

# RESOLUTION CALLING FOR THE CSU TO INCLUDE CASTE IN ANTI-DISCRIMINATORY POLICY

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- WHEREAS: the California State Student Association (CSSA) is the single recognized voice for over 487,000 students of the California State University (CSU) system; and
- WHEREAS: Caste is a structure of oppression that affects over 1 billion people across the world based in birth that determines social status and assigns “spiritual purity”;<sup>1</sup> and
- WHEREAS: There are four main caste groups: Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras, and those outside the caste system entirely, with lower caste Shudras and those outside the caste system, known as Dalits meaning “broken but resilient” and formerly known as “untouchables”, considered oppressed by caste; and
- WHEREAS: Caste-oppressed groups continue to experience profound injustices including socioeconomic inequalities, usurpation of their land, rights, and experience brutal violence at the hands of the “upper” Castes; and
- WHEREAS: 25 percent of Dalits who responded to a survey, of 1,200 respondents, executed by Equality Labs reported facing verbal or physical assault based on their caste in the United States; and<sup>2</sup>
- WHEREAS: One in three Dalit students report being discriminated against during their education in the United States; and<sup>3</sup>
- WHEREAS: Two out of three Dalits surveyed reported being treated unfairly at their workplace in the United States; and<sup>4</sup>
- WHEREAS: 60 percent of Dalits report experiencing caste-based derogatory jokes or comments in the United States; and<sup>5</sup>
- WHEREAS: 20 percent of Dalit respondents report feeling discriminated at a place of business because of their caste in the United States; and<sup>6</sup>
- WHEREAS: All of these inequalities associated with caste status have become embedded in all of the major South Asian American institutions and they

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.equalitylabs.org/castesurvey>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

extend into American mainstream institutions that have significant South Asian immigrant populations, with some of the caste social locators being last names, whether a family eats meat, whether they own land in their country of origin, who they want to marry or be in romantic relationships with, and whether they are allowed to be out in their place of worship and community; and<sup>7</sup>

WHEREAS: In a Caste in America series it was stated, “Caste-based discrimination often appears in higher education institutions, according to a report published last year by Equality Labs, a Dalit research organization”<sup>8</sup>; and

WHEREAS: The series also noted, “Overall, students from India represent the second-largest group of international students in the US But universities are just beginning to address caste dynamics among its student population”<sup>9</sup>; and

WHEREAS: In the last decade alone, numerous incidents of caste-based discrimination and suicides of Dalit students have been reported on the campuses across the country<sup>10</sup>; and

WHEREAS: This resolution would be an important first step to addressing campus Caste-based discrimination since, “there is scarcely any research on the changed demographic [*growing population of lower caste students on college campuses*] in higher education and its implications on students and the campus climate”<sup>11</sup>; and

WHEREAS: Lack of Caste-based Anti-Discrimination Policies make it difficult to find data of student’s facing Caste-based discrimination since there is no policy to categories the discrimination; and

WHEREAS: The CSU, “Strives to be free of all forms of Discrimination, including Harassment, because of any Protected Status: i.e., age, Disability (physical and mental), Gender (or sex), Gender Identity (including transgender), Gender Expression, Genetic Information, Marital Status, Medical Condition, Nationality, Race or Ethnicity (including color or ancestry), Religion (or Religious Creed), Sexual Orientation, sex stereotype, and Veteran or Military Status”; and<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>[https://static1.squarespace.com/static/58347d04bebafeb1e66df84c/t/5d9b4f9afbaef569c0a5c132/1570459664518/Caste\\_report\\_2018.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/58347d04bebafeb1e66df84c/t/5d9b4f9afbaef569c0a5c132/1570459664518/Caste_report_2018.pdf)

<sup>8</sup>

<https://www.pri.org/stories/2019-03-08/caste-discrimination-exists-college-campuses-some-schools-are-trying-change?amp:>

<sup>9</sup>

<https://www.pri.org/stories/2019-03-08/caste-discrimination-exists-college-campuses-some-schools-are-trying-change?amp:>

<sup>10</sup> <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/2394481119900838>

<sup>11</sup> <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/2394481119900838>

<sup>12</sup> <https://calstate.policystat.com/policy/8453516/latest/>

- WHEREAS: However, current CSU policy prohibiting discrimination includes many of the identities intertwined with caste, but does not protect from caste-based discrimination specifically; and <sup>13</sup>
- WHEREAS: Caste discrimination has long been overlooked by American institutions, with almost all institutions in the United States failing to protect caste oppressed people, highlighted most recently by the state of California's ongoing lawsuit against Cisco regarding caste discrimination in the workplace; and <sup>14</sup>
- WHEREAS: Brandeis University was the first US university to ban caste-based discrimination<sup>15</sup>, understanding that "caste identity is so intertwined with many of the legally recognized and protected characteristics, discrimination based on a person's caste is effectively the same"<sup>16</sup>; and
- WHEREAS: In addition to Brandeis University, the University of California, Berkeley, and Harvard University have begun to explore caste issues on their campuses<sup>17</sup>; and
- WHEREAS: The addition of caste within the anti-discrimination policy will make the California State University's in compliance with the recommendations of Equality Labs, an international human rights organization; and
- WHEREAS: The addition of caste within the anti-discrimination policy will reaffirm and add to the CSU's commitment to diversity, equity and support for those most systemically marginalized; and therefore be it
- RESOLVED: That CSSA commits to advocating for the addition of caste in anti-discrimination policy moving forward through conversations with the Chancellor's Office that include students; and be it further
- RESOLVED: That CSSA calls upon the CSU Board of Trustees to implement an addition of caste in the CSU anti-discrimination policy on, or before, the June 18<sup>th</sup> CSU Board of Trustees meeting; and be it further
- RESOLVED: This addition of caste as a protected category should be paired with assurance that staff working in the Title IX office are given resources to learn and better understand what caste is, such as the report on "Caste in the United States" from Equality Labs<sup>18</sup>; and be it finally
- RESOLVED: The California State Student Association will make this document public and will forward this resolution to all affected parties including all 23 CSU

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid

<sup>14</sup>

<https://www.npr.org/2020/10/12/922936053/california-workplace-discrimination-system-sheds-light-on-caste-system>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.insightintodiversity.com/brandeis-becomes-first-us-university-to-ban-caste-based-discrimination/>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2019/12/20/university-adds-caste-nondiscrimination-policy>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.pri.org/stories/2019-03-08/caste-discrimination-exists-college-campuses-some-schools-are-trying-change>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.equalitylabs.org/castesurvey>

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Academic Senate of the CSU, The California Faculty Association.