



CASTE IN THE UNITED STATES

**THENMOZHI SOUNDARARAJAN
EQUALITY LABS**

Caste in the United States

What is Caste?

CASTE IS A SYSTEM OF EXCLUSION THAT AFFECTS MORE THAN 1.9 BILLION PEOPLE WORLDWIDE. THIS EXCLUSIONARY SYSTEM RANKS PEOPLE AT BIRTH, WITH ONE'S CASTE DETERMINING EVERY ASPECT OF THEIR LIFE — THEIR JOB, WHERE THEY CAN LIVE, WHOM THEY MARRY, AND WHERE THEY WORSHIP.

Who Are South Asian Americans?

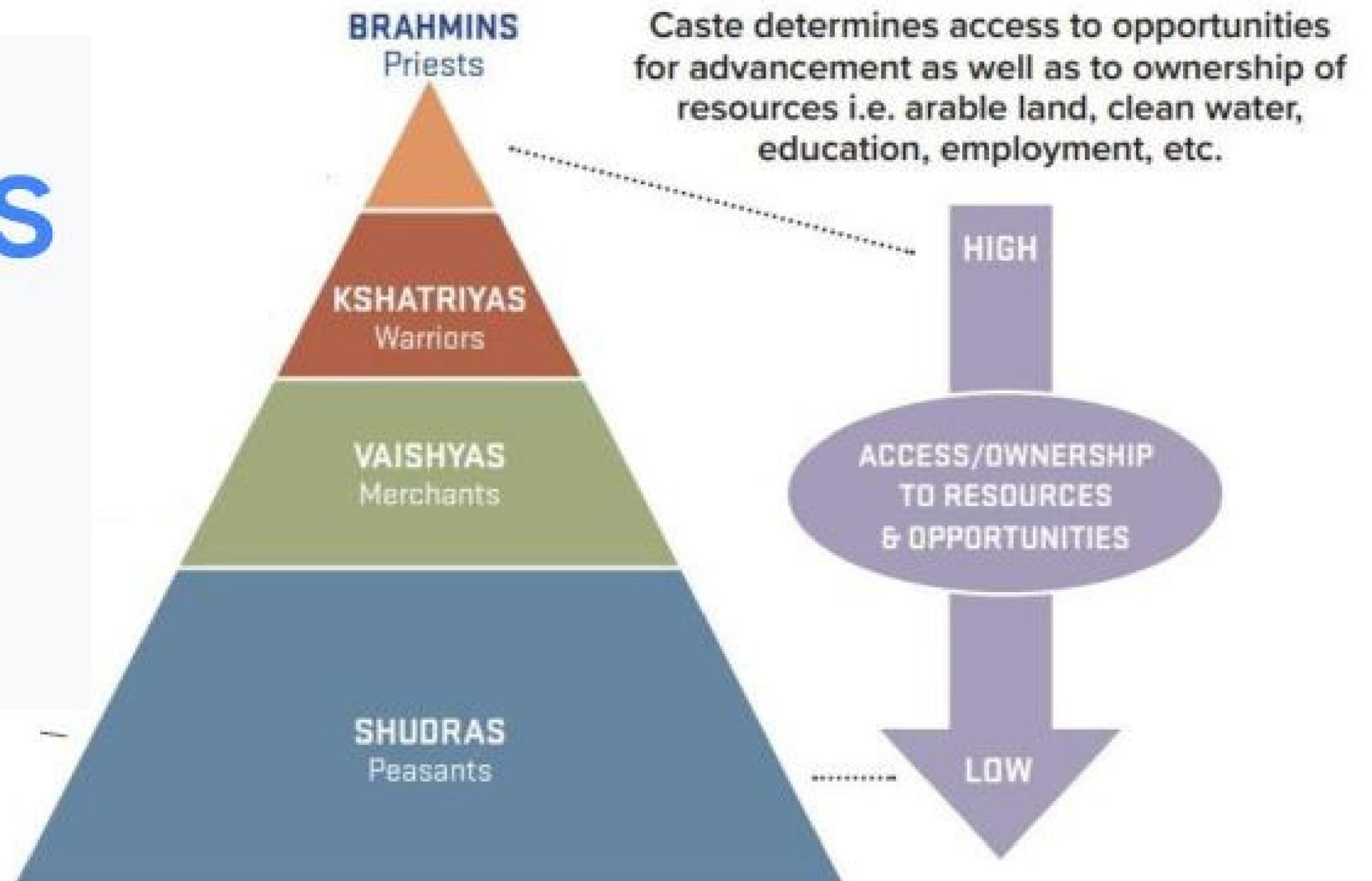
SOUTH ASIAN AMERICANS ARE AMERICANS WHOSE HERITAGE COMES FROM ANY OF THE COUNTRIES OF SOUTH ASIA INCLUDING: BANGLADESH, BHUTAN, INDIA, MALDIVES, NEPAL, PAKISTAN, AND SRI LANKA, AND MYANMAR. IT ALSO INCLUDES PEOPLE WHO WERE INDENTURED FROM THESE COMMUNITIES INCLUDING INDO-CARRIBEAN AND INDO-FIJIAN COMMUNITIES



**THERE ARE
1.9 BILLION SOUTH
ASIANS IN THE
WORLD**

**THERE ARE 5.4 MILLION
SOUTH ASIAN AMERICANS**

How Does Caste Work?



ADIVASIS

Indigenous people of South Asia. For self-determination and political/cultural autonomy, they fight against the stripping of their ancestral land and its natural resources.

DALITS

Caste communities that were forced by Caste apartheid into slave and bonded agricultural labor, and undignified sanitation work like manual scavenging. Branded untouchable for jobs considered spiritually polluting, they struggle against extreme violence and discrimination.

Key Conclusions for Caste-based Discrimination in the United States

It is clear from the findings of this report that Caste definitively exists in the diaspora. A summary of the data shows the scope of the problem. Caste in its manifestations has structural, interpersonal, and internal consequences that we must address.



25% of Dalits who responded said they had faced **verbal or physical assault** based on their Caste.



ONE IN THREE Dalit students report being **discriminated against during their education.**



TWO OUT OF THREE Dalits surveyed reported being **treated unfairly** at their **workplace.**



60% of Dalits report experiencing **Caste-based derogatory jokes** or comments.



40% of Dalits and **14%** of Shudra respondents were made to feel **unwelcome at their place of worship** because of their Caste.



20% of Dalit respondents report feeling **discriminated at a place of business** because of their Caste.



OVER 40% of Dalit Respondents have reported being **rejected in a Romantic Partnership** on the basis of Caste.



ONE IN TWO of all Dalit respondents and **ONE IN FOUR** of all Shudra respondents **live in fear of their Caste being “outed.”**

432 Essex Street, - - - Salem, Mass.
M. P. JYES.



AMERICAN
VIEW 5.

EAST INDIA MARINE SOCIETY

THE DIARY
OF
WILLIAM BENTLEY, D. D.

PASTOR OF THE EAST CHURCH
SALEM, MASSACHUSETTS

Volume 2

JANUARY, 1793 — DECEMBER, 1802

SALEM, MASS.
The Essex Institute
1907

REV WILLIAM BENTLEY DIARY EXCERPT

HAD THE PLEASURE OF SEEING FOR THE FIRST TIME A NATIVE OF THE INDIES FROM MADRAS. HE IS OF DARK COMPLEXION, LONG BLACK HAIR, SOFT COUNTENANCE, TALL, AND WELL PROPORTIONED. HE IS SAID TO BE DARKER THAN INDIANS IN GENERAL OF HIS OWN CASTE. I HAD NOT OPPORTUNITY TO JUDGE HIS ABILITIES BUT HIS COUNTENANCE WAS NOT EXPRESSIVE. HE CAME TO SALEM WITH CAPT. J. GIBAUT AND HAS BEEN IN EUROPE.







Box 11, #7

A New Problem for Uncle Sam





HAVE WE A DUSKY PERIL

HINDU HORDES INVADING THE STATE

BELLINGHAM workmen are becoming excited over the arrival of East Indians in numbers across the Canadian border, and fear that the dusky Asiatics with their turbans will prove a worse menace to the working classes than the "Yellow Peril" that has so long threatened the Pacific Coast.



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THE SUNDAY EVENING BELLINGHAM BELLINGHAM, WASH., SEPTEMBER 14, 1908

Keep the Hindus Out, Says Writer

By [Name]

BY [Name]

BY [Name]

BY [Name]

BY [Name]





Asiatic Barred Zone Immigration Act of 1917

-  Asiatic Barred Zone
-  Modern International Borders

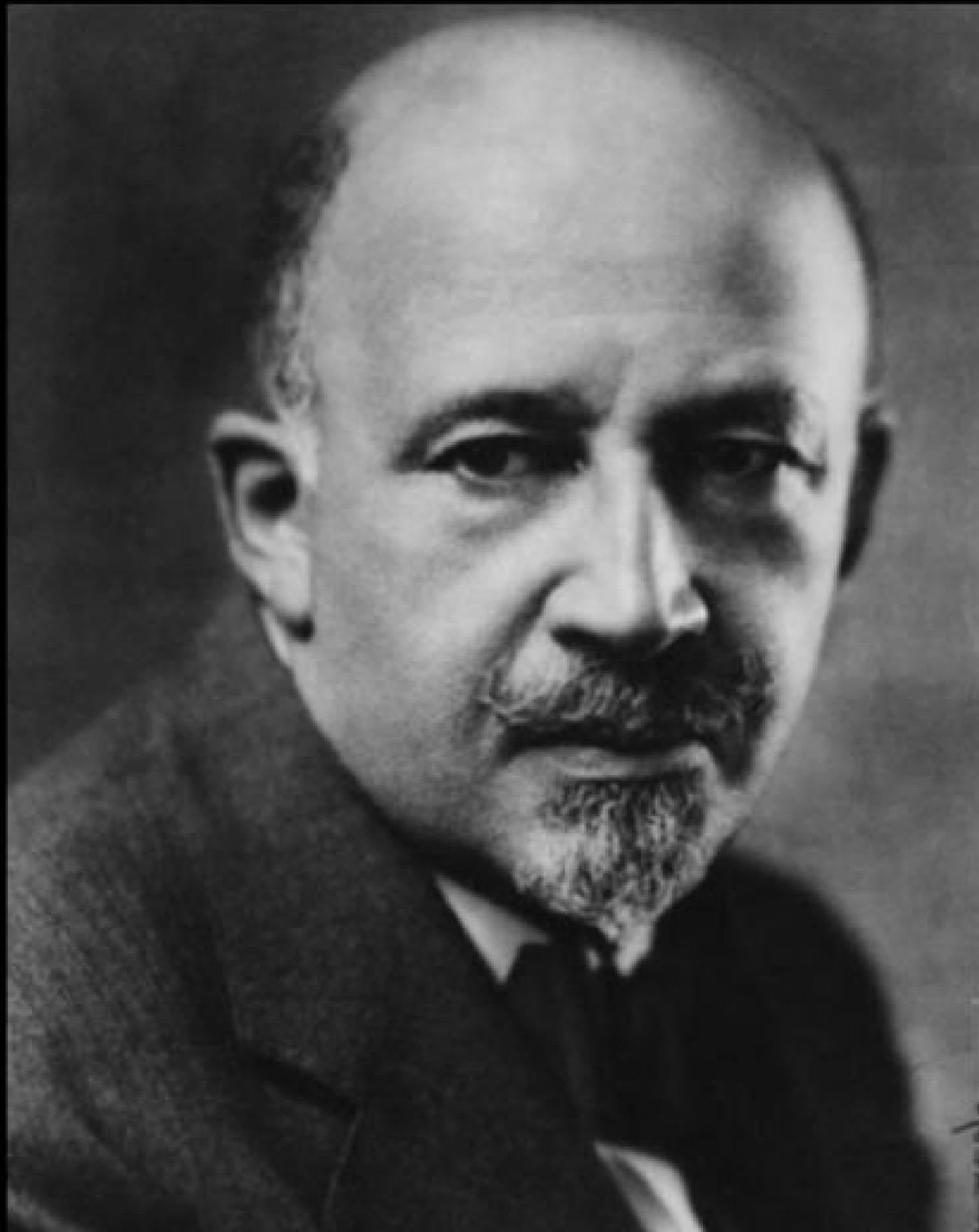
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Presentations are communication tools.





Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, M.A.,
Ph.D., D.Sc., Barrister-at-Law.

"Rajgrah",
Hindu Colony,
Dadar,
Bombay-14.

Dear Prof. Dubois

Air Mail

Although I have not met you personally, I know you by name as every one does who is working in the case of securing liberty to the oppressed people. I belong to the Untouchables of India and perhaps you might have heard my name. I have been a student of the Negro problem and have read your writings throughout. There is so much similarity between the position of the Untouchables in India and of the position of the Negroes in America that the study of the latter is not only natural but necessary.

I was very much interested to read that the Negroes of America have filed a petition to the U.N.O. The Untouchables of India are also thinking of following suit. Will you be so good as to secure for me two or three copies of this representation by the Negroes and send them to my address. I need hardly say how very grateful I shall be for your troubles in this behalf.

Yours sincerely,

B. R. Ambedkar

To

Prof. Dubois,
University of Atlanta,
Georgia, U.S.A.

31 July 1946

My dear Mr. Ambedkar:

I have your letter concerning the case of the Negroes of America and the Untouchables in India before the United Nations. As you say a small organization of American Negroes, The National Negro Congress has already made a statement which I am enclosing. I think, however, that a much more comprehensive statement well documented will eventually be laid before the United Nations by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. If this is done I shall be glad to send you a copy.

I have often heard of your name and work and of course have every sympathy with the Untouchables of India. I shall be glad to be of any service I can render if possible in the future.

Very sincerely yours,

W. E. B. Du Bois

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar
Rajgrah
Hindu Colony
Dadar
Bombay, India

DALIT PANTHER OF INDIA

DHARAVI BRANCH







Berkeley Landlord Arrested in Sex Scheme / Police say he brought girls from India

Indian workers awarded millions after US firm found guilty of trafficking

Five men awarded \$14m after being lured to US to help repair damage after Hurricane Katrina



▲ Inside a work camp used by Indian workers in the Signal shipyards in Pascagoula, Mississippi. A New Orleans jury awarded \$14 million to five Indian men who were lured to the United States and forced to work under inhumane conditions after Hurricane Katrina. Photograph: Handout/Reuters



Case of caste bias at Cisco Systems: Even 'progressive' Silicon Valley elites not immune to new strain of discrimination

This will hopefully provoke the creation of caste as new grounds for discrimination in the United States. This will help create a legal discourse on the synonymy of the manifestations between race and caste.



CISCO



Suit: Workers lured from India paid \$1.20 per hour for years

A lawsuit says workers from marginalized communities in India were lured to New Jersey and forced to work more than 12 hours per day at ultra-low wages to help build a Hindu temple



**CASTE BIAS IN
LABOR**

**WHY WOULD I REPORT
TO HR WHEN THEY
PROBABLY DON'T
EVEN KNOW WHERE
INDIA IS ON THE MAP?**



“

-Caste Oppressed Worker in California



**OF THE CASTE-OPPRESSED STUDENTS, STAFF, AND FACULTY SURVEYED
IN US HIGHER EDUCATION:**

- **1 IN 5 FACED CHALLENGES IN GETTING THEIR VISA.**
- **4 IN 5 WORKED MULTIPLE JOBS WHILE TAKING CLASSES.**
- **3 IN 5 WORKED AT LEAST 20-40 HOURS A WEEK OUTSIDE CLASSES.**
- **2 IN 5 HAD TO APPLY FOR AN EMERGENCY LOAN FOR AN UNEXPECTED CRISIS OR EXPENSE.**
- **4 IN 5 REPORTED EXPERIENCING CASTE DISCRIMINATION IN US HIGHER EDUCATION.**

**OF THE CASTE-OPPRESSED STUDENTS, STAFF, AND FACULTY SURVEYED
IN US HIGHER EDUCATION:**

- **1 IN 5 REPORTED BEING SUBJECTED TO DISCRIMINATORY HIRING PROCESS IN THEIR WORKPLACE IN US ACADEMIA.**
- **1 IN 2 FOUND THEIR PROFESSOR/CURRICULUM EXPRESS CASTE BIAS.**
- **4 IN 5 FOUND SOCIAL CIRCLES ON CAMPUS FALL ALONG CASTE LINES.**

Casteism in University

Common Usage of Caste Slurs and Insults

Bullying and Harassment

Discrimination in housing

Discrimination in dining

Attempts to out caste identity

Siloing and blacklisting them from alumni and professional networks

Casteist professors and syllabus

Caste Based Sexual Harassment

Retaliation and demoralization

Impacts of Caste Stress

- A sense of being isolated and an outside
- Low Self-worth and helplessness and hopelessness
- Stress related to being seen as a “representative” of one’s community
- Feeling fearful, anxious, frustrated, helpless, depressed, or angry
- Considering dropping out or transferring to another school
- Difficulties with concentration and motivation for classes

What Can Universities Do?

- ADD CASTE AS A PROTECTED CATEGORY IN YOUR INSTITUTIONS
- IMPLEMENT DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION TRAINING FOR HR, MANAGERS, AND STAFF TO BUILD CASTE COMPETENCY
- INVEST IN DALIT ORGANIZATIONS FOR EXTERNAL CONTRACTS
- HOLD A PUBLIC BRIEFING ON CASTE
- COLLECT DATA ON CASTE EXCLUSION TO SET KPI'S FOR MEASURING PROGRESS ON CASTE EQUITY
- CONDUCT A REVIEW OF PAST EXPERIENCES OF DALIT STAKEHOLDERS ON CAMPUS

What Can Caste Equity Allies Do?

- COMMIT TO A GROWTH MINDSET THAT IS LIFETIME JOURNEY TO BUILDING INCLUSION
- MAP YOUR CONTEXT IN TERMS OF RACE, CASTE, AND GENDER
- USE PRECISE LANGUAGE AND ACTIONS AND REFLECT ON YOUR IMPLICIT AND EXPLICIT BIASES
- ADDRESS MICROAGGRESSIONS BY UPSTANDING AND ENGAGE IN COMPASSIONATE INTERVENTIONS
- DON'T PUT THE BURDEN OF EQUITY ON THE EXCLUDED
- MEET WITH CASTE OPPRESSED COLLEAGUES AND SUPPORT THEIR GOALS FOR ADVANCEMENT