

Global Health in Action



PAINTING THE  
PICTURE  
OF

VIOLENCE

# CONTENTS

02

## **The Ukrainian War**

By Shaan Prasad

04

## **U.S. School Shootings**

By Tori Jackson

06

## **Global Mass Shootings**

By Aaliyah Deen Sesay

07

## **Domestic Violence**

By McKenna Kaufman

09

## **Student Voices**

By Suha Mohiuddin

11

## **AAPI Hate Crime**

By Makenzie Hicks

13

## **Additional Resources**

# EDITORIAL

Violence has become an ever-present and far-reaching threat to our society. In recent years, several significant explosions of violence have occurred that have acutely affected people across the globe. These instances do not just cause death, but also have long-lasting impacts on the communities in which they occur, such as health and wellbeing. In producing this issue of the Global Health in Action newsletter, we sought to highlight these events, their health implications for communities worldwide, and how we can work to minimize violence in our own neighborhoods.

As you are reading this, it is our hope that you use this edition as an opportunity to learn about the ways violence manifests itself every day and its long-lasting impact on the global community.

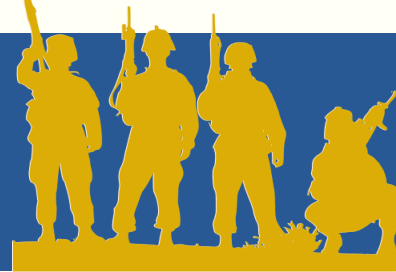
**- Makenzie Hicks and McKenna Kaufman,**  
Chief Editors

*Please take note that the content included in this edition details recent acts of violence that can be triggering or disturbing to some readers.*



# The War in Ukraine

By Shaan Prasad



Vika Kurilenko, a television screenwriter and journalist from Bucha, Ukraine, describes her first experience of the Russian invasion: "...When we were driving, we began seeing terrible explosions. The sky had begun to rumble, and there was black smoke... Our building eventually hit by a shell or mortar. The building itself did not collapse, but the water supply system was damaged. Then...no power, no water, no heating. On fourth day, telephone communication was cut." Her story is not unusual. Many other Ukrainian citizens experienced tremendous hardship and suffering through this conflict. But to truly appreciate these accounts, an understanding of the conflict is needed.

On February 24th, 2022, Russia launched a full-scale military campaign against Ukraine and its people, occupying 20% of Ukrainian land. Ukraine is in Eastern Europe, above the black sea, and under Russia. This invasion was influenced by eight years of conflict between Russia and Ukraine over the territories of Crimea, Donetsk, and Luhansk. This increased ethnic tension in those territories, as Russia armed and assisted pro-Russian separatists, promoted military buildup and claimed those regions independent from Ukraine.

The reasons for Russia's involvement in Ukraine are numerous, mainly resulting from Russia's historical, political, cultural, and economic relations with Ukraine. Russia states that its invasion was in self-defense and to prevent the genocide of Russian residents within these territories. However, its action violates Article 2(4) of the United Nations Charter. The charter states that member countries must "refrain from...the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state." Donetsk and Luhansk are recognized by Russia as independent states, and therefore argue that they are coming to their aid. But international law respects the authority of states only and does not recognize regions of states.

War crimes have also been committed that violated many articles of the Geneva Convention of 1949, detailing the breach of human rights of citizens in war. These include taking hostages, torture, deportation, and imprisonment. Additionally, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) is investigating claims made by Ukraine against Russia, as well as possible war crimes conducted by Russia in the past.

While Russia is not under the authority of the International Criminal Court (ICC), Ukraine is, and the ICC is now investigating offenses that have occurred on Ukrainian territory.

**"We began seeing terrible explosions. The sky had begun to rumble, and there was black smoke..."**

The war has negatively affected the livelihood of people in Ukraine. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), around 7,000,000 people have been forced to leave their homes to countries across Europe, and another 7,000,000 Ukrainians have been displaced internally. Civilian casualties have been reported to be around six thousand, with another eight thousand being injured from the conflict. Even institutions of healthcare and education have been attacked, such as the bombing of a maternity home in Mariupol.

Ukraine's economy has also suffered. It is estimated that by the end of the year, Ukraine's economy will shrink around 35 to 45 percent. This is combined with lower exports of grain (the main agricultural product of Ukraine), and steel, further damaging the economy. In response to these crises, the international community has responded. Countries, notably the United States, have promised billions of dollars in aid. Soldiers, weapons, vehicles, and fuel have also been provided by countries in Europe and the Mediterranean. The Russian-Ukraine conflict, it seems, has stakeholders across the globe.

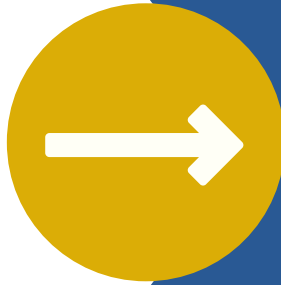




# The Impacts of the War in Ukraine On Health

By Shaan Prasad

**The Ukrainian war has affected the health of civilians in many ways.**



## Environmental Pollution



Pollution caused by the fumes of war and the contamination of water and soil has threatened the health of citizens as well.

## Infrastructure Collapse

Hospitals and ambulances have been attacked, putting a burden on the health systems. Destruction of these facilities and homes have prevented safe sanitation practices, leading to the increased spread of infectious disease.



## Food Insecurity



Food shortages from the conflict on farms and other food-producing centers have disrupted the nutrition of many citizens, including children.

## Involuntary Migration

Many refugees from the conflict have overwhelmed health systems of neighboring countries, and human trafficking is increasing as people leaving their homes are vulnerable to exploitation.



## Mental Distress

Physiological trauma and anxiety from the conflict, in addition to COVID-19 protocols, have negatively affected the mental health of citizens.



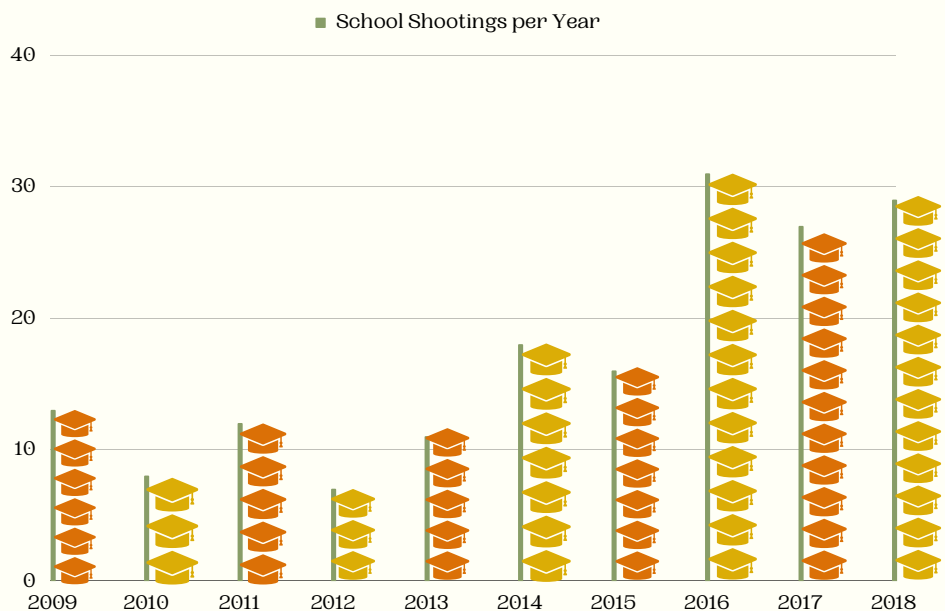
# School Shootings Stop Here: Ending Violence Within Our Schools

By **Tori Jackson**

“He shot my teacher and told my teacher good night and shot her in the head... I thought [the gunman] was going to come back to the room, so I grabbed the blood and I put it all over me.”

These are the tragic remarks of 11-year-old Miah Cerrillo. Miah Cerrillo was a fourth grader at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas; however, on May 24, 2022, Miah's life changed forever after she survived the Rodd Elementary School shooting. Miah was dropped off at school on the 24th like every other day, but little did she know that during an in-class movie 18-year-old Salvador Ramos would arrive and claim the lives of 19 students and 2 teachers.

One of the students who was shot that day was Miah's friend. To convince the shooter that Miah was lifeless as well, Miah covered herself with the blood. Fortunately, Miah's tactic worked, but she is now a survivor of this horrible incident. Nevertheless, Miah is not the same girl that was dropped off at school on the morning of the 24th. Miguel Cerrillo, Miah's father, claims to have “lost his baby girl” that day, and he says Miah “is not the same baby girl I used to play with.” Although fortunate to survive, the survivors of school shootings must live with a different type of pain this act of violence caused.



The Robb Elementary School shooting is a very fresh act of violence as it happened only a few months ago, but school shootings are nothing new. In fact, within the past ten years, there have been 180 school shootings in the United States. These shootings have taken the lives of hundreds of people and have injured even more. However, not much has been done to change these unfortunate outcomes.



One extremely notable school shooting happened on December 14th, 2012, in Newtown, Connecticut. This school shooting is known as the Sandy Hook Elementary school shooting, and the shooter's violent act took the lives of 20 students and 6 teachers. The crime was performed by 20-year-old Adam Lanza, who had access to a multitude of harmful weapons in his home. Adam's mother, Nancy Lanza, had legally owned several firearms that she would freely allow her son to use, but unfortunately, Adam's freedom and access to firearms turned into a tragedy.

Although these horrific acts of violence continue to traumatize student populations, United States gun laws have not changed in the past ten years. As of now, every state in the U.S can create its gun policies; for example, out of the 50 states, only 8 of them require individuals to register their firearms with the state. This statistic is extremely frightening because it is implying that within 42 of the states dangerous individuals can own firearms. With no enforcement to change these gun laws, many people, like school students, are in danger.



Additionally, though many argue that survivors of school shootings are lucky to be alive, the aftershocks of these traumatic events are anything but. Individuals who undergo the trauma of a school shooting are incredibly more likely to experience severe mental health issues. For instance, many survivors suffer from depression, anxiety, and PTSD; additionally, many children lose their motivation or want to learn because they associate school with violence. After a shooting on the Northern Illinois University campus, studies showed that a sample of student's PTSD symptoms increased from 20% to 49%. The traumatic effects of a school shooting can impact students for years. Nonetheless, with the right support, students can overcome the trauma caused by a school shooting.



School shootings are a major act of violence that several schools in the United States continue to experience. However, there are voices advocating for change. The Sandy Hook Promise foundation is a nonprofit that fights to protect the children of America from gun violence. Additionally, Protect Our Schools is an activist group that encourages people to spread the word about gun violence, register to vote, and advocate for change. You can be a part of the change as well by advocating for safety within United States schools and getting involved with nonprofits who fight for the end of violence within schools. In the end, violence only brings pain and sorrow, and we have the power to speak about the violence within this world.



# Mass Shootings

## U.S. vs the World

By Aaliyah Deen Sesay



Each person is representative of one person who was harmed by gun violence.

The U.S. mass shootings are all casualties. The international shootings are only those who were killed.

# Domestic Violence: “A Shadow Pandemic”

By McKenna Kaufman

“He smacked me hard, I hit the floor, and then he dumped his drink in my face,” Sheila, a domestic abuse victim from Nebraska, said in an interview with TIME magazine.

The abuse Sheila endured at the hands of her husband began in March 2020, early in the COVID-19 pandemic. After her husband’s trucking business crumbled with the economic downturn, he began using methamphetamine and entertaining “a consuming delusion” that Sheila was engaged in an extramarital affair. National lockdowns left Sheila and her four children with practically no way to escape the ongoing abuse.

On May 21, 2020, with a concussion and wounds covering her body, Sheila drove to meet a family friend under the guise that she was going to buy her husband cigarettes. She was connected with a local domestic violence shelter, pursued a divorce from her husband, and began her journey to healing.

Growing numbers of people around the world continue to face a second pandemic hidden amid the spread of COVID-19: skyrocketing levels of domestic violence. According to the American Journal of Emergency Medicine, international domestic violence cases have increased by 25 to 33 percent since the start of the pandemic. While deeply-rooted hypermasculine attitudes and gender roles contribute to this influx of violence, the financial stress, loss of “breathing space” and privacy, and isolation from friends and family worsened the violence abusers perpetrated against their own partners.

“COVID doesn’t make an abuser,” Jacky Mulveen, project manager of Women’s Empowerment and Recovery Educators (WE: ARE), an advocacy and support group in Birmingham, England, said. “But COVID exacerbates it. It gives them more tools, more chances to control you.”

Sheila, and many others around the globe, experienced the negative effects of COVID-19 restrictions firsthand. Communities around the world were largely unprepared to support the rising numbers of people facing violence in their own homes.

“There are good reasons for lockdowns to protect public health, but we have to recognize the collateral and unintended impacts as well,” Mariana Yang, clinical instructor at the Family and Domestic Violence Law Clinic at Harvard Law School, said. “That’s not to say that we should not have lockdowns, but there must be more focus on the resources to address those secondary impacts as well.”

Shelters for victims of domestic violence saw their capacity decrease with the implementation of social-distancing protocol, while people in need were trapped in their homes, unable to call help hotlines with their abusers staying at home all day.

The effects of these limitations in services and support for victims became especially visible in Latin American countries, a region that already has the highest rates of gender-based violence (GBV) in the world. Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, Peru, El Salvador, and Bolivia make up 81% of global GBV cases.

“A catastrophe is unfolding in Latin America,” Debora Cobar, Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean for Plan International, a humanitarian organization.

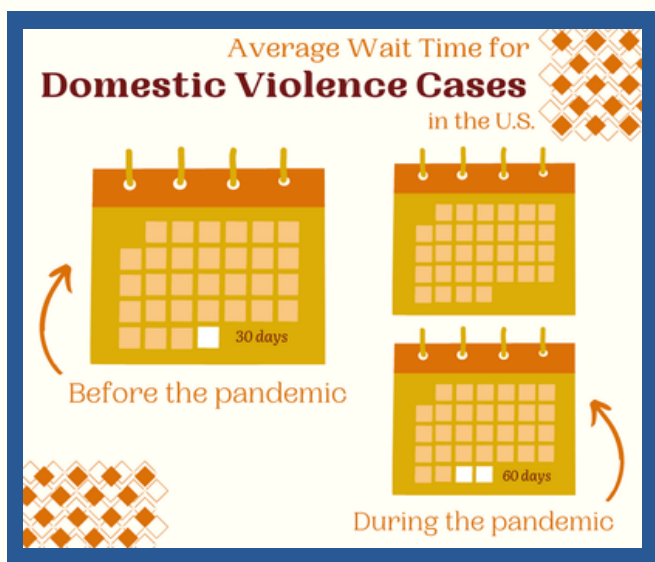
This catastrophe is linked to long-term adverse health impacts that will remain long after the pandemic is over. Women and others with uterus who experience domestic violence become vulnerable to an onslaught of gynecological problems, including unintended pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections (including HIV), and pregnancy complications. Victims also become susceptible to mental health issues, like anxiety disorders, depression, and addiction, in addition to the physical injuries they endure.

“More needs to be done to prioritize addressing violence against women in COVID-19 response and recovery efforts,” an article on the UN Women website stated. “Everyone has a role to play.”

# What is being done to address “the shadow pandemic”?

By McKenna Kaufman

The legal ramifications of the pandemic added another layer of difficulty for domestic violence victims seeking justice. According to [Yang](#), court proceedings being handled slowly and remotely became another deterrent to victims of an already underreported crime. Before the pandemic, it was routine for plaintiffs in divorce, child custody, or child support cases to wait 30 days to present their case, or motion, to the court. During the pandemic, timelines lengthened to 60 days, if not longer before plaintiffs would stand before a judge.



Those facing domestic violence may not always have access to legal services, or may not live in countries where domestic violence legislation is upheld, or even exists. According to [UN Women](#), while 158 countries around the world have laws targeting domestic violence, this does not mean that these laws are adequately implemented or enforced. An estimated [736 million women](#) have been or will be, subjected to physical or sexual violence in their lifetime.

However, recent efforts have been made on a global scale to target the heightened levels of domestic violence caused by the pandemic. As of October 2021, [52 countries](#) have integrated programs to address violence against women and girls into their COVID-19 relief plans. The European Union was one international entity that made strides towards lessening rates of domestic violence through a new

[proposal](#) released for International Women’s Day in March 2022. This statement called for the wide criminalization of rape and cyber-violence (including the non-consensual sharing of intimate images and harassment), and for the implementation of “a one-stop shop mechanism, meaning that all support and protection services would be located in the same place.”

Similar initiatives are underway across the state of Georgia and in Mercer University’s own community in Macon. [Family Violence Intervention Programs](#), 24-week programs organized by the Georgia Commission on Family Violence, are imposed when a defendant is sentenced for an offense involving family violence. These programs are “designed to rehabilitate family violence offenders” through accountability and addressing learned violent behaviors.

“Most research tells us that participants who complete FVIPs are less likely to commit new acts of violence or to violate restraining orders. Several studies show that FVIPs reduce recidivism by 36-85%,” according to the Commission’s [website](#). “Still, despite some promising signs, recidivism rates are high and FVIPs cannot guarantee safety for victims.”

**“The solution to violent crime in our community will be found in all of us working together on the same team.”**

This summer, Macon Mayor Lester Miller partnered with the Community Foundation of Central Georgia to provide [a series of grants](#) to local organizations dedicated to Macon Violence Prevention. Among these organizations was the [Crisis Line and Safe House of Middle Georgia](#), a program that received \$45,000 to fund their “Enhancing Safety for Victims of Domestic Violence” program, intended to protect victims and hold abusers accountable.

“The solution to violent crime in our community will be found in all of us working together on the same team,” Miller [said](#).



# Student Voices at **MERCER**

Opinions on Gun Violence, Its Causes, and Implications

**By Suha Mohiuddin**

"It is happening because there are no restrictions or background checks on who can buy guns."

**-Senior, Communications Major**

"Instances of gun violence barely make it beyond local news."

**-Junior, Marketing Major**

"I believe the reasons for gun violence are a mixture of mental health issues in the population as well as relaxed laws and policies that allow for easy accessibility to guns."

**-Senior, Psychology Major**

"Our schools should be safe environments, and parents and students should not have to worry about the potential dangers of gun violence."

**-Sophomore, Biology Major**

"One reason why gun violence happens is because of the narratives painted around who performs gun violence. Our society expects particular groups to act out violently using guns. So when we see it, we don't question or challenge those trends."

**-Senior, Global Health Studies Major**

"While having guns gives Americans a sense of security, it instills fear in the community. Be responsible, knowledgeable, and most importantly, be careful."

**-Junior, Chemical Commerce Major**

"We aren't even aware of most instances of gun violence because we have been so desensitized to it".

**-Senior, Communications Major**

"It is happening because we are not breaking the walls to alleviate income inequality, infrastructure, and resulting mental health problems in communities of color."

**-Senior, Global Health Studies Major**

"Guns have caused pains and wounds that are unrepairable."

**-Senior, Biology Major**

# How Can We Address **GUN VIOLENCE?**

By **Suha Mohiuddin**

"The issue can be reduced by setting higher minimum purchasing ages such as 21 as well as implementing cool down periods where people must wait a certain amount of days after purchasing it."

**-Senior, Psychology Major**

"We can address gun violence by implementing laws that make it more difficult to purchase and carry guns."

**-Senior, Global Health Studies Major**

"We can have proper protocols to allow people to purchase guns such as more in depth background checks."

**-Junior, Chemical Commerce Major**

"Any effective solution to gun violence has to address the process of acquiring arms, the geographical concentration of arms, the biopsychological states of people who engage in gun violence, and the repercussions assigned to different perpetrators of gun violence."

**-Senior, Global Health Studies Major**

"We need more people from younger generations in places of power so their voices can push for legislation and gun control, but most importantly, we, as a nation, need to take accountability."

**-Senior, Engineering Major**

"We can require background checks and training courses for people who want to buy and own guns and we can limit types of guns that are available."

**-Senior, Communications Major**

"We can address gun violence by passing legislation that inhibits weapons of war from getting in the hands of untrained individuals and fund mental health awareness/support treatment."

**-Senior, Art History Major**

# The COVID-19 Pandemic and Hate Crime Against AAPI

By Makenzie Hicks



"I asked for help, but nobody helped. Nobody moved," Noel Quintana said. Quintana was on the train headed to work in Harlem, New York City when a young, African American man approached him. Using a box cutter, the man cut Quintana's face from ear to ear.

As a Filipino-American, Quintana didn't want to think about the possibility that this violent attack could have occurred because of his race. However, with the growing reports of violence, he knew that this was a possibility.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, from lockdowns to mask mandates, the way that people live has been completely transformed. Although COVID-19 brought about millions of deaths, this pandemic impacted one community differently: the Asian and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community, who trace their ancestry back to Asia or the Pacific Islands.

Examining the violence the people in this community have experienced over the past few years shows a pattern of racism and discrimination that is unprecedented.

At the beginning of the pandemic, between the years of 2019 and 2020, there was a 77 percent increase in hate crimes against people in the AAPI community, with upwards of 9,000 incidents being reported.

Because the pandemic began in Wuhan, China, people started viewing those in the AAPI community as the source of the virus, making AAPI people the targets of hate-fueled violence.



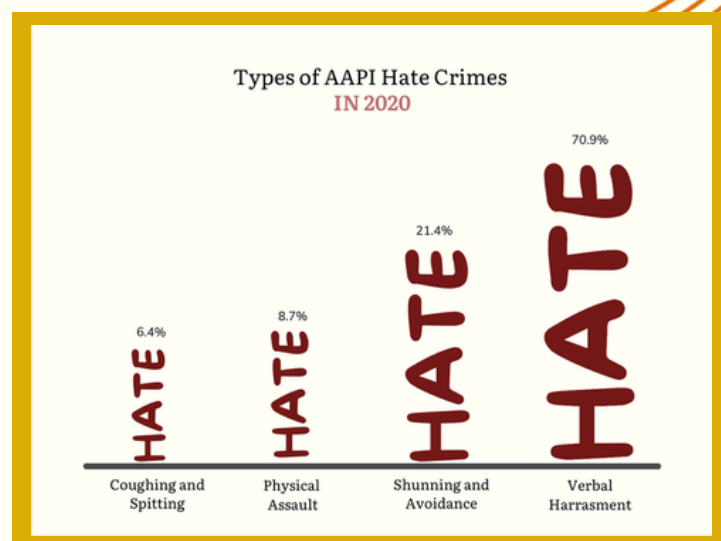
Government officials were some of the largest perpetrators of these attacks. Former president Donald Trump continually used the term “Chinese virus” and Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, used “Wuhan virus” when referring to COVID-19.

The nicknaming of the virus in this way led to hate speech and further association of AAPI people with COVID-19. The governor in Veneto, Italy, released a statement that Italy could handle the pandemic better because they paid better attention to hygiene while “we have all seen the Chinese eating mice alive.” In a similar instance, the education minister of Brazil tweeted that the pandemic was part of the Chinese government’s plans for world domination. Language like this only served to further perpetrate the discrimination that the people in the AAPI community were experiencing.

**"In fact, 74% of Asian women reported experiencing racism, discrimination, or both during the pandemic."**

There are a few instances that stick out specifically when discussing the violence AAPI communities experienced. In March of 2021, there was a shooting in an Atlanta spa where six of the eight victims were women of Asian descent. This shooting came among reports that most of these explosions of hate-based violence were experienced by women, who are already more likely to be the target of gender-based violence. In fact, 74% of Asian women reported experiencing racism, discrimination, or both during the pandemic. These violent acts include much more than just physical violence. It includes coughing, spitting, avoidance, and verbal altercation

Attacks like these are not just happening in the United States. In Spain, a Chinese American was beaten by two men and spent two days in a coma. In Texas, a Burmese family was attacked by a man with a knife. In Australia, Chinese students were attacked by two women. They were physically assaulted while their attackers yelled obscenities at them including telling them to “go back to China.” Unfortunately, these are just isolated examples of a larger issue that spans globally.




Those in the AAPI community continue to face discrimination and racism that largely has to do with the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2021, President Joe Biden passed legislation to help respond to these heightened rates of violence. The bill passed works to increase the accessibility of reporting hate crimes and creates a position in the Department of Justice (DOJ) that can expedite investigations of these crimes. It also supports campaigns on the prevention of hate crimes and resources for the public.

In addition, a movement called “#StopAsianHate” was started in 2021 to fight the discrimination and violence the AAPI community faced across the globe. Stop AAPI Hate is a coalition that was also formed that provides opportunities for victims to support hate crimes, educate about the history of AAPI Hate, and provide resources to the AAPI community.

# Additional Resources




## Podcasts

- The Spike in Gun Violence, Today, explained by Vox
  - Stop AAPI Hate, Together for Change
- 

## Books

- Another Day in the Death Of America: A Chronicle of Ten Short Lives by **Gary Younge**
  - Glimmer of Hope: How Tragedy Sparked a Movement by **The March for Our Lives Founders**
- 

## Movies and TV Shows

- Newtown (2016)
  - Putin's War: The Battle to Save Ukraine (2022)
  - And So I Stayed (2022)
- 

## Local Organizations

- Macon Violence Prevention
- Crisis Line and Safe House of Middle Georgia



**Makenzie Hicks**  
Chief Editor



**McKenna Kaufman**  
Chief Editor

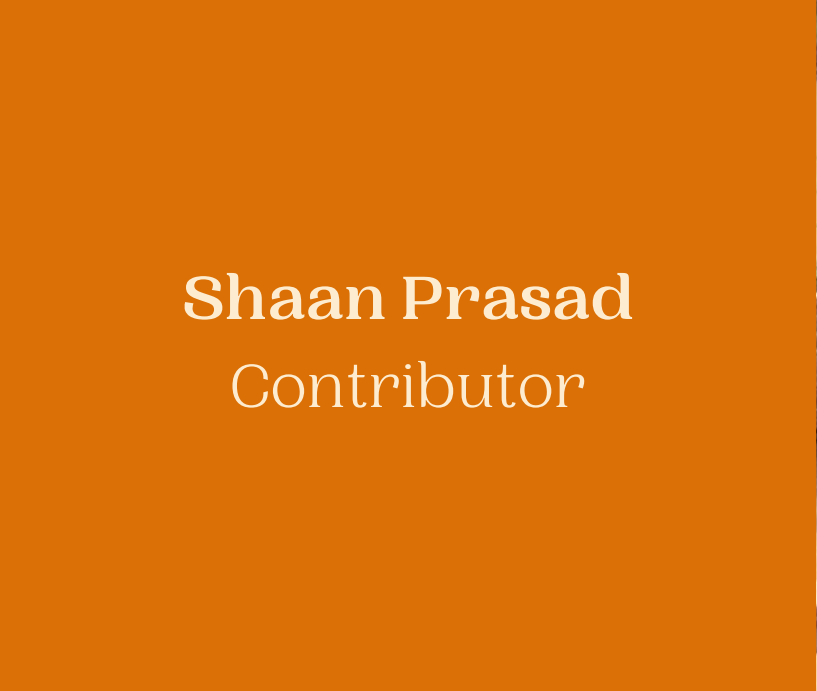


**Suha Mohiuddin**  
Contributor





Aaliyah Deen Sesay  
Contributor



Shaan Prasad  
Contributor



Tori Jackson  
Contributor

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank the International and Global Studies (IGS) faculty for their continued support of and commitment to the furthering of educational opportunities at Mercer.

## **Special thanks to:**

Dr. Chinekwu Obidoa  
Convener & Faculty Adviser

Dr. Amy Nichols-Belo  
Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of International and Global Studies

Ms. Bobbie Shipley  
Sr. Admin. Assistant/ Programs Coordinator IGS

Dr. Ryan Tokarz  
Assistant Professor

Dr. Rachael Goodman  
Assistant Professor

**Want to learn more about  
Global Health in Action?**

Follow us on Instagram @globalhealthinaction for  
more information and updates!