know. They search for a singular driving factor, ignoring that bias is often intersectional. They hone in on mental health, as though it precludes prejudice. Or they simply shrug their shoulders and move on, because the motives of the dead are unknowable--and what does it matter, anyway?

Indianapolis was one such case. Despite the shooter's familiarity with where he went to kill, and the fact that white nationalist content was reportedly found on his computer, the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department and the Federal Bureau of Investigation dismissed bias as a possible motive. They never explained how they reached this conclusion.

Our society must do more to approach acts of mass violence through the lens of those who are most affected. Bias should be considered a possible motive from the start, community stakeholders should be engaged consistently and transparently, and our laws and policies should reflect the scope and scale of the threat that violent hate poses.

Our mothers and fathers have the right to go to work and come home alive. Our grandparents have the right to walk in their neighborhoods without fear. Our brothers and sisters have the right to attend school without any infringement on their health and happiness, from verbal bullying to literal massacre.

As we mark this anniversary, we reaffirm that we will not be driven out of the public spaces to which we have equal claim. And while we will remain resilient in the face of hate, we insist that the burden of understanding it and addressing it is not ours to carry alone.

Signed:

The Sikh Coalition

9to5

AAPI Equity Alliance

Act To Change

ADL (the Anti-Defamation League)

American Muslim Empowerment Network (AMEN)

Apna Ghar, Inc.

Asian American Federation

Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF)

Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC

Asian Americans Advancing Justice | Chicago

Asian Americans Advancing Justice-Atlanta

Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders for Justice (San Antonio, TX)

Asian Family Support Services of Austin

Asian Law Alliance

Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, AFL-CIO

Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence

Asian Solidarity Collective

Asians Are Strong

California Asian Pacific American Bar Association

Can't Stop! Won't Stop! Consulting & Education Fund

Center for Pan Asian Community Services

Center for the Study of Hate & Extremism

Chinese for Affirmative Action / Stop AAPI Hate

Coalition of Asian American Leaders

Compassion in Oakland

Dear Community

Delta Chinatown Initiative

Georgia Asian Pacific American Bar Association (GAPABA)

Georgia Muslim Voter Project

Grassroots Asians Rising

Hindus for Human Rights

IL Muslim Civic Coalition

Interfaith Alliance

Islamic Networks Group (ING)

Islamic Society of North America (ISNA)

Japanese American Citizens League

Justice for Migrant Women

Laal NYC

MAPS-AMEN (Muslim Association of Puget Sound-American Muslim Empowerment Network)

Matthew Shepard Foundation

Muslim Advocates

National Council of Jewish Women

National Sikh Campaign

NCAAT in Action

North Carolina Asian Americans Together

Not In Our Town

OCA-Asian Pacific American Advocates

OPAWL - Building AAPI Feminist Leadership

Rabbinical Assembly
Raksha, Inc
Reboot
Revolutionary Love Project
Sadhana: Coalition of Progressive Hindus
Sakhi for South Asian Women
Sapna NYC
Shoulder to Shoulder Campaign
South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT)
South Asian Bar Association of Georgia
South Asian SOAR
Stand with Asian Americans
Stand with Asians
Stop AAPI Hate
T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights
The TransLatin@ Coalition