



The
Episcopal Diocese
of New York

March 18, 2021

On Anti-Asian Violence

A Message to the
Clergy and People of the Diocese of New York
from the Rt. Rev. Allen K. Shin, Bishop Suffragan
with a supporting message from
the Rt. Rev. Andrew ML Dietsche, Bishop of New York,
and the Rt. Rev. Mary D. Glasspool, Bishop Assistant.

My Brothers and Sisters,

The pandemic this past year has brought many challenges in our lives both personally and collectively. One thing it has brought to light is the virus of white supremacy and racism which has infected the soul of America for centuries. It has played out in racial inequalities with a devastating effect on the lives of the people of color in marginalized and underprivileged communities, in terms of COVID infections and deaths, of economic hardship, and even of the vaccine rollouts. The killings of Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and many other African Americans have revealed the insidious nature of the racist structures and systems and of white supremacy in our society.

During the pandemic we have also seen a dramatic surge of hate crimes against Asians across the country, particularly against the elderly and women. An 86-year-old man from Thailand died after being shoved to the ground in San Francisco. A Filipino man was slashed with a box cutter on the subway in New York City. Just a couple of weeks ago, a 56-year-old Malaysian man was pushed to the ground and punched in the face on a subway station. Most recently, eight Asians were murdered by a gunman in Atlanta, six of whom were women. While the overall crime rate has declined from 2019 to 2020, hate crimes against Asians have increased 150%. Since March last year 3,800 anti-Asian hate crimes have been reported, with 68% of the victims being women.

Violence against Asians is not new. We have seen this before in this country. The "Yellow Peril" sentiment of the nineteenth century fueled many violent incidents against Chinese communities. The Chinese massacre of 1871 resulted in the Chinatown of Los Angeles being ransacked and 20 Chinese men being lynched and hanged. Those who attended the 2019 Diocesan convention saw the play, Red Altar, which told the story of the massacre of the Chinese fishing village in Monterey

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Bay. The village was burned down, and the Chinese people were lynched or driven out. When the bubonic plague broke out in 1900, the Chinatown in Honolulu was burned down by a mob, and the Chinatown in San Francisco was quarantined off so that no Chinese were allowed to leave but were left to die while the white residents were allowed to leave. The US government also played a role with the enactment of anti-Asian policies such as the Chinese Exclusionary Act of 1882, the Asiatic Barred Zone Act of 1917, and the Japanese Internment of 1942.

As an Asian-American bishop, I am mindful of bringing too much attention to Asian concerns and issues lest people see me as a bishop only for Asians. But I can no longer remain silent. I feel compelled to speak up against the rising anti-Asian hate crimes in our communities. It has been conveyed to me that the members of the Church of Our Savior in Chinatown, many of whom are elderly, are feeling anxious and living in fear. I cannot express how deeply it hurts and saddens me. In the fall 2020 edition of the Episcopal New Yorker, I shared a personal experience of being harassed and called "China virus" by a biker as my wife and I were taking walks in the nearby park. I have been called by racist epithets and told to "go home" many times before. But, never have I felt so fearful for my life as I have felt this past year.

Despite the fear and anxiety, however, one thing I have learned in this pandemic is to be grateful for life and not take it for granted. I have learned the joy of being alive through simple things. Easter this year feels so much more meaningful because of that. I have learned the power of gratitude, compassion, and justice. So I ask for your prayers of solidarity and of compassion and justice for the Asian brothers and sisters in your communities. I ask you to reach out to them with a word of encouragement and comfort. I ask you to stand up against all forms of racial violence and hatred in our society as I and many other Asians stand with African American brothers and sisters in their continued struggle against the systemic racism and the culture of white supremacy just as the Asian leaders marched alongside the African American leaders in the Civil Rights movement. Racial justice and healing will be the unavoidable focus of the Church's mission in the post COVID time. I refuse to let fear take over my life and hatred destroy my faith in the goodness of humanity. At the heart of the Christian faith is the life-giving power of the crucified Christ. Love is the way of the Cross, and love will win over all hatred. Won't you join me and stand up against the racist and xenophobic violence that is destroying our common life and humanity?

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The Rt. Rev. Allen K. Shin
Bishop Suffragan

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From Bishops Dietsche and Glasspool

Our dear Brothers and Sisters,

Over the last year Bishop Shin, our brother Allen, has shared with us some of the incidents of Anti-Asian bias, discrimination, and hatred with which he and Clara have lived during the pandemic. He has shared with us the fear they sometimes have had to feel just by being in public. These private, intimate narratives have revealed to us the pain which they both have felt in a time when Asians have been scapegoated for a global pandemic which far transcends in scope the blaming or assigning of fault to anyone. What is clear is that the pandemic has served as a kind of license for racists to give voice to, or to express violently, other, ongoing currents of anti-Asian sentiment, or even hatred, which remain alive and continue in our culture. The Red Altar presentation at our Diocesan Convention of 2019 put before us again the long legacy of discrimination against Asian immigrants, the internment of Japanese, the lynching of Chinese, and the myriad ways in which Asian people have faced the degradations and humiliations of American racism. We grieve that that racism is still alive in our country. We condemn the violence against Asian people. We condemn and repudiate the racism against our Asian brothers and sisters. And we are proud to lend our support and love to Allen, and our gratitude for the powerful, personal reflection and testimony he has written as a prophetic word and gift to the Diocese of New York, and to join him in this communication.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andrew ML Dietsche".

The Right Reverend Andrew ML Dietsche
Bishop of New York

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mary D Glasspool".

The Right Reverend Mary D Glasspool
Bishop Assistant