

OPINION

Seattle's Asian community asks: When will we be heard?

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**Asian community advocates are asking: “What must we do to be heard?”
“What other evidence do city leaders need before they take leadership?”**

The Asian community in Seattle urges city leaders to help stop the violence against us. We represent Asian American civil rights organizations, namely: the Chinese American Citizens Alliance Seattle Lodge, the Filipino American Political Action Group of Washington, the Japanese American Citizens League Seattle Chapter and OCA Asian Pacific American Advocates of Greater Seattle.

We've been rocked by the targeting of our elders, home invasion robberies, hate crimes in the Chinatown International District and the mockery of a woman's death by the Seattle police. These events have led to a high level of frustration in our community.

Anger and pushback are swirling. We cannot get answers from city officials, and the disrespect toward us is daunting. Victims and community members have asked the Seattle Police Department, “Are these hate crimes?” “Has the FBI been involved?” and many other questions. The standard response — “the information is confidential because the matter is under investigation” — is neither adequate nor helpful. It disregards the fact that the 14 home invasions reported thus far all targeted Asians.

It leaves us feeling that no one really cares — what else can we believe? While most robbers look for side or back entrances, an open window, an unlocked door, these home invaders break front doors. In two cases, they followed the victims for over a mile to their homes.

Then last week, an older white man [brought a sledgehammer and shattered nine large storefront windows](#) in Canton Alley at the Wing Luke Museum of the Asian Pacific American Experience in broad daylight, traumatizing the Wing Luke staff and causing over \$100,000 in damages. He says he did it because “the Chinese have ruined my life,” and “I came to Chinatown because something had to be done.”

Police were called immediately but initially told Wing Luke staff they couldn't respond to vandalism reports and to stop calling 911. The police eventually arrived to arrest him after a wait of nearly an hour, and he is now in jail and charged with a hate crime. These incidents embolden and give permission for racist perpetrators to assault and victimize our Asian community.

The community has taken plenty of action to get the city's attention.

On Sept. 5, the Asian community held a news conference to bring [attention to the home invasion robberies targeting Asians](#) in South Seattle. That same day, the Friends of Little Saigon held a protest in Little Saigon in the Chinatown International District against the continued crime and drug trafficking.

Salt was added to our community wound when a Seattle police officer was recorded mocking the value of Jaahnavi Kandula's life after she was hit and killed by an SPD vehicle —

an appalling show of indifference, disrespect and disregard for Asian American lives. Countless individuals have written letters asking our public officials to help our communities and stop the violence.

We will continue to ramp up our actions to get the city's attention, get safety training for our community members in several Asian languages, express our concerns, show up for victims and advocate for help from our elected officials to keep our Asian community safe.

Why must we work so hard to be heard? The truth is that we must work so hard because we don't have enough political power. It's politics, they say. It's about building community power. We, as Asians and other communities of color, are exhausted advocating for help, for justice and equity. It isn't fair, and it isn't right. The city has a longstanding [Race and Social Justice Initiative](#). When crime data, and not political power, is the driver for police action, that is the day we can expect justice.

Finally, we know that the safest areas of Seattle are those with the greatest resources, not those with the greatest police presence. More must be done to increase resources in South Seattle and the CID.

The mayor's vision of [One Seattle](#) is No Seattle as long as our community continues to be terrorized and victimized.

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