No to anti-Asian racism and xenophobia!

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The mass shootings in Atlanta, Georgia this week, whose victims were predominantly Asian American, have thrown into relief the surge in anti-Asian violence in the United States amid the relentless demonization of China by the US government.

The motives of the shooter remain unclear, but in the wake of the attacks, the US ruling class has only escalated its efforts to whip up anti-China sentiment, including open appeals by sections of the political establishment to anti-Asian prejudice and violence.

On Thursday, the House Judiciary Committee held a hearing on "Discrimination and Violence Against Asian Americans," which had been scheduled weeks in advance. The opening statement by the ranking Republican on the committee, Texas Representative Chip Roy, was a racist diatribe and open incitement to violence. Referring to the Chinese as "Chi-Coms," a racist slur, Roy declared, "I think they're the bad guys."

He added, "That's the reality of what I tend to refer to as the Chi-Coms. And I'm not going to be ashamed of saying I oppose the Chi-Coms."

He favorably invoked the legacy of lynch law in America, declaring, "There's old sayings in Texas about find all the rope in Texas and get a tall Oak tree." He demanded that the government "round up the bad guys" and "take out the bad guys."

Roy said violence against Asian Americans was being blown out of proportion and claimed that those who take exception to racist speech are engaging in censorship.

Instead of exposing anti-Asian racism, Roy demanded that Congress condemn China for "engaging in modern day slavery." He denounced China for "what they're doing to build up their military … throughout the Pacific" and accused the Chinese regime of seeking to "hide the reality of this virus," implying that COVID-19 was created as a bioweapon.

Roy's violent diatribe met with only meek protest from Democrats on the committee. Chairman Steve Cohen (Democrat from Tennessee) replied that "the incidents I mentioned in my opening statement were being spat at, slapped in the face, lit on fire, slashed with a box cutter, and shoved violently to the ground. … That's not speech."

Fighting back tears, Congresswoman Grace Meng accused Roy of "putting a bullseye on the back of Asian Americans across this country, on our grandparents, on our kids."

Otherwise, committee members were silent on Roy's racist incitement of violence.

In remarks Friday following a meeting with Asian American representatives in Atlanta, President Joe Biden hypocritically condemned the "scapegoating" of Asian Americans in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic. Notwithstanding his platitudes about "unity," Biden has continued and intensified the demonization of China carried out by his predecessor.

While foregoing Trump's crudely racist demagogy, including labeling COVID-19 the "Chinese virus" and "Kung Flu," Biden has continued in all fundamentals Trump's belligerent and militaristic policy toward China.

The Biden White House has expanded Trump's delisting of Chinese companies from US stock exchanges, left in place Trump's anti-China tariffs and continued to enforce Trump's restrictions on Chinese students.

At the same time, the Biden administration continues to promote Trump's false charge that China is engaged in "genocide" against its Muslim population, as well as the baseless claim that COVID-19 may have been created in a Chinese laboratory.

Across the entire US media and political establishment, there is a de facto agreement not to discuss the relationship between the rise of anti-Asian

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racism and Washington's pursuit of "great-power conflict" against China.

A case in point is the *New York Times*, which this week published an "editorial observer" column declaring that China poses a "threat" and asserting that the US must retain a "military and technological edge."

The same day, the *Times*' online edition carried an editorial titled, "Asian-Americans Are Scared for a Reason," which condemned "bigotry and demagoguing." But the editorial did not raise the obvious question: Do not the declaration of China as a "threat" and attempts to blame it for the deaths of over a half million Americans constitute racist incitement? To ask the question is to answer it, in the affirmative.

The entire sordid history of anti-Asian racism in America is intimately linked with the predatory aims of US imperialism. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 came amid the carve-up of China by the imperialist powers, accompanied by the fomenting of xenophobia directed against the "yellow peril."

In 1942, the US government ordered the internment of 120,000 Japanese Americans, claiming they were a national security threat based on their ethnicity.

Now, too, the surge in racist violence against Asian Americans coincides with a major escalation of the US conflict with China.

In a meeting with Chinese officials in Anchorage, Alaska on Friday, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken opened with a furious denunciation of China that in substance echoed the words of Republican Representative Roy, accusing China of carrying out "cyberattacks" against the United States and "economic coercion."

In a speech last month, Blinken identified China as America's central adversary, declaring China to be the only country with the "economic, diplomatic, military and technological power" to "challenge" the United States.

The efforts of the Trump and Biden administrations to demonize China have had a pernicious effect on public consciousness. Nine in 10 Americans now see China as a competitor or an enemy rather than a partner, according to a Pew Research poll conducted last month. Two-thirds of respondents have "cold feelings" toward Beijing, up from 46 percent just two years ago.

"The fact that both Republican and Democrat administrations have framed the relationship as strategic competition and highlighted numerous threats that China has posed, it's not surprising that more and more Americans … have an unfavorable view of China," noted Bonnie Glaser, director of the China Power Project at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

A central aim of the promotion of nationalism and chauvinism is to deflect internal social antagonisms outward by attempting to scapegoat an external enemy.

The American working class must come to the defense of Asian Americans who are being vilified as part of the drive by the ruling class to divide the working class while pursuing its homicidal policy of "herd immunity" in response to the pandemic.

Even as the world remains in the grip of the COVID-19 pandemic, the US and its allies are focusing their efforts not on eradicating the virus but on preparing for war. The Pentagon recently requested the doubling of funds for its Indo-Pacific command, while the UK's Johnson administration plans to increase the number of nuclear warheads in Britain by 40 percent.

The struggle to eradicate COVID-19 is inseparable from opposition to war, racism and xenophobia. The enemies of American workers are not their Chinese brothers and sisters, but the oligarchs who profit from the deaths of millions around the world. All efforts to blame China and Asian Americans for the pandemic, whose horrific toll is attributable to the greed, ignorance and criminality of the capitalist oligarchy, should be dismissed with contempt.

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