

March 10, 2022

AAJA Announces *UPDATED GUIDANCE* on Coverage of Anti-AAPI Violence

As we mark one year since the tragic Atlanta spa shootings and two years since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States, the Asian American Journalists Association has updated our [guidance on coverage of violence against Asian Americans](#) based on input from AAJA's Media Watch, Broadcast Advisory Council, and our membership at-large.

Violence Against AAPIs Continues and Deeply Impacts Our Communities

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, acts of violence towards AAPIs have not subsided. Unfortunately, we've seen increasing anti-Asian incidents; the Stop AAPI Hate Campaign [recorded more](#) than 5,700 reports of anti-Asian hate incidents in 2021, up from 4,599 in 2020.

Acts of violence have especially affected Asian American women, data show. The recent killings of Michelle Go and Christina Yuna Lee, as well as the killings of two Asian women in Albuquerque, continue to deeply affect AAPI communities across the United States. A [new NAPAWF](#) survey found 74% of Asian women respondents have experienced racism or some form of discrimination in the last 12 months; 71% reported feeling anxious or stressed due to fear of discrimination, harassment, or violence.

Newsroom Coverage Varies in Quality– and Commitment to Diversity

While some newsrooms' coverage has acknowledged the important context and history of anti-Asian discrimination and violence, other newsrooms have not. We have observed that the coverage of anti-Asian violence widely varies in quality, and we urge newsrooms to be mindful of the complexities involving AAPI communities by including nuance and context in their stories.

We have also heard from members who have reported running into challenges in their own newsrooms as they pursue and pitch stories regarding anti-Asian violence. AAPIs are underrepresented in newsrooms across the country, especially in positions of power. That means many of our members are the lone voice— with little to no editorial authority— pushing for stories about the AAPI community. We urge newsrooms to seriously consider bringing to light these important and newsworthy stories.

At the same time, many of our members are also expected to speak on behalf of a diverse AAPI diaspora that encompasses some 50 ethnicities, often without acknowledgement or additional compensation. News managers and executives need to understand the unique burdens and expectations on their AAPI employees, and empower nuanced journalism about AAPI communities by supporting, trusting, and hiring more AAPI journalists.

AAJA Stands Ready to Empower AAPI Journalists and Narratives About AAPIs: Our Updated Guidance on Coverage of Violence Against AAPIs

Our [updated guidance](#) is even more relevant and urgent than ever. In this latest version, we address the continued violence and the dearth of accurate and contextualized reporting. We urge newsrooms to cover individual instances in the larger context of increased anti-Asian violence across the country.

With diversity still sorely lacking in newsrooms and among key decision-makers, many outlets are missing crucial perspectives that represent truthful experiences within AAPI communities. We hope increased diversity in newsrooms can lead to crucial coverage that is relevant to the fastest growing racial demographic in the nation.

AAJA stands with our AAPI journalists, who have been subject to violence and discrimination over the past year and as anti-Asian incidents have risen during the coronavirus pandemic. Many are experiencing compounding trauma while covering the violence. We uplift and acknowledge their dedication and resilience.

We acknowledge and commend the newsrooms who work hard to get this right, who have covered this with empathy and thoughtfulness, and who have built newsrooms that provide the support and resources, including sufficient safety and mental wellness resources, that retain and empower journalists of color.

[Find our guidance here](#)

Support AAJA and Our Continued Efforts

In March 2021, AAJA released the following guides to aid journalists in this work to responsibly and accurately cover the news: [AAJA Guidance on Atlanta Shootings & Anti-Asian Hate Incidents](#) and the [AAJA Pronunciation Guide for Asian Victims of Atlanta Shootings](#).

The response was overwhelming, and it was clear that journalists — and the general public — were in need of our guidance. We heard from many newsrooms and organizations outside of journalism that were able to use our advisories as a starting point for responsible discussions about these important events. Read more about [our impact here](#).

The Asian American Journalists Association is proud to continue to support and build a better journalism industry for all and to empower AAPI ownership of our narratives across sectors. To support our work, please [donate here](#).

Previous Statements About Anti-AAPI Violence:

- AAJA Calls on News Organizations to exercise care in Coverage of the Coronavirus Outbreak ([February 13, 2020](#))
- AAJA Condemns Anti-Asian Racism and Challenges Newsrooms to Prioritize Coverage of Anti-Asian Violence ([February 11, 2021](#))
- AAJA-HQ commends journalists who have championed coverage of AAPI experiences during this period of increased anti-Asian incidents ([March 16, 2021](#))
- AAJA Guidance on Atlanta Shootings & Anti-Asian Hate Incidents ([March 17, 2021](#))

- AAJA Encourages Newsrooms to Empower AAPI Journalists and Their Expertise ([March 18, 2021](#))
- AAJA Pronunciation Guide for Asian Victims of Atlanta Shootings ([March 19, 2021](#))
- SAJA-AAJA Media Advisory on Coverage of Indianapolis FedEx Facility Shooting ([April 22, 2021](#))

Guidance on Coverage of Anti-AAPI Violence

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Names / Terminology / Coverage

1. **Double-check names, pronunciations, and faces** as a general rule, but especially when covering communities different from your own.
2. **Avoid using gratuitous graphic imagery or videos of violence** without thoughtful consideration of the value it adds to the story and coverage as it may traumatize or retraumatize Asian Americans.
3. **Be specific and descriptive when referring to violence and harassment aimed at Asians, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.** Rather than using euphemisms like “anti-Asian sentiment” or “anti-Asian hate,” assess whether it is more accurate to use terms like “anti-Asian racism,” “anti-Asian bias,” “anti-Asian incident,” “anti-Asian rhetoric,” “anti-Asian violence,” or “assault against Asians.”
4. **Recognize that “hate crime” is a legal term that has limitations.** Regardless of a crime or incident’s classification, motive, or intention, the impact on the community should be reported.

Sources

1. **Avoid assumptions, insinuations and relying on unverified sources. Institutional sources must be verified.** Newsrooms need to consider: What is the relevance of your story to this shooting? What is the necessary context? What sources or resources are you using to inform your reporting, and are they verifiable or credible? Does this source's assertion/judgment fully tell the story or inadvertently neglect other important factors of the full story?
2. **Diversify your sources by interviewing and quoting AAPI experts who can legitimately speak on behalf of the community.** Build relationships within the communities on which you are reporting. Question the proximity of your source with the geography and communities featured in your story.

AAJA's speakers bureau, [AAJA Studio](#), includes AAPI researchers, experts and thought

leaders with expertise in civil rights, hate crimes, AAPI history, racial justice and community-building work, racial profiling and discrimination. AAJA Studio is not an exhaustive list of experts. We encourage reaching out to [AAPI studies professors and scholars](#) as well.

3. **Acknowledge and attribute credit to community media sources, and support the work of in-language and community media.** It has come to our attention that some mainstream English media sources were using Asian language media as sources without proper citation or acknowledgement. Attribute credit to community and in-language journalism, which provide the service of journalism to immigrant communities often with fewer resources than larger newsrooms, while having greater access to communities that are underrepresented in mainstream media.

Contextualization

1. **Provide context about the 2020 rise in violence towards AAPIs, but also recall that violence towards Asian Americans and other people of color has existed long before the COVID-19 pandemic.** We urge newsrooms to cover the violence in the context of the current rise in attacks on Asian Americans and heightened fear among AAPI communities across the country. Understand anti-Asian racism and invisibility and the long-standing stereotypes that have been wielded against AAPIs, or that have pitted AAPIs against other communities of color. Racism against AAPIs is highly nuanced, complex, and has rendered racism against AAPIs relatively invisible.
2. **Understand the origins of and the connections between anti-Asian racism and racism towards other communities of color.** Consider how different aspects of identity and systems of power affect individuals' unique experiences. Journalists should apply that intersectional lens to examine their own biases as well. Do not perpetuate stereotypes about AAPIs or other communities of color in coverage. Do not perpetuate anti-Blackness in coverage of violence against Asian Americans.
3. **Understand the specific experiences of anti-Asian racism faced by AAPI women.** Take care to note the long history of hypersexualization of AAPI women, as well as the fact that sex work is a profession that may be an empowering choice for some or a choice by necessity. Regardless, it does not change the value of a human life.
4. **Center community experiences and victims' stories.**

We urge proactive hiring of AAPI reporters and leaders in local newsrooms as well as at the national level. We urge newsrooms to empower and support their AAPI journalists and colleagues, while not relying on them completely to be total experts on AAPIs. Newsrooms must provide AAPI journalists with the necessary mental wellness support as our community faces increased anti-Asian violence and sentiment.