

To: SACUA

From: Dinesh Pal, Chair, Committee on Anti-Racism

Subject: Report on Activities of Committee on Anti-Racism for 2023-2024

Members: Dinesh Pal, Mark Allison, Michael Brenner, Daniel Burns, Minerva Garcia-Barrio, Gary Harper, Yazier Henry, Vincent Hutchings, David Kwabi, Kiran Lagisetty, Nicolai Lehnert, Stephen Rush, Kate Saylor, Emmanuel Yimfor, Esther Launstein (undergraduate student), Kevin Nguyen (graduate student)

SACUA Liaison: Deirdre Spencer

Meeting Dates: September 16, October 21, December 9, January 20, March 17, April 21

Committee Charge

1. Serve as a body to identify ways in which University, College, or other institutional policies contribute to structural racism and identify ways to change policies to promote anti-racism.
2. To guide and recommend to SACUA and the Senate priorities for University policies that support anti-racism.
3. Serve as a body to whom racist policies and practices experienced by faculty can be reported. Collect data on faculty reports of racism.
4. Identify and share best practices for responding to racism experienced by faculty of color, working with other units on campus as appropriate.
5. Sponsor at least one public anti-racism event per year (workshop, art performance, talk or paper, panel discussion, etc.).

Committee Report

The committee held hour-long monthly meetings between September 2022 and April 2023 and discussed wide ranging issues, including possible revision of the committee charge, and restructuring of the committee. Some of the committee discussions and business were also conducted over emails.

Before I summarize the committee's activities during this academic year, I would like to acknowledge the immense contributions by the previous chairs, Prof. Damani Partridge, and Deirdre Spencer who also served as the SACUA liaison for the CAR. Of note, some of the work that was accomplished this year was initiated under Deirdre's leadership. I would also like to thank my committee members, including the student members, for their invaluable service and contributions, and above all for being such a great group of supportive colleagues.

Senate Assembly Resolutions Introduced by CAR

- **Resolution on Anti-Racism Statement Regarding those of Asian and Pacific Islander Descent:** This resolution condemned the hate-based violence against Asian-Americans



and recommended that the University of Michigan join our peer institutions in explicitly acknowledging the escalation in anti-Asian sentiment, reaffirming its own commitment to anti-racism, and developing strategies to address all forms of discrimination.

The resolution was debated in the senate assembly and was sent back due to the objections by some assembly members who viewed the description of Asian-Americans in the resolution as too restrictive. The resolution was revised after extensive discussions among the CAR members, and critical input by Prof. Ann-Lin (Associate Professor, Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy). The revised resolution was approved in the Senate Assembly meeting held on Jan 23, 2023.

- **Resolution for the Creation of a Committee to Pursue a Land Acknowledgement Monument:** This resolution recommended that the senate assembly shall create a special committee to 1) pursue the creation by the University of Michigan of a memorial at a central location befitting the donation made by the native nations, and (2) advocate that the University take steps to ensure representation of their descendants across the University of Michigan.

The resolution was approved by the senate assembly on April 17, 2023.

Anti-Caste Initiatives by the CAR

- Dinesh Pal, Nicolai Lehnert (chair of CFEI and CAR member), Allen Liu (current SACUA chair), Silvia Pedraza (former SACUA chair), and Luke McCarthy (director of the Faculty Senate Office) met with Tanesia White (ECRT) to discuss incorporating language about caste into the U-M's anti-racism statement, as recommended by the resolution approved by the senate assembly. Pursuant to this meeting, the ECRT Office added language to their website that explicitly prohibits caste-based harassment and discrimination under the University's Non-Discrimination policy, and provided a mechanism to report such incidents.
- Dinesh Pal along with Manan Desai (Associate Prof., Dept. of Asian/Pacific Islander American Studies), Madhumita Lahiri (Associate Prof., Dept. of English, Language & Literature), and Matthew Hull (Associate Prof., Dept. of Anthropology; Director, Center for South Asian Studies) authored a Faculty Perspective Article for *The Record* to make the UM community aware of this new policy while providing background on this issue. The article is scheduled to be published on April 24th.

Anti-Racism Outreach Activity

- Dinesh Pal was contacted by the interim Chief of Primary Care at Highland Hospital, a safety-net hospital and clinic system in Oakland (CA) to know more about our best practices and experiences related to anti-racism. They came to know about our committee (CAR) while working on a project to design anti-racism interventions at their institution with the local Black community. Dinesh Pal, Damani Partridge, and Deirdre Spencer held a Zoom meeting with their contact person and shared the background knowledge and experiences.



Recommendations

The CAR members discussed the need to revise the committee charge and for possible restructuring of the committee. The following recommendations emerged from these discussions:

- Given that in the recent years there has been a significant increase in the number of anti-racism events that are held within and outside the UM, the CAR recommends removing the charge to hold at least one public anti-racism event each year. The committee is constrained by the available time and resources as opposed to other UM units which have both the funding and the support personnel to conduct such events. Importantly, the clear overlap in the goals of such events and the targeted audience does not, in our opinion, justify diverting the time and resources away from the CAR.
- The working period for any of the senate committees is between September and April (i.e., 8 months). However, due to the holidays and/or other exigencies related to teaching and research, the actual available time is much less. To facilitate continuity of intent and direction from year to year, we propose that the committee is led by a chair and a vice chair, with the provision for vice chair to assume the chair position in the subsequent year.
- Given the committee charge and the diverse membership, we believe that CAR can play a bigger role in providing input on anti-racism to the university. Therefore, we recommend that CAR be considered for an advisory role to the Chief Diversity Officer, and in an advisory/oversight role in ECRT when discussing cases related to racism.

Anti-Caste Statement and Resolution
2022-09-26 SA Vote of Approval

**DEFINITION OF SOUTH ASIAN CASTE SYSTEM AND ANTI-CASTE DISCRIMINATION
LANGUAGE**

A caste system is a class structure that is determined by birth and pre-determines all aspects of one's life and future. The caste-system as practiced in the South Asian nations of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and others have a three-thousand-year history and may determine what kind of work descendants can perform, what opportunities they have for professional and social growth and advancement, etc.

Unfortunately, the Indian caste system has become part of the diaspora and when people of South Asian descent migrate to other nations, they bring their caste-system to places such as the United States, where they discriminate against other south Asians based on caste. This takes the form of harassment, denial of job opportunities and advancement to name a few.

Therefore...

Whereas the caste-based discrimination cuts across religious identities and continues to be pervasive.

Whereas the leading institutes of higher education in the United States have recognized the need to proactively provide safeguards against caste-based discrimination and to include caste as a protected category.

Be it resolved that the University of Michigan join our peer institutions in explicitly recognizing caste as a protected category and provide safeguards to address any form of discrimination based on race, color, caste, national origin, age, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, disability, religion, height, weight, or veteran status.

ANTI-RACISM STATEMENT REGARDING THOSE OF ASIAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER DESCENT

- Whereas Asian Americans are the fastest-growing racial or ethnic group in the United States and have recently been the target of hate-based violence.
- Whereas anti-Asian racism in the United States has historically operated such that anger initiated against one Asian group/ethnicity inevitably expands to target all people who are perceived to be of Asian or Pacific Islander descent.
- Whereas anti-Chinese sentiment has recently become increasingly apparent in the United States, in part due to the federal government's China Initiative of 2018, and largely due to stigmatization of the people of Chinese origin as the carriers responsible for the COVID-19 Pandemic.
- Whereas anti-Chinese hate in public spaces has endangered the lives of people of Asian and Pacific Islander descent who have been randomly targeted to become victims of aggression and violence in public spaces.
- Whereas leading institutes of higher education in the United States, including the University of Michigan, have recognized the need to proactively acknowledge and address racism in all its forms.
- Be it resolved that the University of Michigan join our peer institutions in explicitly acknowledging the escalation in anti-Asian sentiment, reaffirming its own commitment to anti-racism, and developing strategies to address all forms of discrimination based on race, color, national origin, age, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, disability, religion, height, weight, or veteran status.

The University of Michigan
University Senate
Senate Assembly
Resolution # 041723-2

**Resolution for the Creation of a Committee to
Pursue a Land Acknowledgement Monument**

WHEREAS it is universally acknowledged that the grant of lands by the Anishinaabeg (including Ojibwa, Odawa, and Bodewadimi) and the Wyandot Nation, along with many other indigenous nations – laid the foundation of the University of Michigan, as it exists today;

WHEREAS the treaty of Fort Meigs, expressed in letter and spirit, an understanding that their descendants will receive education at the University of Michigan, known previously as the college at Detroit, and later as the University of Michigania;

WHEREAS a plaque to commemorate the said grant of lands installed by the University of Michigan in 2002 is certainly a step forward, we feel that the plaque is inadequate as a memorial to honor the land gift that was a foundational step in the evolution of the University of Michigan;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate Assembly shall create a special committee:

- The charges of the committee shall be (1) to pursue the creation by the University of Michigan of a memorial at a central location befitting the donation made by the native nations, and (2) to advocate that the University take steps to ensure representation of their descendants across the University of Michigan;
- The Chair and members of that committee shall be appointed by SACUA, in consultation with the CAR, the Native American Studies program, and members of the appropriate Native American communities;
- The special committee chair shall provide periodic updates to the chairs of CAR and SACUA.

Senate Assembly Approval: 4/17/2023

April 24, 2023

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Faculty Perspective: Inclusion of caste in U-M's non-discrimination policy

By Dinesh Pal, Manan Desai, Madhumita Lahiri and Matthew Hull

Topics: [Campus News](#)

This winter, the University of Michigan's Equity, Civil Rights, and Title IX Office added language to its website that explicitly prohibits caste-based harassment and discrimination under the University's Non-Discrimination policy and provided a mechanism to report such incidents.

In doing so, U-M joins a growing list of institutions such as Brandeis University, Brown University, University of California, Davis, and the California State University system that have included caste in their campuswide non-discrimination and harassment policy.

Notably, such efforts to explicitly prohibit caste-based discrimination have not been limited only to colleges and institutions of higher education. Apple Inc. has explicitly prohibited caste-based discrimination, and this past February, the Seattle City Council passed an ordinance to identify caste as a protected class under its Human Rights Code. In addition, a bill was introduced in March this year in the California State Senate to recognize caste as a protected category.

Understanding and incorporating caste as a category of discrimination requires clarity on what caste means. Caste is a system of graded inequality built on endogamy and exclusionary practices that strip individuals and communities of basic human dignity.

Caste affiliations and caste-based harassment and discriminatory practices are a feature of social life in South Asia, including among Christians, Sikhs, Muslims, and Hindus in every country of the region, including Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Most countries of the region have laws that distinguish caste-based discrimination from religious and ethnic discrimination.

Caste defies the frameworks of race, religion or ethnicity and thus poses a unique challenge to those unfamiliar with its functioning. Caste affiliations frequently remain significant in diasporic South Asian communities, and caste-based micro-aggressions and overt discrimination have been reported in countries such as Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

For example, in 2020 the California Department for Fair Employment and Housing filed a lawsuit against the software company Cisco Systems over the allegations of caste-based discrimination. Along similar lines, a class action lawsuit was filed in May 2021 against a New Jersey temple run by Bochasanwasi Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha, by individuals from marginalized castes alleging exploitative practices.

At U-M, a resolution to include caste as a protected category was first approved by the Committee on Anti-Racism, a relatively new Faculty Senate committee whose charge includes guiding the Senate Assembly and the Senate Advisory Committee on University Affairs (SACUA) on priorities for university policies that support anti-racism. The resolution was subsequently approved unanimously by SACUA and then passed in the Senate Assembly in 2022.

Silvia Pedraza, professor of sociology and of American culture, and SACUA chair in fall 2022, noted that “discrimination by caste is distinct from discrimination by race and by social class. It serves to marginalize and isolate those who are of lower caste, whose progress is blocked, and it ultimately hurts.”

In response, the ECRT Office has included the following language on its website under **the “Civil Rights Discrimination” page**: “Caste-based discrimination and/or harassment violates the University’s commitment to ensuring equal opportunity in educational, occupational, and professional advancement, and is prohibited under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, under U-M **SPG 201.35 (Non-Discrimination)**, and under **SPG 201.89-1 (Discrimination and Harassment)**. Instances of caste-based discrimination may be reported using the **Discrimination and Harassment Reporting Form.**”

We applaud the ECRT Office for recognizing and expressly prohibiting caste-based harassment and discrimination. We also urge the university to begin vigorous efforts to educate our community about caste-based discrimination as part of its mission to support diversity, equity, and inclusion.

However, caste also must be specifically included as a protected category in the university’s Standard Practice Guide. Caste is a distinct phenomenon and caste-based discrimination cannot be thoroughly addressed through other protected categories such as race, religion or ethnicity. Caste-based discrimination must be specifically included in the SPG if we are to realize an equitable university community free of discriminatory and exclusionary behaviors.

— *Dinesh Pal is an associate professor of anesthesiology and of molecular and integrative physiology in the Medical School. He also chairs the Faculty Senate’s Committee on Anti-Racism and is a member of the Senate Assembly.*

— *Manan Desai is an associate professor of American culture and of English language and literature, and is director of the Asian/Pacific Islander American Studies Program in LSA.*

— *Madhumita Lahiri is an associate professor of English language and literature in LSA and is a member of the Senate Assembly.*

— *Matthew Hull is an associate professor of anthropology and is director of the Center for South Asian Studies in LSA.*

— *Faculty Perspective is provided by The University Record as a forum for U-M faculty representatives to comment on university issues. Opinions presented are those of the authors and do not reflect the views of the Record or the University of Michigan. Submissions are coordinated through the Faculty Senate Office.*

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