



# Ambedkar King Study Circle, California, USA

## SOLIDARITY STATEMENT TO END CASTE PRACTICES IN SILICON VALLEY AND THE USA

On June 30, the State of California's Department of Fair Employment and Housing (DFEH) sued Cisco Systems – a major supplier of computer networking gear that makes the internet work – indicting the company of discriminating against an engineer because he is Dalit<sup>1</sup> (formerly "untouchables"). This statement from Ambedkar King Study Circle seeks solidarity from **media, technology, academic community and industry professionals to end caste-based discrimination and practices in the US.**

We the undersigned welcome that the State of California has sued Cisco Systems for allowing its employees to practice caste at the workplace. This incident illustrates both - the casual and commonplace presence of everyday caste-based practices at the workplace, and the more conscious practice of caste discrimination pervasive in the US amongst Indian Americans, Indians and South Asians.

According to Silicon Valley Institute for Regional Studies in 2018, there were more high-skilled workers in Silicon Valley from **India (25%)** than from China (15%); California (16%); or from the rest of the country (16%)<sup>2</sup>. We, therefore, urge, all tech-corporations in Silicon Valley to be sensitive to caste practices and caste-based discrimination at their workplaces and ensure appropriate policies and protections are in place to guarantee safe and dignified working environment to all Dalit and so-called "low" caste employees.

At the moment, US employment law does not bar caste-based discrimination. We request the California State agency to seize this opportunity to have **legal protection** in place to protect Dalit and other so-called "low" caste employees.

According to DFEH, a Dalit employee suffered discrimination and harassment at the workplace once his dominant caste colleague "outed" him. The complex of trauma, humiliation, devaluation of self-worth, and perpetuation of caste stereotypes (especially against Dalits) - has severe impacts on workplace conditions, the right to dignity and commitment to diversity as a bulwark of modern organizations. The last names of the alleged harassers – Iyer and Kompella – are also their dominant caste names.

As per DFEH, Iyer "outed" the Dalit employee by telling colleagues that the victim enrolled at the prestigious Indian Institute of Technology through affirmative action – a claim that includes the connotation that affirmative action is inherently devoid of "merit". This consequently shaped the actions of Iyer and his so-called "upper caste" colleagues, and the successive line manager. They allegedly proceeded to harass the victim and assigned unrealistic tasks to set him up for failure.

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<sup>1</sup> Dalit means 'crushed or broken' in Marathi, an Indian language.

<sup>2</sup> <https://siliconvalleyindicators.org/data/people/talent-flows-diversity/tech-talent/share-of-residents-in-technical-occupations-with-a-bachelors-degree-or-higher-by-place-of-origin/>.



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Caste is a hierarchical category based on pre-set social identities of birth and ancestry or descent. In its historical origins, caste has a close relation to occupation and exploitation. This nexus continues with some changes in modern times. The most excluded caste groups now self-identify as Dalits.

Dominant caste groups, for centuries, forcibly assigned occupations to Dalits and stigmatized those occupations. This stigma continues even after Dalits move outside of caste-affected societies and find new professions such as engineers in Silicon Valley. In the words of one of India's foremost modern public intellectuals, chief drafter of the Indian Constitution, the most influential leader of Dalits in the 20th century, and an economist, anthropologist and philosopher – **Dr B.R. Ambedkar: "the caste system is not merely a division of labour. It is a division of labourers."** In the minds of oppressors, the Dalit victim did not and should not belong to that workplace.

We now know that the victim had filed complaints as early as in November 2016 to the Cisco Human Resources (HR) department about the discriminatory behaviour of his dominant caste line managers. However, Cisco HR did not act on these complaints on the ground that **caste discrimination was not unlawful in the US**<sup>3</sup>. We, therefore, appeal to all American companies, including those in Silicon Valley to be sensitive to ubiquitous caste practices and caste-based discrimination. We urge them to recognize caste, as operating similarly to race and gender as a source of discrimination and harassment and incorporate caste practices as an unfair and punishable practice in their Human Resource policies.

Executive Committee, Ambedkar King Study Circle. Thank You.

July 13, 2020  
San Jose, California

**We, the following organizations, support AKSC's solidarity statement.**

1. Ambedkar Association of North America, USA.
2. Ambedkar International Mission, USA.
3. Ambedkar King Study Circle, USA.
4. Association for India's Development, USA.
5. Bay Area Against Hindu Fascism, California, USA.
6. Boston Coalition, USA.
7. Coalition of Seattle of Indian-Americans, USA.
8. Dalit Solidarity Network, London, United Kingdom.
9. Global Indians Progressive Alliance, USA.
10. Graduate Student Organizing Committee (GSOC-UAW-2110), NY, USA.
11. India Civil Watch International, USA.
12. International Dalit Solidarity Network, Copenhagen, Denmark.
13. Periyar International USA, Gurnee, Illinois.
14. Political Action Platform for Tamils (PAPT), Sacramento, CA.
15. Sadhana, Coalition of Progressive Hindus, USA.
16. Students Against Hindutva Ideology (SAHI), UCLA, Los Angeles, CA.

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<sup>3</sup> California Department of Fair Employment and Housing Vs Cisco Systems, Inc., et al. Civil Rights Complaint – Employment Discrimination.



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**We, the following individuals, support AKSC's solidarity statement.**

1. AAZIZ ZILANAWALA, Richardson, TX, USA.
2. ANIRUDDHA DAS, New York, NY 10027, NY, USA.
3. ARVIND MENON, Minneapolis, MN, USA.
4. Aamir Qureshi, San Jose, CA.
5. Aaron Berman, Amherst MA.
6. Aarti Bhatt, MD University if MN.
7. Aastha Ahuja, School of Education, University of Glasgow.
8. Abdul Bhuiyan, New Hyde park, Ny, USA.
9. Abdul Rydhan, San Jose, California, USA.
10. Abdur Rahim, Round Rock, Texas, USA.
11. Abha Sur, Cambridge, MA, USA.
12. Abhishek Shah, Evanston, IL, USA.
13. Abi John, Watkins Glen, New York, USA.
14. Adam Tobin, Stanford University, Menlo Park, CA.
15. Adelana Akindes, Kenosha, Wisconsin, USA.
16. Aditee Kumthekar, Palo Alto, CA.
17. Aditi Chandra, University of California, Merced.
18. Aditi Dhruv, Brooklyn, NY, USA.
19. Aditi Sen, Brooklyn, New York, USA.
20. Aditya Guthey, Laurel, Md, USA.
21. Adrita Rahman, Alliance of Progressive South Asians, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN.
22. Afrin Fathima, Sunnyvale, CA.
23. Ahamed Tharik, Sunnyvale, CA.
24. Ahmed Arif, Flint, MI, USA.
25. Ahmed Quddus, Sacramento, CA, USA.
26. Ahsan Syed, Palo Alto, CA, USA.
27. Ajantha Subramanian, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.
28. Ajay Skaria, minneapolis, MN, USA.
29. Ajinkya Ingale, AKSC, California.
30. Akbar Firdosy, Walnut, CA, USA.
31. Akif Sultan, Austin, TX, with Friends of India.
32. Akilan Jayaraman, Cary, NC.
33. Akshay Rangamani, MIT, USA.
34. Akshaya Natarajan, Oakland, CA.
35. Akshitha Singathi, Kendall Park, NJ, USA.
36. Alistair Lewis, Philadelphia, PA.
37. Aliya Latif, New york, New York, USA.
38. Amal Chatterjee, University of Oxford, Amsterdam.
39. Aman Bardia, New York, NY, USA.
40. Amba Kak, NYU (AI Now Institute), NY.
41. Ameya Prabhune, University of Colorado Boulder.
42. Ami Naik, Oakland, California, USA.



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43. Amilcar Shabazz, Amherst, MA, USA.
44. Amin Choudhury, LUISS University, Italy.
45. Amir Azmi, Belmont, MA, USA.
46. Amit Baishya, Norman, Oklahoma, USA.
47. Amita Vempati, Subcontinental Drift, Washington D.C..
48. Amna Buttar, New York, New York, USA.
49. Amol Patwardhan, Postdoctoral Fellow, UC Berkeley, CA.
50. Amrapali Gan, Los Angeles, CA.
51. Amulya Mandava, Saratoga, CA.
52. Amy Jersild, Kalamazoo, MI, USA.
53. Amy Z, Los Angeles, CA, USA.
54. Ana Claudia Santos, Arlington, VA, USA.
55. Anand Silodia, Jersey City, N.
56. Anand Subramanian, Oakland, CA, USA.
57. Ananth Subramanian, San Diego, CA, USA.
58. Ananya Chatterjea, Alliance of Progressive South Asians (MN).
59. Ananya Sairaman, Glen Allen, Virginia, USA.
60. Andrea Dunlap, Alameda, CA.
61. Andrew Lamas, Philadelphia, PA, USA.
62. Andrew TR, Sunnyvale, CA.
63. Andy Swarna, Silver Spring, Md, USA.
64. Angela Xiao Wu, New York University, USA.
65. Ania Loomba, Philadelphia, PA, USA.
66. Ania Loomba, Professor, University of Pennsylvania.
67. Anil Wagde, Atlanta, Ga, USA.
68. Anindita Chatterjee, Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA.
69. Anindya Dey, Baltimore, MD, USA.
70. Aniruddha Vaidya, Sunnyvale, CA, USA.
71. Anirudh Shivaswamy, Livonia, Michigan, USA.
72. Anisha Srivastava, San Francisco, California, USA.
73. Anita Chikkatur, Alliance of Progressive South Asians (MN).
74. Anjali Enjeti, Johns Creek, G.
75. Ankit Gajbhiye, Milpitas, CA, USA.
76. Ankur Jalota, Los Angeles, CA, USA.
77. Annapurna Menon, London, UK.
78. Anneeth Kaur Hundle, Irvine, CA, USA.
79. Annu Daftuar, NY, NY, USA.
80. Annu Jalais, Academic, NUS, Singapore.
81. Anu Mandavilli, Cupertino, CA.
82. Anuj Vaidya, DAVIS, CA, USA.
83. Anuj Vaidya, Davis CA,.
84. Anupam Dev Goel, Jersey City, NJ.
85. Anupama Rao, Barnard College, Columbia University.
86. Anuradha Advani, Fremong, CA.
87. Anuush Vejalla, Ithaca, NY.



## Ambedkar King Study Circle, California, USA

88. Anwer Abbas, Roswell, Ga, USA.
89. Aparajita De, Gaithersburg, MD, USA.
90. Aravind Prasad, Boston, MA.
91. Aravinda Pillalamarri, Bel Air, Maryland.
92. Ari Laurel, Seattle WA,.
93. Arif Hussain, CAMBRIDGE, Massachusetts, USA.
94. Arkya Chatterjee, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
95. Armaity Sumariwalla, Lawrenceville, NJ, USA.
96. Arnab Mukherjea, DrPH, MPH, California State University.
97. Arnab Mukherjea, San Ramon, CA, USA.
98. Arslan Ahmad, Redmond, WA.
99. Arthur MacEwan, Cambridge, MA, USA.
100. Arulmary Rathinam, Houston, Texas, USA.
101. Arun Chopra, Salisbury, MD, USA.
102. Arun Kumar, Federation of Ambedkarite and Buddhist Organisations, UK.
103. Arun Rajendiran, California, USA.
104. Aruna Sankaranarayanan, MIT.
105. Arundhati Velamur, New York, NY, USA.
106. Asad Abbas, Roswell, GAA, USA.
107. Asad Chag, Philadelphia, PA, USA.
108. Asha Sitaram, National Equity Project, Oakland, CA.
109. Asha Thanki, Alliance of Progressive South Asians (MN).
110. Asha Thanki, Minneapolis, MN.
111. Ashish Aroo, Durham, Nc, USA.
112. Ashish Sijapati, Falls Church, VA, USA.
113. Ashley Payne, Martinez, CA SEIU 1021 and East Bay DSA..
114. Ashwin Rajadesingan, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.
115. Ashwin Rao, New York, NY, USA.
116. Asmita Aasaavari, Windham, CT, USA.
117. Asti Bhatt, Redwood City, CA.
118. Aswin Punathambekar, Charlottesville, VA.
119. Atef Ibrahim, Santa Clara, CA, USA.
120. Athmika Senthilkuamar, Needham, MA, USA.
121. Atul Barry, M.D., Columbus, OH.
122. Avishek Das, University of California Berkeley, CA.
123. Ayesha Jamil, USA,.
124. Ayesha Vemuri, McGill University, Montreal, Canada.
125. BRADLEY MAYER, SAN LEANDRO, CA, USA.
126. Baki Tezcan Tezcan, Berkeley, CA, USA.
127. Balachandran, Radhakrishnan, Mountain View, CA.
128. Balaji Narasimhan, Los Altos, CA.
129. Balamurali Mani, Warwick, Rhode Island..
130. Banu Subramaniam, Amherst, MA, USA.
131. Barby Ulmer, Saratoga, CA.
132. Bedabrata Pain, Los Angeles, CA, USA.



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133. Ben Baer, Princeton University, NJ.
134. Ben Hutchinson, San Francisco, CA, USA.
135. Benjamin Kaila, La Crescenta-Montrose, California, USA.
136. Benjamin Kersten, West Hollywood, California, USA.
137. Bertin Louis, Lexington, Kentucky, USA.
138. Bertrand Figarol, L'Arche International, France.
139. Beth Bruch, Durham, NC.
140. Bharat Mekwan, South San Francisco, California, USA.
141. Bharat Rathod, Amherst, MA, USA.
142. Bharat Venkat, UCLA, .
143. Bharati Acharya, Alliance of Progressive South Asians (MN).
144. Bhavana Nancherla, Long Island City, NY, USA.
145. Bhavana Nancherla, New York, ,.
146. Bhavna Mehta, San Diego, CA, USA.
147. Bhumika Chauhan, NYU, USA.
148. Biju Mathew, NYC, NY, USA.
149. Bill Fletcher, Mitchellville, MD, USA.
150. Bipasha Mukherjee, Seattle, WA.
151. Bipin Loi, Schaumburg, IL, USA.
152. Brandon Juhl Juhl, Mill Creek, WA, USA.
153. Brandon Juhl, Mill Creek, WA, USA.
154. Bri Burr, Queen Creek, AZ, USA, .
155. Briceida Hernandez, Las Vegas, Nevada, USA.
156. Bronislaw Czarnocha, NYC, NY, USA.
157. Brooke Holmes, New York, NY.
158. Bruce Bookman, Los Gatos, CA, USA.
159. C. Aindri Edinburgh, UK280, .,
160. Caroline Bowman, NY, USA.
161. Chaand Ohri MBBS, Washington DC.
162. Chandana Singathi, Kendall Park, New Jersey, USA.
163. Charles muturi, Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA.
164. Charlotte Casey, San Jose, CA.
165. Chetana Sabnis, Brooklyn, New York, USA.
166. Chinmay Pai, Worcester, MA.
167. Chinmayi Arun, New Haven, CT.
168. Chinmoy Sarkar, UC Davis, .
169. Chinmuay Kanchi, Bellevue W, .
170. Chitra Thiruvengadam, Pleasanton, CA.
171. Chitra Vairavan, Alliance of Progressive South Asians (MN).
172. Chloe Pelling, Sydney, SW, Australia.
173. Christina Dunbar-Hester, Los Angeles, California, USA.
174. Christopher Ick, NY, USA.
175. Chukka Srinivas, San Jose, CA, .
176. Claudia Leung, Oakland, CA.
177. Claudia Leung, Oakland, CA, USA.



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178. Connie Jones, Oakland, CA.
179. Cookie Kaur, Oviedo, FL.
180. Cordelia Mattuvarkuzhali Ezhilarasu, Cranfield University, UK.
181. Craig Kumar, San Jose, CA, USA.
182. Cris Youssef, Oakland, CA, USA.
183. D. Sivakumar, Cupertino, CA.
184. DINA SIDDIQI, New York, NY, USA.
185. Daniel Brinkerhoff Young, NY, USA.
186. Daniel Radford, Sandpoint, Idaho, USA.
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188. Daniel Shoup Shoup, OAKLAND, CA, USA.
189. Daniel Spector, Miami, USA.
190. Daniella C√°diz Bedini, New York, NY, USA.
191. David Faust, St Paul, MN, USA.
192. David H, Albert, Olympia, WA.
193. Debashree Mukherjee, New York, NY, USA.
194. Debjani Bhattacharyya, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA.
195. Debjani Dutta, PhD student, Los Angeles, CA..
196. Deboleena Roy, Decatur, Georgia, USA.
197. Deborah Williams, Christchurch, New Zealand.
198. Dee S, Ewing, New Jersey, USA.
199. Deepa Iyer, Washington, DC, USA.
200. Deepa Mahadevan, BASKING RIDGE, New Jersey, USA.
201. Deepa Manjanatha, Cambridge, MA.
202. Deepa Sivarajan, Seattle, WA.
203. Deepak Kapur, Albuquerque, NM, USA.
204. Deepali Gokhale, Alexandria, VA, USA.
205. Deepankar Basu, AMHERST, MA, USA.
206. Denise Belardes, Santa Clara, CA, USA.
207. Dennis O'Brien, San Francisco, CA, USA.
208. Denny Thattil, Monroe, CT, USA.
209. Devendra Shelar, PhD, MIT, MA.
210. Devika Ghai, Alliance of Progressive South Asians (MN).
211. Dhananjay Awale, Columbus, IN, USA.
212. Dhandapani Ponnurangam, Mountain House, CA..
213. Dharam Bishwokarma, Harrisburg, pa, USA.
214. Dheepa Sundaram, University of Denver.
215. Dilawar Hussain, Lowell, Massachusetts, USA.
216. Divya Jha, University of Sheffield, UK.
217. Divya Karan, Alliance of Progressive South Asians (MN).
218. Divya Karan, Minneapolis, MN, USA.
219. Divya Karan, Minneapolis, Minnesota.
220. Dolly Daftary, Boston, Massachusetts, USA.
221. Donna Wallach, San Jose, CA.
222. Dorotea Manuela, Dorchester, MA, USA.



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223. Dorothy Howard, San Diego, CA, USA.
224. Dr Balmurli Natrajan, William Paterson University of New Jersey, NJ..
225. Dr Chloe Breyer, New York, NY.
226. Dr Dora Sales, Jaume, University, Spain.
227. Dr Gloria Khamkar, Southampton, UK.
228. Dr Khwaja Nawaz Khan, Bolton, UK.
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230. Dr Murali Shanmugavelan, SOAS, University of London, UK..
231. Dr Padma Blasubramanian, Boston, MA.
232. Dr Rhian Waller, University of Chester.
233. Dr Saroja Ilangovan, , Southampton, PA.
234. Dr Soma Ilangovan, President, Periyar International USA..
235. Dr Subir Sinha, SOAS, London, UK.
236. Dr Sylvia Karpagam, Public health doctor.
237. Dr Vikrant Kishore (Fimmaker & researcher), Melbourne, Australia,.
238. Dr. Debashree Mukherjee, Columbia University.
239. Dr. Devendra Meshram, Tokyo, Japan.
240. Dr. Kuzhiyilethu Kumaroo, Silver Spring, Maryland, USA.
241. Dr. Manish Madan, Stockton University New Jersey.
242. Dr. Maqbool Patel,.
243. Dr. Paula Chakravartty, New York University, NY.
244. Dr. Praba Pilar, Oakland, CA, USA.
245. Dr. Pratyush Bharati, University of Massachusetts, Boston.
246. Dr. Raja Swamy, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN.
247. Dr. Simmy Makhijani, San Francisco State University, San Francisco, CA.
248. Dr. Sornam Sankar, Ellicott City.
249. Dr. Sunny Sinha, Marywood University, Scranton, PA.
250. Duraikkannan Sundarackannan, Newark, DE.
251. Durgesh Solanki, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD.
252. Ehtisham (Bill) Ashai, Palos Verdes Estates, CA, USA.
253. Elise Hahn, Denver, Colorado, USA.
254. Elora Shehabuddin, Rice University.
255. Emina Buzinkic, Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA.
256. Emma Kinema, CODE-CWA, Los Angeles, CA.
257. Emma Leiken, The London School of Economics / San Francisco, CA.
258. Erica Vasquez, Monterey Park, California, USA.
259. Erin Arnesen, NYC, NY.
260. Esha Kashyap, Atlanta, Georgia, USA.
261. Ezak Perez, Los Angeles, CA, USA.
262. Fadi Shihadeh, MD, San Francisco, CA.
263. Faheed Subhani, Seattle, WA.
264. Faiz Moh, Fremont, CA, USA.
265. Fanny Ortiz, Los Angeles, CA, USA.
266. Fareen Parvez, Amherst, Massachusetts, USA.
267. Farha Syed, Santa clara, California, USA.





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268. Farhana Sobhan, Berkeley, CA.
269. Fariha Khan, University of Pennsylvania.
270. Farook Chandiwala, Birmingham, AL, USA.
271. Fatima Alam, OAKBROOK, IL, USA.
272. Fawzia Afzal-Khan, Ossining, NY, USA.
273. Felix Almeida, Toronto, Ontario, USA.
274. Florence S. Majors, Salisbury, MD, USA.
275. Furkhan Syed, Canton, Mi, USA.
276. Ganesh Babu Sigamani, San Ramon, CA.
277. Ganesh Nayak, Marietta, GA.
278. Gautam Kundu, Statesboro, GA, USA.
279. Gautam Premnath, Berkeley, CA, USA.
280. Gautham Reddy, PhD, Atlanta, GA.
281. Gayatri Reddy, Chicago, IL, USA.
282. Gee Imaan Semmalar, Canterbury, U.K.
283. Gerarda Gomez, Alliance of Progressive South Asians (MN).
284. Gia Miramontes, Burbank, Ca, USA.
285. Gita Sinha, Milwaukee, WI.
286. Guilherme Estermann Meyer, NY, USA.
287. Gulab Singh, Jersey City, NJ, USA.
288. Gulrez Azhar, Bellevue, WA.
289. Gulrez Khan, California, USA.
290. Gurdeep Kataria, Queens, New York, USA.
291. Gurvinder Singh, Garland, TX, USA.
292. Habib Ahmed, Albertson, NY, USA.
293. Hadi Abdul, Boulder, CO, USA.
294. Haimanti Roy, Dayton, OH, USA.
295. Hameed Khan, Edgewater, NJ, USA.
296. Hana Maruyama, Minneapolis, MN, USA.
297. Hana Shams Ahmed, PhD Student, York University, Canada.
298. Hareem Khan, Los Angeles, CA, USA.
299. Hari Bapuji, University of Melbourne, Australia.
300. Harini Kannan, Philadelphia, PA.
301. Harry Cleaver, Austin, TX, USA.
302. Harshita Mruthinti Kamath, Emory University.
303. Hasham Khan, Sharon, Massachusetts, USA.
304. Heather Robinson, Pittsburgh, PA, USA.
305. Hena Zuberi, Columbia, MD.
306. Hena Zuberi, Ellicott city, Maryland, USA.
307. Hillary Abraham, Irvine, CA.
308. Himika Bhattacharya, Syracuse, New York, USA.
309. Hindus for Human Rights, USA,.
310. Holly Stoumbaugh, Denver, Colorado.
311. Howard Ji, Milpitas, CA.
312. Huma Ahmed-Ghosh, San Diego, California, USA.



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- 313.Huma Dar, California College of the Arts, Oakland, CA.
- 314.H Plascencia, WHITTIER, California, USA.
- 315.Ian Garvey, Blue Ridge, Ga, USA.
- 316.Ilina Krishen, Fort Gratiot, MI, USA.
- 317.Inderpal Grewal, yale university.
- 318.India Civil Watch, USA.
- 319.Indira Thangasamy, San Ramon, CA.
- 320.Indrani Chatterjee, Austin, TX, USA.
- 321.Indrasen Bhattacharya, PhD, Berkeley, CA.
- 322.Indu Nair, Seattle, WA.
- 323.Ishani S, Albany, CA, USA.
- 324.Ismail Poonawala, Rancho Palos Verdes, CA, USA.
- 325.J Thomas, New york, NY, USA.
- 326.J. Siguru Wahutu, New York University, New York.
- 327.Jacob Hinton, Sunnyvale, CA.
- 328.Jacob McLaws, CA USA.
- 329.James Vanié, Bay Area, CA.
- 330.Jane Roschen, Los Angeles, CA, USA.
- 331.Jasleen Kaur Matharu, Tracy, CA.
- 332.Jawed Umerani, Palo Alto, CA, USA.
- 333.Jay Ramesh Sawant, North Carolina State University, USA.
- 334.Jaya Dubey, Irvine, CA, USA.
- 335.Jaya Dubey, UCI, Irvine, CA.
- 336.Jayashree Kamble, New York, NY, USA.
- 337.Jayati Lal, Winston-Salem, NC-North Carolina, USA.
- 338.Jeannette Eaton, San Jose, CA.
- 339.Jeeva Muhil, Ann Arbor, MI, USA.
- 340.Jeff Baum, Venice, CA, USA.
- 341.Jeffery D, Long, Elizabethtown, PA.
- 342.Jeremy Rinker, Greensboro, NC, USA.
- 343.Jessa Lingel, University of Pennsylvania.
- 344.Jessica Yogini, Portland, Oregon, USA.
- 345.Jigna Desai, Alliance of Progressive South Asians (MN).
- 346.Jigna Desai, Minneapolis, Minnesota.
- 347.Jim Howland, Georgia USA.
- 348.Jinee Lokaneeta, New York, New York, USA.
- 349.Joan Scott, Lakewood, Colorado, USA.
- 350.Joanna Nunez, San jose, Ca, USA.
- 351.Jodie Tonita, Redondo Beach, CA, USA.
- 352.Joe Natar, San Jose, CA.
- 353.Joel Lee, Williamstown, MA, USA.
- 354.Johanna Lessinger, Brooklyn, NY, USA.
- 355.John Ishvaradas Abdallah, San Pedro, CA, USA.
- 356.John Prabhudoss, Washington, DC..
- 357.John Zhao, Cupertino, CA.



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358. Jon Wetterau, Long Island City, New York, USA.
359. Jonathan Engel, Mountain View, CA.
360. Jose Faleiro, Seattle, WA.
361. Josephine Park, University of Pennsylvania.
362. Joya Misra, Amherst, MA, USA.
363. Judith Rodenbeck, Los Angeles, CA, USA.
364. Justin Schuetz, Atlanta, Georgia, USA.
365. Jyoti Puri, Boston, Massachusetts, USA.
366. Kabir Tambar, Stanford University, CA.
367. Kal Sid, Suwanee, Ga, USA.
368. Kala Shah, San Rafael, CA, USA.
369. Kaleeswaran J, California, USA.
370. Kalpana Karthikeyan, Santa Clara, CA.
371. Kalpana Subramanian, Buffalo, New York, USA.
372. Kalyani Menon, Chicago, IL, USA.
373. Kalyani Monteiro Jayasankar, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ.
374. Kamlesh Wasnik, Portland, Oregon, USA.
375. Kanagalakshmi Nagarajan, AKSC EC, Cupertino, CA.
376. Kanai Shah, Watertown, Massachusetts, USA.
377. Kanak Natarajan, Bayarea, California.
378. Kapil Chowksey, Cupertino CA.
379. Karan Singha, the Netherlands.
380. Karen Saunders, Brattleboro, Vermont, USA.
381. Karen Steele, Astoria, ,.
382. Karishma Desai, New Brunswick, New Jersey, USA.
383. Karishma Desai, Rutgers University-New Brunswick.
384. Karthick Arumugam, Cupertino, CA.
385. Karthikeyan Annapillai, Austin TX.
386. Kartik Nair, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA.
387. Kartik Sreedhar, PhD, Washington State University, WA.
388. Karuna Mantena, New York City, NY, USA.
389. Kasturi Ray, Berkeley, CA, USA.
390. Kathi R, Kitner, PhD, Berkeley.
391. Kathryn March, Ithaca, NY, USA.
392. Katrina Neal, Paris, France.
393. Kaustav Das, Chesterfield, NJ, USA.
394. Kavery Kaul, Riverfilms, New York, NY.
395. Kavita Goyal, Plymouth Meeting, PA, USA.
396. Kavita Philip, Irvine, California, USA.
397. Kavitha Sundar, Princeton, NJ.
398. Kedar Reddy, Oakland, CA.
399. Kelda Jamison, Stanford, CA.
400. Kentaro Toyama, University of Michigan, USA.
401. Kevin Sun, Berkeley CA.
402. Khanorkar, Florida.



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403. Kiran Asher, Amherst, MA, USA.
404. Kiran Samuel, Columbia University, NY, USA.
405. Krishna Sob, Falls Church, VA, USA.
406. Krishna, Sunnyvale, CA.
407. Laila Mohamed, Miami, Florida, USA.
408. Lalita du Perron, Sunnyvale, CA.
409. Lane Rasberry, Charlottesville, Virginia, USA.
410. Lasondra Wilson, Concord, Ca.
411. Laura Forlano, NY, NY, USA.
412. Laura Valdiviezo, SUNDERLAND, MA, USA.
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414. Leah Horgan, Long Beach, CA, USA.
415. Leena R, Kamat, Dublin, CA.
416. Lilly Irani, San Diego, CA, USA.
417. Lina Fruzzetti, Providence, Rhode Island, USA.
418. Linda Hess, Berkeley, Ca, USA.
419. Lotika Singha, University of Wolverhampton, UK.
420. Louis Bayman, Lecturer, University of Southampton.
421. Lucinda Ramberg, Ithaca, NY.
422. M Korukonda, Seattle, WA, USA.
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424. Madhivanan Durai, Dallas, TX.
425. Madhumita Dutta, Columbus, Ohio, USA.
426. Madhura Raghavan, San Francisco, CA.
427. Madhuri Kasat Shors, MD,.
428. Madhuri Shors, Alliance of Progressive South Asians (MN).
429. Maha Ramamurthy, Palo Alto, CA..
430. Maharshi dosapati, Cleveland, Ohio, USA.
431. Mahe Nadeem, Parker, Texas, USA.
432. Mahendra Jamankar, State College, Pennsylvania, USA.
433. Mahesh Wasnik, Detroit, Michigan.
434. Mahesh Wasnik, Novi, MI, USA.
435. Mahesh Wasnik, Novi, Michigan, USA.
436. Mahjabeen Syed, Palo Alto, CA, USA.
437. Mahjabeen Syed, Palo Alto, California, USA.
438. Mahnaz Mohiuddin, Chicago, IL, USA.
439. Mahpara Khan, Chicago, IL, USA.
440. Mallesh Singathi, Kendall Park, NJ, USA.
441. Manan Desai, University of Michigan.
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461. Mayuri Raja, Austin, TX.
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464. Meenakshi Upadhyaya, Amherst, MA, USA.
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468. Meera D, Rochester, MI, USA.
469. Meera Sehgal, Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA.
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474. Mehmet Bayram, Bay Point, CA.
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478. Michael Levien, Baltimore, MD, USA.
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484. Millie Thayer, Amherst, MA, USA.
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486. Miray Philips, Silver Spring, MD, USA.
487. Mohamed Bandali, Austin, Texas, USA.
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489. Mohammad Imran, NJ,.
490. Mohammad Moiz, Flint, MI, USA.
491. Mohammad Nasirul, LUISS University, Italy.
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510. Mubina Qureshi, St Paul, Minnesota, USA.
511. Muhammad Khan, Jersey City, NJ, USA.
512. Muhammad M., Peoria, IL, USA.
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517. Nadia Purwestri, Jakarta, Indonesia.
518. Nafees Farooqi, Glandale, California, USA.
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521. Naman Agrawal, Newark, DE, USA.
522. Namratha Sastry, Chicago, IL.
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526. Nasir Chhipa, Woodbridge, Virginia, USA.
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528. Natasha Raheja, Cornell University.
529. Natasha Raheja, Ithaca, NY, USA.
530. Naveen Judah, Sheffield, UK.
531. Nazia Fazili, Lomita, CA, USA.
532. Neela Vaswani, New York, NY, USA.
533. Neelofer Qadir, UNC Greensboro.
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535. Neepa Majumdar, University of Pittsburgh, PA.
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- 544.Nikhil Mandalaparth, Chicago, IL.
- 545.Nimisha Nagalia, Alliance of Progressive South Asians (MN).
- 546.Nina Asher, Alliance of Progressive South Asians (MN).
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- 548.Nina Asher, Minneapolis, MN, USA.
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- 552.Nirupama Ravi, Amherst, MA, USA.
- 553.Nirveek Bhattacharjee, Seattle, WA.
- 554.Nishaant Choksi, IIT Gandhinagar and Seattle, WA.
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- 556.Nithya Krishnamoorthy, Mountain View, California.
- 557.Nithya Rajan, Minneapolis, MN, USA.
- 558.Nithya Sambasivan, Seattle, USA..
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- 560.Nivedita, University of California, Los AngelesMD.
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- 564.Oviya Govindan, irvine, california, USA.
- 565.Padam Bishwokarma, Aurora, Colorado, USA.
- 566.Paige Rebecca, Seattle, WA.
- 567.Pallavi Rao, PhD student, Bloomington, IN.
- 568.Pallavi Somusetty, Oakland, CA.
- 569.Panna Iyer, Malvern, PA, USA.
- 570.Parijat Desai, New York, NY.
- 571.Parijat Desai, New York, NY, USA.
- 572.Partha Chatterjee, New York, NY, USA.
- 573.Patricia Morton, Los Angeles, CA, USA.
- 574.Patricia Narayanabhatta, Worthington, Ohio, USA.
- 575.Paul McDermott, Los Angeles, CA.
- 576.Pavan Vaidyanathan, Bay Area, USA.
- 577.Pavan kumar, South India,.
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- 579.Peggy Elwell, San Jose, CA.
- 580.Peter E, Kenmore, Daly City, CA.
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589. Pragya Trivedi, University of California, Irvine.
590. Prakash Kashwan Kashwan, Storrs, CT, USA.
591. Prakash Nepal, Falls Church, VA, USA.
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594. Pramila Vasudevan, St, Paul, MN.
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614. Priyamvada Gopal, University of Cambridge.
615. Priyank Raj, Los Altos, CA, USA.
616. Priyanka Srivastava Srivastava, Amherst, MA, USA.
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618. Prof Nick Coudry, London School of Economics and Political Science, UK.
619. Professor G Patel, Charlottesville, Virginia, USA.
620. Professor Meena Dhanda, University of Wolverhampton, UK.
621. Promila Dhanuka, MD Redding CA, USA.
622. Pugal Anbu, Pleasanton, CA, USA.
623. Rachel Waterman, St. Louis, Missouri, USA.
624. Radha A, San Jose, CA.
625. Radhika Balakrishnan, New York, New York, USA.
626. Radhika Govindrajan, University of Washington, WA.
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631. Rajeev Soneja, Arlington, MA, USA.
632. Rajender Delhi Jal Board, Delhi,.
633. Rajesh Gokul Sankaran, San Francisco, California, USA.
634. Rajesh Sidhartha, Flushing, NY, USA.
635. Rajesh Veeraraghavan, Georgetown University.
636. Rajeswari Sunder Rajan, New York City, New York, USA.
637. Rajita Menon, Brighton, MA, USA.
638. Rajiv Krishnakumar, Research Scientist at Goldman Sachs, New York.
639. Rajive Tiwari, Charlotte, NC, USA.
640. Raju Rajagopal, Hindus for Human Rights-USA.
641. Ram Bhat, LSE, UK.
642. Ram Mahalingam, Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA.
643. Rama Mantena, University of Illinois at Chicago.
644. Ramat Gan, Israel,.
645. Ramesh Jay, Sunnyvale, CA.
646. Ramesh Karuppusamy, Frisco TX,.
647. Ramkumar Sridharan, San Jose, CA.
648. Ramya Indirajith, San Ramon, CA.
649. Ramya Satish, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA.
650. Ramya Vijaya, PHILADELPHIA, PA, USA.
651. Ranga Krishnan, San Jose, CA.
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653. Rashid Shaikh, Cambridge, MA, USA.
654. Rashim Singh, Pearland, TX.
655. Rashne Jehangir, Alliance of Progressive South Asians , University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN.
656. Rathinan Periyaiyah, Houston, Texas, USA.
657. Ratik Asokan, New York, NY.
658. Ratik Asokan, New York, NY, USA.
659. Rauf Adil, Hayward, CA, USA.
660. Ravi Bhagavatula, Dallas, TX,.
661. Ravi Vijaya Satya, San Jose, California, USA.
662. Ravi Vijaya Satya, USA,.
663. Ravinder Kaur, University of Copenhagen.
664. Raza Mir, East Brunswick, USA.
665. Rebekah Morin, Brooklyn, NY, USA.
666. Reema Rajbanshi, Haverford College.
667. Regina Langhout, Santa Cruz, CA, USA.
668. Rehan Khan, Bel Air, MD, USA.
669. Rehan Khan, MD, MS Baltimore, MD.
670. Renu Nahata, New York, NY, USA.
671. Reshna Maniklal, Duluth, GA, USA.
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675. Richa Nagar, University of Minnesota, USA.
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678. Ritesh Nayak, San Jose, CA.
679. Ritty Lukose, New York, NY, USA.
680. Ritwajit Das, International Dalit Suolidarity Network, Copenhagen, Denmark.
681. Riya Desai, CA.
682. Rizwana Mohiuddinhawthorn, Hawthornwds, IL, USA.
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684. Rob Nixon, Princeton University, NJ.
685. Robert Brown, San Jose, CA.
686. Robin Kelley, Los Angeles, CA, USA.
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688. Rohit Upadhya, Union City, CA.
689. Romio Kundal, BAKERSFIELD, CA, USA.
690. Ronak Soni, San Francisco, CA, CA.
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695. Rucha Modi, Chino Hills, CA.
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699. Rupal Oza, New York, NY, USA.
700. Rupal Oza, New york, NY, USA.
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711. Sabaresh Ragupathy, Hartford, CT.
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713. Sadia Abbas, New York, NY, USA.
714. Saeed Patel, Carlstadt, New Jersey, USA.
715. Sagaree Jain, University of California, Berkeley, CA.
716. Sahil Shah, SAN FRANCISCO, CA, USA.
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- 728.Sangay Mishra, New York, New York, USA.
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- 740.Sareeta Amrute, University of Washington/Data & Society Research Institute.
- 741.Sargurunathan Mohan, London, UK..
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- 757.Shafi Refai.
- 758.Shaik Ubaid, Albany, NY, USA.
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- 760.Shailja Sharma, Chicago, IL, USA.
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- 767.Shan Khan, Dallas, TX, USA.
- 768.Shana Sippy, Centre College/Carleton College.
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- 777.Shefali Chandra, Chicago, Illinois, USA.
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- 792.Shruti Mukherje, Jersey City, New Jersey, USA.
- 793.Shruti Mukherjee, Jersey City, New Jersey, USA.
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- 798.Siddharth Ghosh, Haslet, Texas, USA.
- 799.Siddhartha Deb, New York, NY, USA.
- 800.Sima Shakhsari, Minneapolis, MN, USA.
- 801.Sirisha Naidu, Kansas City, MO, USA.
- 802.Smita B, New York, NY, USA.
- 803.Smita Ramnarain, Kingston, Rhode Island, USA.
- 804.Smita Swarup, USA,.
- 805.Smitha Radhakrishnan, Natick, MA, USA.
- 806.Smriti Rao, Needham Heights, MA, USA.
- 807.Sneha Annavarapu, University of Chicago.



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- 811.Sohomjit Ray, BROOKLYN, New York, USA.
- 812.Solidarity in Struggle, South Asians for Black Lives, Bay Area based solidarity and education group..
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- 814.Somak Paul, Alameda, CA, USA.
- 815.Somalee Banerjee MD, , Kaiser Permanente, CA,.
- 816.Somnath Mukherjee, Milpitas, CA.
- 817.Sonal Gandhi, BROOKLYN, NY, USA.
- 818.Sonali Rahagude, Mountain View, CA..
- 819.Sonia Arora, Port Washington, New York, USA.
- 820.Sonia Suresh, Los Angeles, CA, USA.
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- 822.Sonya Badigian, Carnegie Mellon Grad, Minneapolis, MN.
- 823.Sonya Kalara, Oakland, CA.
- 824.Sonya Mehta, OAKLAND, CA, USA.
- 825.Sonya Mehta, Oakland, CA, leadership team member of They See Blue.
- 826.Soumya Vavilala, Woodbridge, New Jersey, USA.
- 827.Soundharya Chandran, California, USA.
- 828.Sri Mirle, Liberty Tw, Southampton.
- 829.Srikanth Jandhyala, Redwood City, CA.
- 830.Srilata Sircar, King', College London, UK.
- 831.Sripad Motiram, Boston, Massachusetts, USA.
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- 833.Sriram Rajagopalan, Seattle, WA.
- 834.Srirupa Prasad, Columbia, MO, USA.
- 835.Sriyandass Adidass, San Jose, CA..
- 836.Sriyandass Adidass, San Jose, California, USA.
- 837.Srushti Totadri, Boston, MA, USA.
- 838.Steph Jordan, Ypsilanti, MI, USA.
- 839.Stephen Rea, Denver, CO, USA.
- 840.Steve Folmar, Winston-Salem, NC, USA.
- 841.Steven Ragnarök, Tech Workers Coalition, Bay Area, CA.
- 842.Stuart Freeman, Brooklyn NY.
- 843.Subhayan Sahu, University of Maryland, MD.
- 844.Subramanian Elancheran, Sunnyvale, CA.
- 845.Subramanya Sastry, Alliance of Progressive South Asians (MN).
- 846.Sujata Warriar, Bloomfield, NJ, USA.
- 847.Sujatha Ramni, Seattle, WA.
- 848.Sumana Mandala, Scottsdale, AZ.
- 849.Sumanth Inukonda, Queens, NY, USA.
- 850.Sunaina Maira, Oakland, CA, USA.
- 851.Sunayana Gali, Seattle, WA.
- 852.Sunil Mehta, Saratoga, CA, co-founder and core-team member of They See Blue.



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- 855.Supriya Misra, New York City, NY, USA.
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- 867.Syed Ehtisham, South Plainfield, N.J, USA.
- 868.Syed Hussain, Pleasanton, CA, USA.
- 869.Syed Kamal, Norcross, GA, USA.
- 870.Syed Salman Qadri, Santa Clara, CA.
- 871.Tahil Sharma, Claremont, CA.
- 872.Tanay Balantrapu, Washington, DC, USA.
- 873.Tanvi Avasthi, Baltimore, MD.
- 874.Tapoja Chaudhuri, Seattle University, Seattle, USA.
- 875.Tara Bhagat, Washington DC.
- 876.Tatiana Chaterji, Oakland, CA.
- 877.Teresa Kotturan, New York, NY, USA.
- 878.Thazul Anaam PM, Trabuco Canyon, CA.
- 879.Therese Soosairaj, Monroe, New York, USA.
- 880.Thillai Kumaran, San Jose, CA.
- 881.Thiru Palanisamy, CA,.
- 882.Todd Wolfson, Philadelphia, PA, USA.
- 883.Tom O'Keefe, New York, NY.
- 884.Tommy McPhee, Houston, Texas, USA.
- 885.Toni Moore, Atlanta, Georgia, USA.
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- 887.Tsukina Blessing, Seattle, Washington, USA.
- 888.Udai Bhan Kashyap, Columbus, NJ, USA.
- 889.Ujjayini Sikha, Cupertino, CA.
- 890.Uma Raghavan, Seattle, WA.
- 891.Uma savanoor, Toledo, OH.
- 892.Umar Ahmed, San Jose, CA, USA.
- 893.Usha Iyer, Stanford University, CA.
- 894.Utkarsh J, San Jose, CA.
- 895.VV Ganeshananthan, Alliance of Progressive South Asians (MN).
- 896.Vamsi Vakulabharanam, Amherst, MA, USA.
- 897.Varun Khanna, Swarthmore College.



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- 900.Vasuki Narasimha Swamy, PhD, Santa Clara, CA.
- 901.Vasuki Nesiah, Brooklyn, NY, USA.
- 902.Vasundhara Gautam, Speech Recognition Engineer, Vancouver, Canada.
- 903.Veena Calambur, Princeton NJ,.
- 904.Veena Oldenburg, New York, New York, USA.
- 905.Veena Sankaranarayanan, Empyrean Benefit Solutions, San Francisco, CA.
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- 907.Vidhya Shanker, Alliance of Progressive South Asians (MN).
- 908.Vidya Mantrala, Washington, DC, USA.
- 909.Vidya Palaniswamy, San Jose, CA.
- 910.Vidya Sekhar, Seattle, WA.
- 911.Vijayan Sundararaj, TX,.
- 912.Vijayendra Kadalabal, Bangalore (TISS Alumni, GIPE Alumni, Chevening Alumni).
- 913.Vinod Mubayi, Miller Place, NY, USA.
- 914.Vinod Mubayi, New York, NY, USA.
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- 922.Vivek Mittal, Los Angeles, California, USA.
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- 924.Waqas Syed, North American Indian Muslim Association.
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- 926.Willow Ozburn, Norcross, GA, USA.
- 927.Winifred Poster, Washington University, St, Louis.
- 928.Yajnaseni Dutta, Chicago, IL.
- 929.Yavuz Yasar Yasar, Fort Collins, CO, USA.
- 930.Yinan (Nancy, Wang, Grad Student, Ann Arbor.
- 931.Yogesh Varhadd, Kingston, PA, USA.
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- 935.Zahir Adil, Billerica, MA, USA.
- 936.Zain Sharma, Herndon, Va, USA.
- 937.Zakia Zaman, Lombard, IL, USA.
- 938.Zeel Patel, Shingle Springs, CA.
- 939.abhilasha joshi, postdoctoral fellow, UC San Francisco, CA.
- 940.dipankar mukherjee.
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