Dear Fellow Buddhist Teachers,

Please behold my open letter with your awakened heart and the compassion of our ancient vows, as I know you will. This Tuesday’s horrific shooting in Atlanta has eight victims; six of them are Asian women, just like me. The event deeply shocked the Asian American community and me, so I am asking for your help on behalf of us all.

The **spike of violence against Asians** may have entered your radar only recently, but for us, it has been a lived reality starting the day Wuhan locked down. People in my community felt erased and did not know where to go. The mainstream media has only begun reporting these incidents in recent months.

While it is within reach for me to practice Metta and Tonglen, many of my fellow Asians living in the West might not be able to. The knee-jerk reaction is to feel hurt, marginalized, and fearful when they experience or witness anti-Asian attacks and see **vandalization reports of Asian Buddhist temples**. It breaks my heart to see my elderly friends pushed further to the margin by fear and isolation.

As an immigrant who went through English-speaking schools, I know there are countless people like you who see much more than just stereotypes when you see Asians like me, such as a model minority, a perpetual foreigner, or a potential Asian girlfriend when you meet us, but many of my fellow Asian expats might not know this. As someone who teaches Dharma alongside Westerners, I know there are non-Asian Buddhist leaders like many of you who pay daily homage to spiritual ancestors looking a bit like my grandfather, but that is not common knowledge among Asians.

As Korean American Zen priest Cristina Moon puts it, “we must start by reinvesting in the institutions where the Asian American community has historically developed strength.” I see great potential for healing and unity if members of our Asian community know that many non-marginalized people live to embody the teachings of Asian spiritual ancestors day in, day out, and breath in, breath out. I can imagine how much safer and included my Asian brothers and sisters would feel if they knew this, but the message needs to come from you.

My Dharma friends, I’m asking your help to bridge the rift created by the COVID-19 and racism dual pandemic. The practice of care and healing has as many faces as Avalokiteshvara. To name a few ideas, you might invite your Asian neighbors to honor your spiritual ancestors together, or publicly post Buddhist quotes in an Asian language. Perhaps your center or group might host ESL classes for immigrants or offer an afterschool homework place for their children to foster long-term connections. I’m confident that you and your community can envision much more, just as I am convinced that you are in a uniquely powerful position to do so.

In Chinese Buddhism, we have a saying, “One lamp can puncture a thousand years of darkness.” We have all vowed to be this lamp for ourselves and all sentient beings. Now is the time to bring our lights of wisdom and compassion to the greater society, starting by giving more Asians a caring hand from the Western Buddhist community.

Rebecca Nie

Founder of [M.V. Seon Sanctuary](http://mvseon.org), A Chinese Immigrant, and a Zen Master of the Korean Jogye Order

March 18, 2021