

It is Time for the Parliament to Take Concrete Action on Anti-Asian Racism

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Let's not forget that for every incident of racist violence that has been reported on the covidracism.ca website, there are countless more that the Canadian public has never heard about. Those victims are suffering in silence, and their stories are just as worthy to be told.

We must also remember that behind every number is a flesh and blood human being whose life, and the lives of those around them, have been changed forever by this de-humanization and the gross violation of their rights.

Collectively and individually, these racist incidents have resulted in deep and long-lasting impacts on the Asian Canadian community as a whole.

As the report has confirmed, these racist verbal and physical attacks can happen at any time to anyone who is Asian Canadian or who looks like one. No one, no matter how old or young, is spared. As Asian Canadians, our lives have been taken over by a constant sense of paralyzing fear. Every time we step out of our home, we wonder if the attack will happen to us, again. Asian Canadian women like myself face an ever greater risk of attack. And regardless of whether we are a newcomer, or a fifth generation Canadian, our sense of security has been shattered.

Slash by slash, wound by wound, each one of these incidents takes away from all Asian Canadians our sense of safety; robs us of our basic dignity, and ultimately undermines our sense of belonging in a country that we have every right to call home.

However devastating the impact of each one of these racist attacks has on us, they still pale in comparison to the long-standing and ongoing systemic racism that Asian Canadians have had to endure – and continue to endure – since the founding of Canada, a nation that we have helped build. After being in Canada for more than 160 years, Chinese Canadians and other Asian Canadians are still being portrayed as perpetual foreigners. For Asian Canadians who have been here for generations, this label cuts right through their sense of identity.

Notwithstanding the model minority myth, Chinese Canadians are twice as likely to live in poverty than white Canadians. Having an Asian sounding name makes us at least 30% less likely to get calls for job interviews. Those with precarious immigration status, and those who do not speak English as their first language, are bearing the brunt of the COVID-19 pandemic. They were the first to lose their jobs, in some cases permanently. The interaction of poverty, race and precarity of their work, as well as status, puts them at a greater risk of both COVID-19 and racism.

As we acknowledge and thank every one of the individuals who have shared their experiences with us, we must honour their courage to speak out, by re-dedicating ourselves to make sure that the pain they have suffered both mentally and physically will not be in vain.

To do so, we need the Prime Minister and all Parliamentarians to take a stand. Instead of empty rhetoric, we demand concrete actions. In addition to the recommendations contained in the report, we call on the House of Commons to pass a motion to unreservedly denounce anti-Asian racism in all forms, and we urge politicians of all political stripes to support the motion.

We demand the Federal and provincial governments to include anti-Asian racism in their anti-racism policy and programs, and to include anti-Asian racism in the pending national anti-racism implementation plan.

Finally, we call for a Parliamentary Committee hearing on the root causes of anti-Asian racism and strategies to prevent anti-Asian racism, as well as ways to provide support and resources to our communities to fight anti-Asian racism. Let the Atlanta Shootings and all the stories that are shared by this report be our call to action. Thank you.