

Chief Justice Condemns 'Disease of Racism' Amid Attacks on Asian Americans

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Chief Justice Tani Cantil-Sakauye on Friday joined a chorus of state leaders in condemning recent acts of violence against Asian Americans, calling the attacks "reprehensible."

"Because of who I am as an Asian-Filipina, because of my parents, my aunties, friends and connected communities of color, these attacks feel more personal," Cantil-Sakauye wrote in a statement distributed by the Judicial Council.

"We can and must do better," the chief justice continued. "We deepen our understanding by advancing diversity and respecting our differences. In respecting our differences, we strengthen our social contract. In strengthening our social contract, we abide by the rule of law."

Cantil-Sakauye, appointed chief justice in 2010, was the first Asian American and second woman to lead California's judiciary.

"As we pass and approach many anniversaries relating to the pandemic, it is disheartening that while we have made progress on the virus, the disease of racism remains," Cantil-Sakauye wrote.

The comments follow a wave of high-profile attacks on Asian Americans across the country. Six Asian American women were among eight [killed](#) in shootings at three Atlanta-area spas Tuesday. San Francisco police on Thursday announced the arrest of a suspect in the [assaults](#) of two elderly Asian residents. An 84-year-old Thai immigrant died last month after he was shoved to the ground on a San Francisco sidewalk.

Gov. Gavin Newsom was scheduled to meet with Bay Area Asian American and Pacific Islander leaders this afternoon to address the violence.

Some state leaders have cited the violence in [urging](#) Newsom to appoint an Asian American or Pacific Islander to succeed Attorney General Xavier Becerra, who resigned Thursday to become secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Homeland Security. Some legal groups have endorsed Bay Area Assemblyman Rob Bonta, a Filipino American.

Over the last year Cantil-Sakauye and the California Supreme Court have spoken out publicly about racism

and the role the law and courts play in addressing it. Last June, the chief justice decried the "action and inaction" that led to the death of George Floyd while being detained by Minneapolis police.

"Justice is the first need addressed by the people in the preamble of our nation's Constitution," Cantil-Sakauye [wrote](#) in a [statement](#) at the time. "As public servants, judicial officers swear an oath to protect and defend the constitution. We must continue to remove barriers to access and fairness—to address conscious and unconscious bias, and yes, racism."

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