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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

***SOMSD Condemns Anti-Asian Racism/Violence and Stands in Solidarity
with the AAPI Community***

March 22, 2021 - We have been following the events and senseless acts of violence that have occurred against the Asian-American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community in Georgia, New York and across our country. As a community, our hearts are broken. We are disheartened over the senseless loss of life of eight human beings, six of whom were women of Asian descent.

Over the past year, we have witnessed how words, fear, intolerance, and lack of empathy have led to a rise in hate crimes, injustice, discrimination, harassment, and bullying against the AAPI community. Hate crimes against the AAPI community have been on the rise since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. A report released by "Stop AAPI Hate" revealed that there have been at least 3,795 hate incidents targeting the AAPI community between March 2020 and February 2021; more than 500 occurred in 2021.

Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Ronald G. Taylor, shared, "On behalf of the Board and District leadership, we condemn any acts that would seek to diminish the worth of any one group due to their race, gender, nationality or heritage...." The deaths of these eight people, six of whom were Asian American women, on Tuesday in Atlanta was an unspeakable tragedy for the families of the victims, first and foremost, and also for the AAPI community, who have been faced with high levels of racial discrimination."

As a District, we stand in solidarity with our AAPI community, our staff, students, families, community partners, and any group that has faced injustice and racism. There is no place for hate and discrimination in our community and schools. The victims of this shooting were mothers, wives, daughters, aunts, friends, a grandmother, an Army veteran, and a husband. We will not forget the names of those whose lives were tragically cut short on Tuesday, March 16, among them:

1. Soon Chung Park, 74;
2. Hyun Jung Grant, 51;
3. Suncha Kim, 69;
4. Yong Ae Yue, 63;
5. Delaina Yaun, 33;
6. Xiaojie Tan, 49;
7. Paul Andre Michels, 52; and
8. Daoyou Feng, 44.

Internal Resources for Students:

We encourage members of our student/parent community to reach out to their school social workers and/or counseling department for individual & group counseling services for students.



1. **Elementary Schools:** Click here for more information: bit.ly/SOMSDElemSW
2. **Middle School & High School:** Your child's Guidance Counselor can provide counseling for your child, connect you with resources available in the Secondary Schools such as the Social Work Intern Programs, ISTEP, or ESS programs, and can provide referrals to an outside therapist. Students with IEP's should contact their case manager.

Additional external resources: Access links for resources here: <http://bit.ly/3lCGyZu>

Dr. Ronald G. Taylor, Superintendent of Schools
Dr. Gretel Perez, Assistant Superintendent, Access & Equity
South Orange & Maplewood Board of Education

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About South Orange & Maplewood School District

The School District of South Orange and Maplewood serves more than 7,200 students in ten schools, including one early-childhood center, six elementary schools, two middle schools, and one high school. The community and its schools are racially and economically diverse with more than 90 percent of Columbia High School graduates planning to attend college each year. The mission of the South Orange Maplewood School District is to empower and inspire each student to explore and imagine, to pursue personal passions, and to collectively create a better future by creating a learner-centered environment through multiple pathways; re-imagined structures, systems and supports; innovative teaching; partnering with families; and maximizing community expertise and resources.