

saalt

COVID-19 & South Asian Americans

Hate From the State

Black, Indigenous, and other people of color are experiencing two deadly pandemics: racism and COVID-19. Communities across the globe are rising up in response to the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, Monika Diamond, and many more Black victims of police murder and structural violence.

A Pew study found that Asian and Black Americans are more likely than other groups to report negative experiences because of their race or ethnicity since the coronavirus outbreak.

In the U.S., there have been more than 3,000 reported incidents of hate violence targeting Asian Americans in April alone. A recent poll found that 60% of Asian Americans say they have seen or been affected by a xenophobic reaction to COVID-19.

In India, there has been a surge in the use of the Islamophobic hashtag #CoronaJihad. This follows the Delhi pogrom in February targeting Muslims which led to the deaths of at least 53 people. Equality Labs has found that #CoronaJihad appeared “nearly 300,000 times” and was likely “seen by 165 million people on Twitter.” These tweets have been cited in attacks, including [this one](#) against a paralyzed Muslim man in Valsad, Gujarat.

Eleven million undocumented immigrants have been left out of the CARES Act and unemployment benefits, including nearly 700,000 undocumented Indians and Pakistanis alone. Overall an estimated 16.7 million people who live in mixed-status households are left out, including 8.2 million U.S. born or naturalized citizens.

immigration

Nearly 525,000 foreign workers, including working class South Asian Americans with J-1 visas, have been exploited and barred due to this Administration’s extended ban on worker visas. With national unemployment rates higher than the 2008 “Great Recession”, as many as [250,000 guest workers could lose their legal status](#) by the end of June 2020.

As places of worship have been closed around the country, Jakara Movement, a Sikh community organization in the Central Valley in California, has been supporting R-1 visa religious workers with direct relief, given that many of these individuals are ineligible for unemployment benefits. Immigrant workers in gurdwaras already experience difficult working conditions, while dealing with below market wages, restriction of movement, and limited pathways to citizenship.

Hundreds of thousands of F-1 students from South Asian, African, and Latinx countries felt the chilling impact of the uncertainty around their decision to pursue their education in the U.S. after ICE issued a directive targeting international students. The directive was reversed a few days later - but the trauma from those decisions remain.

detention

As of June 10th, there are 1,714 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in detention facilities across the U.S.. Although the detained population has declined around 30% over the last 2 months, the current conditions mean that the virus will continue to be a crisis for the 26,000+ individuals in detention.

Prior to the pandemic, the number of South Asians crossing the Southern border was rising at an alarming rate, with many ending up in detention facilities, mostly in Texas and Louisiana. Since the pandemic, SAALT has continued to learn of South Asians in detention, who are in even more dire situations. Among those are at least six South Asian women at the Northwest Detention Center in Tacoma, WA, who described poor disinfection procedures, spreading toxic fumes from undiluted chemical cleaners through poorly ventilated areas.

Researchers at Johns Hopkins have found that incarcerated people are 550% more likely to get infected than the general population and three times as likely to die from COVID-19.

domestic violence

Nearly 40% of police officers commit domestic abuse and according to the RAINN, less than 25% of sexual assaults are reported to the police.

Interviewees from domestic violence shelters affirmed that survivors rarely call the police or even consider them to be safe options. ApnaGhar, in Chicago, and Maitri, in California, both explained that their staff discusses policing in relation to survivors regularly.

For many domestic violence survivors, financial instability remains a huge concern, in addition to being trapped at home with abusers, without space for private calls, meetings with counselors, or shelter safety: Daya has distributed over \$100,000 directly to survivors in cash transfers. The city of Houston granted a \$650,000 fund for their city’s women’s domestic violence shelters which Daya partners closely with to ensure holistic services for South Asian survivors.

anti-black racism & islamophobia

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