

Our Dharma Demands Us To Fight For Racial Justice & A Better Way Forward

We the undersigned Indian American community organizations and leaders are joining hands to address the very real challenges that we are all facing today in America and to be a part of a process that affects real, positive change in our respective communities.

Our nation is in the beginning phase of dealing with a deadly global pandemic that has stolen over 100,000 lives in the U.S. in just a few short months. Add to that once in a century phenomena, the recent murders of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Dreasjon “Sean” Reed, and George Floyd – innocent, unarmed African Americans – which has sparked a nationwide movement. These senseless killings have brought into stark reality that it is our duty to cure the chronic disease of racism, bigotry and police brutality. Indian Americans honor those innocent lives taken, which are sadly the latest examples in a long pattern of injustice faced by African Americans.

The victims are the sons and daughters, uncles and aunties, and the grandchildren of someone who loves them.

We also stand with the brave men and women of law enforcement who are doing their jobs properly, as they are on the front lines responding to the violent, criminal elements that have boiled over from the peaceful protests and demands for change that Indian Americans support at our core.

Reflecting on all the violence that, from the systemic to the organic, and from that which emerges from understandable frustration to that which is fueled by ulterior motives, we must be reminded that the ideals of **ahimsa** (compassion and non-harming), **satya** (truth), **viveka** (discernment), and **dharma** (selflessness and righteousness) are more urgent today than ever before. Violent reaction to police brutality will only continue a cycle of destruction that will leave all of us blind and postpone the very change that is necessary today.

The American system is being bent, it is being tested. Indian Americans can straighten the arc of justice by coming together as engaged and thoughtful Americans, lending our voices to those suffering from hate and injustice, offering our helping hands to those communities hardest hit, and pushing elected officials to enact lasting solutions.

Now more than ever, we need to bring our respective **Hindu, Jain, Buddhist, and Sikh dharma** to the forefront of our advocacy and our daily interaction with friends, neighbors, coworkers and communities at large. We believe that Indian Americans can be powerful agents of change and ambassadors of peace and pluralism to help ensure that the promise of America – equality, freedom, and dignity – is fulfilled for all Americans.

Our teachings remind us that we are united by a shared divinity. That compassion and truth must be the foundation of our moral compasses, and that the exercise of discernment and

selflessness in our interactions with the world is the only path that can bring about universal well-being. These are powerful principles for us to practice through service aimed towards justice and the betterment of all people.

Here are a few, simple ideas that we can all put into practice in our daily lives:

- Acknowledge that **racism is real**, and that it exists in our communities in spite of our diversity. We must be mindful of our implicit biases and work through them, constantly reminding ourselves what our sacred teachings tell us -- that we are all embodied spirits. If you come to realize that you don't have a diverse group of friends in your orbit, get to know people of different walks of life and backgrounds than yours and embrace them for who they are as individuals.
- Bridge the age divide, or any other divides, through conversation to work on constructive and viable solutions to eradicate the pressing challenge of institutionalized racism. There is much for older generations to understand from young people who have lost faith in the systems' ability to self-correct as there is for young people to learn from the experiences of adults who have witnessed historic systemic change.
- Donate or volunteer your time, skills, and resources to your local charities, clinics, and or philanthropic programs working to mentor, strengthen, and empower the most vulnerable amongst African American and other communities in need. We recognize that there are Indian Americans who do this already, and that's a wonderful thing. Given our community's size, growth, and influence, more Indian Americans need to answer the call and have a lasting impact on our society.
- Reach out to local law enforcement to cultivate relationships so that they recognize the diversity of the communities they are obligated to serve and protect, and to better hold them accountable if and when they fall short.
- Call on your elected leadership at every level of government and demand they work toward institutional change. Change starts from the bottom up.

We can do these things now, starting today. We are issuing this call to action to ask you to join in this fight for what is right because we believe in America, and we believe Indians in America add value and really strengthen the communities in which we live.

We can draw inspiration from past examples of African American and Indian friendship, where a fierce commitment to shared principles paved the way for both communities to tackle their respective struggles. Mahatma Gandhi's **satyagraha** and its demonstrated success in India's independence had a profound influence on Martin Luther King, Jr. and the American civil rights movement 60 years ago. *Satyagraha*, while deeply informed by the Bhagavad Gita's wisdom, was also influenced by American intellectuals Henry David Thoreau's and Booker T.

Washington's ideas on civil disobedience and self-empowerment. Booker T. Washington's works also compelled Mahatma Gandhi to evolve from his own initial prejudices against Africans. American civil rights leader W.E.B. Dubois cultivated a deep friendship built upon a cooperative exchange of ideas with Indian freedom fighter Lala Lajpat Rai to oppose what they deemed as the major obstacle of global white European hegemony to civil rights in America and the sovereignty of India.

There are many such stories of African American and Indian friendship, philosophical exchange, and cooperation. So as Indian Americans, we need only look back at the last century to know that where Indian and American ideas have intersected and manifested into action, historic and transformational change for the better has been the result.

Let us honor this legacy and once again rise to the occasion for the sake of future generations.

Yours in dharma,

ORGANIZATIONS

AMERICAN HINDU WORLD SERVICE (FULTON, MD)

ARSHA VIDYA GURUKULAM (SAYLORSBURG, PA)

AWARENESS INSTITUTE (GRAND RAPIDS, MI)

BANGLADESH HINDU BUDDHIST CHRISTIAN UNITY COUNCIL

BANGLADESH HINDU BUDDHIST CHRISTIAN UNITY COUNCIL, USA (NEW YORK, NY)

DURGA TEMPLE OF VIRGINIA (FAIRFAX STATION, VA)

FEDERATION OF JAIN ASSOCIATIONS IN NORTH AMERICA (MILPITAS, CA)

GLOBAL HINDU HERITAGE FOUNDATION (DALLAS, TX)

GLOBAL INTERFAITH WASH ALLIANCE

HINDU AMERICAN FOUNDATION (WASHINGTON, D.C.)

HINDU AMERICAN POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE (HOUSTON, TX)

HINDU CHARITIES FOR AMERICA (AUSTIN, TX)

HINDU JEWISH COALITION (PRINCETON, NJ)

HINDUS OF GREATER HOUSTON (HOUSTON, TX)

INDIA AWARENESS FOUNDATION (ALPHARETTA, GA)

INDIA DEVELOPMENT AND RELIEF FUND, INC (NORTH BETHESDA, MD)

INDIAN SUBCONTINENT PARTITION DOCUMENTATION PROJECT INC. (NEW YORK, NY)

INDIASPORA (WASHINGTON, D.C.)

INDO-AMERICAN COMMUNITY FEDERATION (FREMONT, CA)

INDO-AMERICAN KASHMIR FORUM (BOSTON, MA)

INTERFAITH DIALOGUE ASSOCIATION (GRAND RAPIDS, MI)

INTERFAITHSHAADI-ORG (SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA, CA)

JAIN CENTER OF NORTHERN CALIFORNIA (MILPITAS, CA)

JAIN SOCIETY OF METROPOLITAN CHICAGO (BARTLETT, IL)

PUNJAB FOUNDATION (SAN JOSE, CA)

KASHMIR HINDU FOUNDATION (PLESANTON, CA)

MINNESOTA HINDU MILAN MANDIR (FARMINGTON, MN)

NETWORKING FOR HINDU PROFESSIONALS SFL (FORT LAUDERDALE, FL)

OVERSEAS VOLUNTEER FOR A BETTER INDIA (HOUSTON, TX)

QUEER HINDU ALLIANCE

SEWA-SOUTH ASIAN INDIAN FAMILY WELLNESS (MN)

SV LOTUS TEMPLE (VA)

US IMPACT MN (MINNEAPOLIS, MN)

INDIVIDUAL LEADERS (TITLES/AFFILIATIONS ARE FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY)

ANSHU VASHISHTHA

UCSF AND CENTER FOR INNER RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT
MOUNTAIN VIEW, CA

DEVESH VASHISHTHA, MD, MS

SEATTLE, WA

DR. BHAVIN PARIKH

PAST PRESIDENT, INDIAN ASSOCIATION OF SACRAMENTO;
BOARD OF DIRECTOR, OCA - ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN ADVOCATES
SACRAMENTO, CA

DR. PIYUSH C. AGRAWAL

PAST PRESIDENT, THE ASSOCIATION OF INDIANS IN AMERICA
WESTON, FL

GIRA VIBHAKAR

COMMUNITY MEMBER
HANOVER, MN

GIRISH SHAH

EX-PRESIDENT, JAIN CENTER OF NORTHERN CALIFORNIA
CAMPBELL, CA

DR. GONUGUNTLA V NAIDU

COMMUNITY MEMBER
ST. LOUIS, MO

GOPALAKRISHNAN RAMAMURTHY

COMMUNITY MEMBER/RETIRED ENGINEER
WEST WINDSOR, NJ

HEMA PATEL

VOLUNTEER, HINDU AMERICAN FOUNDATION NCAL CHAPTER
SAN RAMON, CA

ILLYASHA PEETE

COMMUNITY MEMBER/FITNESS COACH
LIVERMORE, CA

LALITHA MANI

AICC RETD
SOMERSET, NJ

MAHESH KALLA

NATIONAL MEDIA DIRECTOR, HINDU SWAYAMSEVAK SANGH USA
WEST CHESTER, PA

MANJU RAMACHANDRAN

ALL STARS HELPING KIDS
MOUNTAIN VIEW, CA

MUKUND M KUTE

HINDU SWAYAMSEVAK SANGH
PHILADELPHIA, PA

NANDA SUBBARAO

VOLUNTEER/BALVIHAR SEVIKA
CHINMAYA MISSION CRANBURY
PLAINSBORO, NJ

NIPANK N. SHROFF

HIFU UROLOGY CENTER OF TX, PLLC
PLANO, TX

PARANGKUSH SUBEDI

BHUTANESE COMMUNITY IN RIVERDALE
GREENBELT, MD

PRABAL & SWAPNA MUKHERJI

COMMUNITY MEMBERS
DIX HILLS, NY

PROFESSOR RITA D. SHERMA

DIRECTOR, GTU MIRA & AJAY SHINGAL CENTER FOR DHARMA STUDIES, GTU
BERKELEY, CA

RAM HARDOWAR

HINDU PRIEST
JAMAICA, NY

RAM RAMACHANDRA

PAST PRESIDENT, AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF PHYSICIANS OF INDIAN ORIGIN
FREMONT, CA

RAMEN NANDI

BOARD MEMBER, INDIAN SUBCONTINENT PARTITION DOCUMENTATION PROJECT INC.
JERSEY CITY, NJ

RAO GONDY

CITI STOP
LAS VEGAS, NV

RICHA S.

COMMUNITY MEMBER
BRIDGEWATER, NJ

SACHI DASTIDAR

DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR
BELLEROSE, NY

SANJANA CHOPRA

SENIOR FACULTY, ART OF LIVING FOUNDATION
FREMONT, CA

SHASHI RAO

COMMUNITY MEMBER
PLAINSBORO, NJ

SHOBHA VORA

JAIN CENTER OF NORTHERN CALIFORNIA
SAN JOSE, CA

STEPHANIE SQUIBB

COMMUNITY MEMBER
GRAND RAPIDS, MI

VAJENDRA DESAI

BOARD OF TRUSTEE, WEST MICHIGAN HINDU TEMPLE
GRAND RAPIDS, MI

VED CHAUDHARY

FORMER PRESIDENT, EDUCATORS SOCIETY FOR HERITAGE OF INDIA
MORGANVILLE, NJ

VED NANDA

CHAIR, BOARD OF TRUSTEES, HINDU UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA;
DISTINGUISHED UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR, UNIVERSITY OF DENVER;
CHAIR, BOARD OF TRUSTEES, HINDU TEMPLE AND CULTURAL CENTER OF THE ROCKIES
DENVER, CO

VENKAT KRISHNASWAMY

PARTNER, KUBHERA
PRINCETON, NJ

VIMALKUMAR PATEL

RETIRED PROFESSOR
INDIANAPOLIS, IN

VISHAL AGARWAL

TRUSTEE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL, HINDU SOCIETY OF MINNESOTA
MAPLE GROVE, MN

YELLOJI-RAO K MIRAJKAR

HINDU SWAYAMSEVAK SANGH USA
PISCATAWAY, NJ