redlightdistrict.totallywowgroup.org
info@totallywowgroup.org
Atlanta, GA

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**On 5th Anniversary of Atlanta Spa Shootings, Advocates Demand End to Anti-Asian and Anti-Sex Worker Violence**

**ATLANTA** - March 16, 2026 – Today marks five years since the Atlanta spa shooting, a tragedy that claimed eight lives, six of them Asian women, and shook Atlanta's Asian American and sex worker communities to their core. We honor their lives, their labor, and the families and communities who continue to carry their memory.

This anniversary is not only a moment of remembrance, but a call to action!

The violence that day, five years ago (March 16, 2021), did not happen in isolation. It was shaped by intersecting systems of racism, misogyny, xenophobia, and the criminalization of sex work and migration. Anti-Asian hate has long been embedded in the history of the United States, surging in visibility during the COVID-19 pandemic, but, for many Asian and migrant women working in the massage and sex work industry, violence and harassment are daily realities.

Migrant workers are often pushed to the margins of the labor market by restrictive immigration systems, language barriers, and the threat of deportation. Criminalization compounds this vulnerability. When sex work is criminalized, workers are forced into isolation and denied labor protections and workplace safety. When migration is criminalized, entire communities are driven underground, where exploitation flourishes unchecked.

We reject the narrative that paints sex workers as victims without agency while ignoring the structural forces that create harm. We also reject attempts to use this tragedy to justify further policing, surveillance, and raids on Asian massage businesses, actions that too often result in deportations, arrests, and further trauma for the very communities purportedly being protected.

We must also confront the role that immigration enforcement has played, and continues to play, in creating conditions of fear within the Asian and other migrant communities. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) operations, workplace raids, and data-sharing agreements between local police and federal immigration authorities have deepened mistrust and driven workers further into the shadows. On this fifth anniversary, we reject the use of tragedy to justify expanded collaborations between local law enforcement and ICE.

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Arrest is not protection. Deportation is not safety.

True community safety requires clear firewalls between local services and federal immigration enforcement. Survivors of violence must be able to seek medical care, legal assistance, and emergency support without fear that their information will be shared with immigration authorities. Anti-Asian violence cannot be addressed while migrant Asian communities live under the constant threat of removal.

These same dynamics of fear and criminalization also shape the realities faced by sex workers. Violence against sex workers is not inevitable; it is enabled by stigma, discrimination, and laws that deny workers' rights and recognition. When sex work is criminalized, workers are pushed into isolation and prevented from accessing the very systems meant to protect them.

Sex workers deserve the same labor protections, workplace safety standards, and access to justice as any other workers. Decriminalization of sex work is a critical step towards reducing violence and dismantling the stigma that fuels it. By removing criminal penalties, we improve health and safety outcomes that ensure workers can report harm without fear of arrest.

On this anniversary, we call for:

- The full decriminalization of sex work.
- Policies that uphold migrant rights, including protection from detention and deportation.
- Investment in community-based safety strategies rather than carceral responses.
- Meaningful action to address anti-Asian racism and gender-based violence.
- Economic justice and full occupational protections for all workers in the massage and sex industries.

As we remember those whose lives were taken and those whose lives were forever impacted by this tragedy, we make a commitment opposing policies that compound vulnerability. We stand in solidarity with Asian communities, migrant communities, and sex workers everywhere. We commit to building a future where no one is targeted because of their race, gender, work, or migration status.

Five years later, though they have tried to break us, we are not broken. We remain a community building on the backs of those who came before us and who were lost too soon.

Signed,
Red Light District, Red Canary Song, and C.L.A.W.S.

Red Light District (RLD) is dedicated to advancing the rights, safety and dignity of sex workers and survivors of violence. Through policy advocacy, community organizing, and public education RLD works to end the criminalization of sex work and advance policies that promote safety, care, and economic justice.

**Contact:**
www.RedLightDistrict.totallywowgroup.org
RedLightDistrict@totallywowgroup.org

Red Canary Song

**Contact:**
www.RedCanarySong.org
redcanarysong@gmail.com

The Coalition for Labor Autonomy and Worker Solidarity (C.L.A.W.S.) a BIPOC and Sex-Worker led coalition works to build solidarity among all workers. C.L.A.W.S. fights for decriminalization, mutual aid, and cultural change at the intersections of reproductive justice, labor rights, migrant justice, abolition, and trans liberation.

**Contact:**
clawsatl@proton.me

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