

Newswire

INTERNATIONAL

lssue 11

Caste in the U.S. - an update

INDIA CIVIL WATCH INTERNATIONAL

California State University now recognizes caste as a protected category against discrimination. The announcement. made following a unanimous vote in late January was a major victory for Dalits and people of oppressed caste groups, who face routine discrimination from upper caste have but individuals little recourse since caste is not widely understood as a form of active discrimination and structural violence. As Insidehighered.com reports:

While caste is banned in India and other South Asian countries, the system of social hierarchy still exists in practice, and some California State students of Asian reported descent have encountering caste discrimination campus. The system-wide on policy, which will cover all 23 campuses, will allow students to anti-Dalit bias, report or discrimination against what has historically been the most oppressed caste. The move comes after years of activism among Dalit students, including Prem Pariyar, a Nepali Dalit social worker and alum of California State University, East Bay, who first advocated for caste protections in the department of social work. Source

Read more about caste in the United States

Why Is Caste Inequality Still Legal in America?

Paula Chakravartty & Ajantha Subramanian, New York Times. May 25, 2021.

Title VII and Caste Discrimination

Charanya Krishnaswami & Guha Krishnamurthi, Harvard Law Review. June 20, 2021.

Congressional Briefing on Hindu Extremists' Call for Genocide of Muslims

On January 12th, ICWI cosponsored Congressional а Briefing to bring scrutiny to recent public calls for genocide of India's Muslims by leading figures of the Hindutva movement. The Modi regime has remained silent and has not condemned or distanced itself from these public calls for genocide, signaling its own formidable investment in a politics of anti-Muslim bigotry.

Here is a recording of the Congressional Briefing, in which experts describe **the clear and present danger to India's 200 million Muslims** after open calls to commit a genocide of at least two million Indian Muslims was given at a Hindu religious gathering in December.

You can also watch other briefings co-sponsored by ICWI, including:

A Congressional Briefing on "Ant i-Muslim Violence in Tripura and Police Targeting of Lawyers and Journalists

A Congressional Briefing on "Ind ia Among Top Persecutors of Ch ristians: ICC Report"

A Congressional Briefing with Fa milies of Prisoners of Conscienc e in India

Congressional Briefing: Faceboo k Platforms Hate in India: Hauge n Revelations

Congressional Briefing: Persecut ion of Dalits in India

Congressional Briefing on Stripp ing Muslims of Citizenship: Assa m NRC February 2022

#Resign Modi

Also in this issue

- 1. 2021 Year in Review
- 2. Spotlight: New York Taxi Workers Alliance (NYTWA), by Rana Khan.
- 3. Professor Chinnaiah Jangam, in conversation with Rana Khan.
- 4. Chile Presente! By Mamatha Kodidela.

Breaking News!

New Digital Forensics Report identifies the Indian State behind multi-year efforts to incriminate its political opponents, notably those imprisoned under the Bhima Koregaon case. *Sentinel Labs* refers to the threat actor as 'Modified Elephant.' This is a significant development in the ongoing investigation, which you may recall included four reports by another digital forensics firm *Arsenal Consulting*.

"We observe that ModifiedElephant activity aligns sharply with Indian state interests and that there is an observable correlation between ModifiedElephant attacks and the arrests of individuals in controversial, politically-charged cases."

India Civil Watch International

Newswire Archives Contact us by email: icwi@indiacivilwatch.org Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/indi acivilwatch Twitter: @indiacivilwatch



2021 - year in focus

2021 began with the Farmers protests growing in strength and the Indian government ramping up its brutal crackdown on lakhs of protestors camped around Delhi. At the same time that the Indian state and its media minions - increasingly referred to as the 'Godi' media - ramped up their demonization of protesting farmers, accusing them of not being "real" farmers, of being terrorists, anti-nationals and so COVID-19 deepened on. its impact on the lives of millions of Indians. Spreading rapidly, the pandemic infected thousands across the country and took hundreds of lives on a daily basis, in an aggressive second wave. Thousands struggled to obtain life-saving oxygen, in short supply because the government dilly-dallied over the past year when it should have been shoring up supplies on an emergency footing. Instead, the Modi regime - firmly committed to a privatesector led approach to healthcare nevertheless proved itself rather useless even on this front. Having wasted eight months to invite bids for production, the government had pretty much left the country deeply undersupplied with this crucial resource in 2021. So many people died simply because they did not have oxygen to help them breathe as the virus overwhelmed their lungs and respiratory systems. Heartbreaking scenes were witnessed across the country, of people desperately trying to breathe as a callous regime announced without a shred of decency that "no deaths due to lack of oxygen were specifically reported by states and UTs the second Covid-19 during wave," provoking widespread outrage.

The acute undersupply of oxygen in the country is directly attributable to the aggressive privatization of healthcare, and the transfer of critical responsibilities such as the production and supply of oxygen to the private sector.

We recall the horrifying situation that unfolded in Uttar Pradesh in 2017 when despite immensely courageous the efforts of Dr. Kafeel Khan to save dozens of babies in hospitals as oxygen supplies dwindled, the brave doctor himself found arrested. targeted and maligned by the government of state the notorious Hindutva extremist Ajay Kumar Bisht (who calls himself Yogi Adityanath). The Modi regime, like the Bisht regime in UP views critics of its policies as dangerous threats. In this the Modi regime enjoys the solid support of a pliant corporate media, with news hosts using their platforms to attack anybody critical of the government.

While ordinary Indians across the country struggled to find hospital beds, or obtain oxygen, as hospitals were overwhelmed and healthcare workers pushed physical their and to psychological limits with the scale and intensity of the unfolding catastrophe, the country's billionaires guietly fled. Using private jets and their wealth, they quickly found their way to wealthy countries. Most notorious among this lot, Adar Poonawala, the CEO of the Serum Institute of India, the world's leading manufacturer of vaccines which produces the AstraZeneca/Oxford based Covid-19 vaccine under license in India, fled the country after claiming that he felt threatened by critics who lambasted his company's unscrupulous practice of charging the highest rates per shot to Indians, and raking in huge profits from the tragedy. States already bear

roughly half of their regular and two-thirds of development expenditure on their own, with the central aovernment constricting support over several years, in order to force states to seek foreign investment. With the pandemic, already cash-strapped state governments have been unable to meet the needs of their populations forcing people to seek emergency aid from private sources, and throwing them to the mercy of all sorts of quackery and criminal markets in fake drugs and treatments.

While billionaires fled on private jets, foreign investment capital also fled the country in 2021. With no feasible emergency plans in while adamantly place, committed to intensifying the neoliberal assault on agriculture, the Modi regime has all but declared an all out war on the toiling people of India. Nothing could be more stark than the image of police barricades and roadblocks set up to prevent farmers from reaching Delhi, with increasingly ferocious verbal assaults and incitements on farmers by the middle class, upper corporate media angered by the fact that the country's peasantry dared to defy the regime's destructive policies. But marked while 2021 the intensification of Modi's war on combining India's people brutality protesting against farmers with callousness and sheer snobbery in the face of the worst crisis to afflict the country in more than half a century, it also marked another powerful moment in a history that remains open, ripe with revolutionary and possibility. India's farmers scored one of the most spectacular victories against the dastardly regime and its multi-billion dollar Godi media corporate behemoth, and after two years of intense struggle, with over 700 martyred farmers, the Modi government

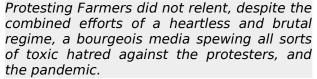
bowed down, and repealed the three farm laws that lay at the center of the farmers' protests in November. Yes, as we hesitantly walk into 2021, wary of the ongoing struggles with COVID-19 and Modi, let us draw inspiration from the lakhs of rural Indians who have without fail shown us a new path forward, a path of uncompromising struggle for justice, dignity and rights.



Scenes such as this occurred across the country as people desperately sought life-saving oxygen and vaccines, often with little success as hospitals were overwhelmed, already under-stocked vital supplies like oxygen.

Thousands of dead bodies were cremated along the Ganges and scores of other sites, as desperate people across the country struggled with the horrific situation with inadequate supplies, rampant abuse, and soaring mortality made worse by a callous and heartless regime that refused to increase emergency spending, but continued its efforts to worsen the situation by attacking minorities, refusing to release political prisoners suffering in prisons, and going after critics.







By the end of the year, India's Farmers WON! And so, India's working people won! Even if the path ahead remains full of danger, as the regime will certainly try to push back, this was a beautiful end to an otherwise challenging year for the people of the country.

Spotlight: New York Taxi Workers Alliance - NYTWA

The New York Taxi Workers Alliance (NYTWA) was formed in 1998 and is now over 28,000members strong, being the only union in the entire country to have unified drivers of all For Hire Vehicles (FHVs), including those of the iconic yellow taxis, Uber, Lvft. and limousines. It describes itself as "multi-ethnic. multigenerational" union. which "builds power for one of the most visible, yet vulnerable immigrant workforces in the city of New York."

According to Bhairavi Desai, the Founder and Executive Director of the NYTWA, the union stands committed to "a progressive, internationalist, democratic labor movement that stands in steadfast solidarity with workers' movement of the U.S. and across the world." The union also has the distinction of providing the first collective bargaining model in which yellow cab drivers have been recognized as independent contractors.

NYTWA has taken part in several campaigns and engaged in collective action, some of which has also been directed at nontraditional worker issues like exmayor Rudy Giuliani's "Quality of Life" campaigns which were against the poor and racialized communities and anti-war protests. It has protested the ant-Sikh and anti-Muslim racism and struck against Trump's also 'Muslim ban'. Recently, it has started a Racial Justice and Civil Rights Initiative to address the long-standing issue of race-based refusals.

Its unique, membership-driven organizing model has helped NYTWA with success in its campaigns. Members are actively involved in the organizing committee, which is the decision-

By Rana Khan

making body of the organization.

It has celebrated some big victories: in 2012, NYTWA succeeded in establishing a Health and Disability Fund for drivers. This was the first for taxi drivers nationwide: in 2018, Uber and Lyft union members were recognized as employees and hence eligible for Employment Insurance (EI). which was a big boon for these drivers affected bv the pandemic; and in 2019, the minimum wage was negotiated and fixed at 17.42 per hour for Uber/Lyft drivers, and a cap was put on the total number of FHV on the streets of New York.

However, the most recent success of the NYTWA has been that of its Medallion Debt Forgiveness campaign. This campaign sought to alleviate the issue of drivers' debt. This had seen, in recent years, many drivers driven to despair and in some cases, suicide. But after three years of direct action that also saw, from Sept 2021 six weeks of a round -theclock mobilization and a hunger strike which ended on November 3rd, NYTWA won a guarantee from New York City re-structured medallion on loans and affordable monthly payments for owner-drivers.

This high-profile win saw deep support for NYTWA's campaign from all sections of society, including the endorsements of the New York City Congressional delegation and that of more than 70 New York State and City Elected Officials.

NYTWA hopes to continue its advocacy for individual drivers and provide them with support and services including legal, financial management, and health services, while carrying on its campaign for structural change in the industry.







Learn more about NYTWA:

Allies can contact New York Taxi Workers Alliance here: Website:

https://www.nytwa.org/mission -history

Phone: 718-706-9892 Email: media@nytwa.org Biju Matthew, Member, Organizing Committee,can also be contacted at biju2you@gmail.com

Chinnaiah Jangam

In conversation with Rana Khan

Chinnaiah Jangam is an associate professor at the Department of History, Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada. His is an inspiring success story, having overcome acute social and economic barriers growing up in India. Chinnaiah is actively involved in advocacy of social justice, human rights, anti-caste politics and Dalit identity, and in creating awareness of caste realities and their impact upon the North American academic world. He is also the author of Dalits and the Making of Modern India, published in 2019. He translated a seminal Dalit poetry text Gabbilam (Bat): A Dalit Poem, out from Yoda Press in April 2022.

How would you describe yourself? What motivates you to do the work that you do, both as an academic and an activist?

I am a first-generation educated Dalit against the backdrop of thousands of years of history of denial of education to my family and community. I feel fortunate to get opportunities to educate and reach this stage in life, especially with the support of state institutions in India that played a pivotal role in molding the lives of millions of Dalits. Thus, I feel responsible for using the opportunities responsibly and contributing meaningfully to my community's history and future. Paying back to the society that brought me to this stage is an ethical commitment passed to us by legendary figures like Dr. B.R. Ambedkar.

In recent times, we have seen a rise of attacks on academics in the diaspora who speak up on behalf of people's civil and democratic rights, along with the deliberate attack on civil rights in India. These attacks are particularly vindictive, based on caste lines and affiliation to political philosophy. Could you share your personal experience regarding this?

This is the sad part about the Indian diaspora in North America. The majority of the Indians settled in North America come from privileged caste backgrounds. They have inherited caste privilege and a sense of entitlement to opportunities and select spaces. Ironically, most of them do not even hold to their Indian passports but take pride in India's Hindu right government and play a critical role in legitimizing the current regime internationally. Every opportunity is taken to attack and harass people, especially academics who guestion the Hindu right regime and its affiliates' violence against Muslims, Dalits, Adivasis, and Christians.

As I am one of the few Dalit academics in North America, and I write, organize and expose Hindu right regimes violence in India, I get targeted by the Indian diaspora in Canada and America. In response



to my writings and activism, they have sent letters to my university president, dean, and colleagues accusing me of being anti-Hindu and anti-national. Thankfully my colleagues and the university administration understood the sinister motives of those groups and have stood by me. Privileged caste Hindus' diatribe is driven not just by ideological reasons but also due to caste. They cannot digest a person from an oppressed background as a faculty in a university in Canada and speak against caste oppression so openly. I am not driven by hate or prejudice and feel pity for them. It shows that they are morally empty and cowards who lack the courage to see others as fellow human beings and deserve respect and the right to life and pursue freedom.

Why is it essential for us to be aware of the realities of the caste system, particularly in the diaspora? Since the whole social structure seems based on this conspiracy to make it seem benign, why is it more incumbent upon us to show the immense harm and continues to do in society?

I see two critical challenges: historical, and the second is contemporary. First, European colonialism constructed Hinduism as an exceptional and benign religion as a nonviolent and spiritual one. Privileged caste Hindus used this image to integrate themselves in white societies, sometimes in unequal terms but admired as exceptional. Added to this is the ignorance of white and no-whites about India's caste system buried and unacknowledged. So if we want to challenge Hindu right politics in India and abroad, we need to expose the myth of Hinduism and talk openly about its inegalitarian culture towards women and other oppressed castes.

Moreover, exposing violent foundations, caste structure, and Hindu religious philosophy should be a central discussion point across academic and activist collectives. Also, importantly, it tells the world that the successful Indian diaspora might fit into the narrative of model ethnic minorities due to their skin color. Still, in reality, these are the people who have inherited thousands of years of caste privilege and exclusive rights over education and institutions, and their success in North America is a continuation of privilege, not an aberration.

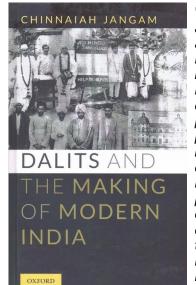
Can we speak frankly of the Dalit-Muslim equation? Why is it that even oppressed minorities in India and elsewhere, for that matter, can't seem to find common ground against their oppressors? What role, in your opinion, does religion play in this contradiction, especially given its impact on elections in India?

As Dalits, Muslims and Christians receive the violence unleashed by the Hindu right regime and its affiliates in India. There is an urgency to find common ground for fighting against the oppressive regime in India. However, historically Dalits have spread across Muslim and Christian societies. Still, the dominant mainstream political and religious elites in Islam and Christianity were indifferent to the inhuman treatment of Dalits in India. They refused to acknowledge caste dynamics within Christianity and Islam. Moreover. Christian educational institutions benefited privileged caste Hindus than Dalits and Adivasis. Given the egalitarian foundations of Christianity and Islam, there is a possibility that they can work to their institutional network and resources to spread education and build institutions that can better the lives of Dalits and Adivasis and that can make communities not only challenge Hindu right but also enlarge the scope of a democratic and inclusive society in India.

What are your views on the situation in India? How can the diaspora help in the fight against fascism? You take part in webinars and online discussions -- how far do these go in spreading the good word - are these effective as a strategy in bringing about change?

Every day, the situation in India reaches the point of no return as the hate and violence are abetted by state institutions and political leadership. Even though the international press has been covering and exposing the realities in India in the last two years, the Hindu right vigilante groups are encouraged by the inaction of the state and the open embracement of hate as philosophy by none other than the Prime Minister himself. The western leadership, including in North America, are indifferent to what is happening in India due to pragmatic considerations.

We in the diaspora have a responsibility to make the leadership of India and North America accountable for the human rights violations and the loss of lives of innocent citizens, activists, and organizers in India who are being jailed and killed for standing with the oppressed humanity. As Martin Luther King said, "the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice." We might be in for a long battle but will win the fight against hate and fascism in India. We should never lose hope and continue to speak and expose the violence in India against the minorities, Dalits, indigenous Adivasis, and women at every forum possible.



"The book is a significant addition to the literature associated with Dalits because in contemporary India most writing on Dalits begins with the colonial context and ends with their participation in the parliamentary democracy. But langam's work challenges this dominant narrative by recording the precolonial anti-caste egalitarian consciousness of Dalits expressed through their cultural creations as being a part of anti-cultural nationalism. In the same

vein, on the basis of empirical data and critical engagement this work has successfully expanded Indian history via Dalit discourse and the public sphere." – Vivek Kumar. Pacific Affairs

Activist in Residence Interview Series: Dr. Chinnaiah Jangam – Carleton University Department of Law and Legal Studies https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JgK4XrratOc

Decolonizing Hinduism and Unraveling Hindutva – Dr. Chinnaiah Jangam with Dr. Sharika Thiranagama, Center for South Asia Studies, Stanford University https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2mZZ38skjzc

Chile, Presente!

Mamatha Kodidela

"Other men will overcome this dark and bitter moment when treason seeks to prevail. Go forward knowing that, sooner rather than later, the great avenues will open again where free men will walk to build a better society", president Salvador Allende declared, in his defiant last speech to the people of Chile, on September 11, 1973.

Almost 50 years after the bloodv coup that overthrew the democratically elected leftist government and murdered or disappeared thousands of Chileans, Allende's words came to life in the form of millions of Chileans who reiected а neo-liberal constitution and а neo-pinochet agenda and elected Gabriel Boric to proclaim that Chile stands for social justice. It took 50 years to get here. That is the power of the constitution that was ratified during the Pinochet dictatorship and continued postdictatorship. The constitution, with the flesh and blood of neoliberal policies that aligned with big businesses, eroded the power of workers to organize, and privatized education, social security and healthcare. After the dictatorship, end of the oppressive constitution was only legitimized by limited democracy while the power shifted between center-left and center-right governments. In the guise of GDP, a well known false growth indicator, to the world Chile became a success story of neoliberalism and came to be known as the most developed and economically stable country in Latin America. However, One of the rallying cries of the recent protests, "Tell me where you were born, I will tell you where you will die" sums up the ground reality of objective progress. While the rich grew richer, poor families plunged into debt to access basic rights of education,

healthcare, and pension. The protest that started in 201 $_{0}$

against price hike in subway fare, soon brought other social and economic inequalities to Millions forefront. of the Chileans participated in massive protests throughout country. Memories of the socialist leaders like Salvador Allende were brought to life in these protests as if to say after all the oppressive and fearful years, socialist dream is still alive among the people. Renditions of Victor Jara's song 'El derecho de vivir, en paz' (For the right to live in peace) shattered curfews in the night and invigorated masses of protesters.

Election result of December 19, 2021 was a culmination of decades of fighting by students. feminists and activists for human rights, environmental and social Chileans faced two iustice. starkly different agendas in this election. One of them promised law and order with utmost disregard to millions of protesting Chileans and the other took on the demands of the protesters as its campaign manifesto and promised social justice. Gabriel Boric was one of the student leaders who organized student protests in 2006 and 2011 demanding free and fair education for all Chileans. When Chile erupted in "Social Outburst" in 2019, Boric backed the peaceful resolution of redrafting the oppressive constitution. Thus, electing Gabriel Boric as the president of Chile became one of the goals of the protests, because the alternative was a candidate who openly displayed a desire to bring back Pinochet-era governance while safeguarding neoliberalism.

While many other Latin American countries are shifting to leftprogressive governments, Chile's results are more hopeful and exciting as Chile has been the forerunner of political and economic changes not only in Latin America but other parts of the world as well. Chile was the first country to elect a socialist government, first to implement neoliberal policies. By electing Gabriel Boric, who has been fighting for social justice all his life and promised to bury Pinochet era policies and fear for good, Chile might as well be the first country to obliterate neoliberalism and make one of the protest slogans a reality: "Neoliberalism was born in Chile, it will die in Chile."



Readings

Salvador Allende Reader: Chile's Voice of Democracy By Salvador Allende Gossens, Jane Canning. Ocean Press

Beyond the Vanguard: Everyday Revolutionaries in Allende's Chile By Marian E. Schlotterbeck. University of California Press

Beatriz Allende: A Revolutionary Life in Cold War Latin America By Tanya Harmer. University of North Carolina Press

The Walls of Santiago Social Revolution and Political Aesthetics in Contemporary Chile Terri Gordon-Zolov and Eric Zolov. Berghahn

Chile Archive (Marxists.org) https://www.marxists.org/subject/c hile/index.htm



Desde el hondo crisol de la tierra se levanta el clamor popular. Ya se anuncia la nueva alborada, todo el mundo comienza a cantar. Recordando al soldado valiente, cuvo ejemplo lo hiciera inmortal, enfrentemos primero a la muerte, traicionar al pueblo jamás.

Venceremos, venceremos, mil cadenas habrá que romper, venceremos, venceremos, el fascismo sabremos vencer.

Venceremos, venceremos, mil cadenas habrá que romper, venceremos, venceremos, el fascismo sabremos vencer.

Campesinos, soldados, mineros, las mujeres del mundo también, estudiantes, empleados y obreros, cumpliremos con nuestro deber. Sembraremos las tierras de gloria, socialista será el porvenir. Todos juntos seremos la historia, A cumplir, A cumplir, A cumplir.

Venceremos, venceremos, mil cadenas habrá que romper, venceremos, venceremos, la miseria sabremos vencer.

Venceremos, venceremos, mil cadenas habrá que romper, venceremos, venceremos, la miseria sabremos vencer.

Venceremos! Listen

"After days of brutal torture and just before he was murdered in cold blood by the soldiers of fascist dictator Augusto Pinochet, who had imprisoned him and thousands of others in a stadium turned into a concentration camp for the 1973 coup against Allende, Victor Jara sang 'Venceremos' as a last act of defiance." Source

In 2004 the stadium where he was martyred on September 15th 1973 -Estadio Chile, was renamed the Victor Jara Stadium. Today Victor lara is one of the most beloved icons of Latin America. His words. voice and spirit live on as eternal sparks lighting revolutionary fires across the world.

From the deep crucible of the world, the people's voices rise up. A new dawn comes over the horizon. All the world breaks out in song. In remembrance of the courageous warrior whose example has made him immortal, we shall confront death before we would betray our people.

We shall overcome, we shall overcome! A thousand chains we'll have to break, but we shall overcome, we shall overcome! We know we can overcome fascism.

We shall overcome, we shall overcome! A thousand chains we'll have to break, but we shall overcome, we shall overcome! We know we can overcome fascism.

Peasants, soldiers, miners, and the women of the world as well, students, workers, white-collar and blue, we will do our duty. We'll sow the land with glory. Socialism will be our future. With all together, history we shall fulfill, we shall fulfill, we shall fulfill.

We shall overcome, we shall overcome! A thousand chains we'll have to break, but we shall overcome, we shall overcome! We know we can overcome suffering.

We shall overcome, we shall overcome! A thousand chains we'll have to break, but we shall overcome, we shall overcome! We know we can overcome suffering.

iCompañero Víctor Jara Presente! "Chile's massive, ongoing uprising is drawing its anthems from the songs and artists of the Allende anu arusus or une America Vears — particularly com Jara, the legendary , ... singer and martyr killed in the 1973 coup." Read



Salvador Allende, 1970



Protests against Pinochet



Chile erupts in protests against neoliberalism, 2019



Three student leaders who led the Chilean universities strike 10 years ago: Camila Vallejo - Giorgio Jackson -Gabriel Boric. One became President of Chile last month! Faded background images: protests over decades remembering the tens of thousands disappeared, tortured or killed by the fascist Pinochet regime