

Kelly Shum worked hard to expand the customer base of her family's Chinese American butcher shop, Mad Butcher Meat Company, and ramp up its online presence to survive the pandemic.

Last week, she reached a breaking point after a man left a mutilated cat outside the Florin Perkins Road shop. Sacramento Police spokesman Karl Chan said it's being investigated as a potential hate crime.

Shum believes the dead cat was intended as a racist message. Mad Butcher Meat has been repeatedly targeted since her family took over the business in 1989, she said. The shop sells raw pet food to customers who prefer to feed their animals real meat. That's led to racist prank calls about butchered pets that have intensified during the pandemic.

Shum said she shrugs off the racism- even when it makes her cry.

But this time she couldn't stay silent. She has posted security camera footage online, done national TV interviews and offered a cash reward for help. Shum wants justice, especially in light of highly publicized incidents of violence against Asian Americans.

Sacramento is not immune.

"This is my every single day, and I feel like I have to apologize for being a race I just am," Shum said. "I'm tired of this."

Hate and bias-motivated crimes surged in Sacramento last year, as did incidents targeting Asians. Sacramento Police documented what victims experienced in a new violent crime report. They described being spat on, having their property damaged, receiving death threats and, in some cases, suffering assault.

At least 11 incidents involved Asians, compared to a recent high of four in 2017. Overall, Sacramentans reported 57 bias-related incidents in 2020, up from 23 total just four years ago.

Many blame former President Donald Trump's anti-Chinese xenophobia, which prompted President Joe Biden to sign an executive order condemning anti-Asian sentiments.

Timothy Fong, an ethnic studies professor at Sacramento State University, said it's not that simple.

"Trump was the fuel," he said. "He has given people the permission to act and say and do things that, at different times, were not as overt. But this is always there."

Confronting anti-Asian bias is difficult because it doesn't fit the white supremacy narrative. Fong said stereotypes about Asian American prosperity are used to diminish others and perpetuate conflict between minority communities.

"We have to have the courageous conversation - all of us - about racism among and between different groups," Fong said.

Research group Stop AAPI Hate received more than 2,800 reports of anti-Asian incidents nationwide last year. About 44% took place in California.

Researchers say those numbers don't tell the full story. Sacramento native Christina Ong, a COVID-19 AAPI Project manager, said victims often don't recognize hate incidents unless they include violence. Some avoid reporting because of pride or masculinity.

Understanding stigmas around reporting is an important piece of the Harvard University-led COVID-19 AAPI Project, Ong said, which is studying the long-term effects of the pandemic on Asian Americans.

"We recognize that the aftermath of the pandemic is going to take decades to recover economically but also psychologically in terms of how we feel safe in this country," she said. "We know when we report numbers and the numbers increase, there's more government attention and there's more funding for certain policies to be put in place."

Last week that rang true as California officials authorized \$1.4 million to support Stop AAPI Hate. State legislators also introduced Assembly Bill 557, which would create a California Department of Justice hotline to report anti-Asian crimes.

Shum said the decision to seek help from the public led to an outpouring of support. It helped her realize how much the community appreciates her shop. It also sent a clear message to the culprit.

"Now I'm crying in my office for different reasons," Shum said.

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