

## **The Rage of One Gunman Once Distressed Korean-American Students**

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FAIRFAX -- A little more than a month has passed since the massacre at Virginia Tech. Classes are in session again and the victims have been buried, rest in peace. But the catastrophic incident remains on the minds of Korean-American students.

George Mason University's Korean-American students were horrified when they heard that the gunman was of the same ethnicity. Students had many initial reactions after hearing about the massacre, but they were not solely thinking about the lives of the victims and their families.

"I was shocked, sad and shameful. I felt like people were going to judge us," said James Park, 19, a freshman majoring in art. "I even felt like people were staring, but then again, for some reason I was really paranoid that day."

In effect, Korean-American students could not help but to also think about how other people would react to Koreans at their school. Like Park said, the students were afraid about being judged.

After the tragic event on Sept. 11, 2001, many Middle Eastern students experienced hostility from the community. Korean-American students started to worry about what was going to happen when school was in session the next day knowing that Middle Eastern students have received uncomfortable treatment following Sept. 11.

"The environment at the school the day after was a little different," said Jun Kim, 20, a sophomore majoring in Spanish. "The school as a whole seemed kind of gloomy in a sense. I could overhear people talking about it everywhere."

A college is supposed to provide not only education but also a safe zone for students to live and learn. But April 16 people started to question their safety and the security at school when Seung-Hui Cho killed 32 innocent students in their Virginia Tech classrooms and dorm room.

GMU was named “Most Diverse University in Nation” in 2005 by the Princeton Review. Koreans were one of the nationalities most represented. With so many Koreans attending GMU, what is the school doing to help the students feel safer and unthreatened?

“I didn’t see anything different except for a few more campus police around the Johnson Center the day after it happened. Besides that, we’ve always had cops around campus,” said Dan Kim, 19, a freshman majoring in psychology. “I think everything is being secured the same way it’s always been. I guess it’s not necessarily a bad thing, but you kind of expect something after something crazy like that happens you know?”

Although Korean students did not directly demand higher security, it is a given. Students and the families of these students will always expect to feel secure and protected in their schools.

“We’re doing the best we can to help the students cope. We want to help students feel safer. I think the most important thing is that we’re still learning from this incident,” said Ric Chollar, the interim director of Office of Diversity Programs and Services.

A school like George Mason can only do so much to help the students feel safer. No one can predict the future or plan ahead for what may happen in a matter of seconds.

GMU does its best to provide the necessities and attention to those Koreans or any students that may need it. But how much care do Korean-Americans at GMU actually need?

“I was worried to be at school at first because I was a Korean, but I’m kind of over it now. I heard a joke about Tech’s shooting the other day actually. I guess it shows that life just goes on,” said Dan Kim.

Korean-Americans found it difficult to deal with at first. Worrying about prejudice and hostility was to be expected but life just goes on and people start to carry on with their daily routine. Even though Mason offered help, it seems that Korean-Americans are now attending school with the same attitude they had before the tragic incident.

According to ODPS, there have not been any prejudice issues at GMU towards Koreans. Korean-American students, once distressed over the wrath of one gunman, understand that they cannot dwell on this forever.

“I don’t think this incident has truly changed the community of the school. I think it’s another thing where people get emotional. Yeah, it was hard at first, but it’s always hard at first. It was hard when September 11 happened, wasn’t it?” said Steven Chun, 21, a junior majoring in history. “After time passes everyone just forgets. We were all Hokies yesterday. Sad truth.”