



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 17, 2021

The Sex Workers Project of the Urban Justice Center: Statement on the Fatal Shootings At Massage Businesses in Atlanta Georgia

The Sex Workers Project of the Urban Justice Center mourns the eight people whose lives were tragically cut short in acts of violence in three Georgia massage businesses last night. If initial reports of a racial motivation are accurate, SWP recognizes that such killings have wide-ranging psychological consequences that extend broadly to Asian and Asian-American communities. Six of the victims in the shootings were Asian women. This attack follows a cruel and disturbing trend of increased violence targeting Asian people in the US. Within 16 of the United States most populous cities there was a 150 percent increase in anti-Asian hate crimes in 2020. We at SWP condemn this violence that is rooted in this country's shameful legacy of genocide against indigenous communities and racist white supremacist systems.

While details of the attack are still becoming available, we do know that they occurred in places of business. It is likely that many, if not all, of the victims were at work when they were murdered. Clement Lee, ESQ. Associate Director of Immigration Legal Services, speaks on behalf of all of us at SWP in emphasizing that, "Like all workers, the victims of this attack deserved safety, peace, and understanding. We continue to offer our support and compassion to our Asian and Asian-American clients, staff, and community who feel the sadness we do today. The victims of this violence didn't deserve to be humiliated, hurt, or killed during an ordinary day of work because of what they looked like, where they were from or how they earned a living."

We currently do not know the work conditions of those who were killed, but we know that massage businesses are sometimes sites of sexual services that employees may provide by choice, circumstance or under conditions of coercion. At SWP we provide immigration legal services as part of our broader work to end the criminalization and stigmatization of adult consensual sex work, and to create a world in which all workers are free from all forms of exploitation including human trafficking. No matter the circumstances of the victims' employment, as more information becomes available, we



implore media outlets, legislators, and the public to respect the dignity and choices of the victims.

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