

The History of the Black-Indian Alliance

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INTRODUCTION

Alliances are not permanent. They change with time and evolve with political circumstance and social need. The discussions and ideas they produce can seem transformative in one era but may be forgotten by the next.

This is what happened to the Black-Indian alliance of the early- and mid-twentieth centuries. It is, largely, a forgotten story in American and world history: an inspiring story of Black civil rights leaders in the United States and Indian independence leaders corresponding, strategizing, and supporting one another in their freedom struggles. They saw, in their respective conflicts, a common oppression: white-supremacist colonialism, manifested in the United States by Jim Crow and in India by the British Raj.

United by this common struggle, figures like W.E.B. Du Bois, Lala Lajpat Rai, Marcus Garvey, Jawaharlal Nehru, and many others spent decades cultivating and advancing a radical notion of transnational unity between “colored people.”¹ Together they created a powerful intellectual force that significantly shaped their respective successful struggles for freedom.

But the alliance has withered since the 1960s. By that time both Black and Indian leaders had, apparently, won their freedom battles: Jim Crow and British colonialism

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1. See GERALD HORNE, THE END OF EMPIRES: AFRICAN AMERICANS AND INDIA 3–5, 15 (2008).

had been defeated. After those victories came new struggles, ones less easily defined, and subsequently the alliance, once rich and transformative, faded.

What were the reasons for the rise and fall of this alliance? How did it shape and advance its participants' fights for freedom? And could this alliance still have relevance today—is there the potential for it to provide new power, new momentum to the racial struggles of contemporary America?

These are the questions this paper attempts to answer. It seeks to shine a light on a radical alliance that today receives little to no attention, between two communities that most people do not associate with each other. It wonders if the past could be a guide to the future, and whether the United States' greatest freedom fighters, African-Americans, and one of the fastest-growing groups of a rapidly diversifying America, Indian-Americans, ought to fashion a new alliance for the future of civil rights in the United States, based on the one forged by their forebearers.

THE ALLIANCE AND HOW IT FORMED

An intellectual and political alliance between Black civil rights leaders and Indian independence leaders might feel like only a historical footnote today. But at the time, the alliance not only made perfect sense: it was almost inevitable.

“The greatest color problem in the world is that of India,” wrote W.E.B. Du Bois, crediting India for being the largest country in the world that was not in control of its own destiny.² Later, Jawaharlal Nehru, a fierce Indian independence leader and first Prime Minister of the country, declared that “[t]here is nothing more terrible . . . than the infinite tragedy of Africa in the past few hundred years. . . . When I think of it, everything else pales into insignificance. . . . [E]ver since the days when millions of [Africans] were carried away in galleys as slaves to America. . . .”³

There was a deep belief at that time that the two struggles these peoples faced were really the same. Both were “colored people”⁴ who had roots in and connections to the Global South, fighting against the same colonial system. By the twentieth century, Black people in the United States were oppressed not by Europeans, but by white Americans. Yet the birthplace of that oppression was in the slave trade, the systematic robbery and abuse of Black bodies by Europeans who, throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, carted them away from the west coast of Africa⁵ in, as Nehru said, “galleys as slaves to America.”⁶ It was the descendants of those slave traders—literally and, in a broader sense, philosophically—who in the first half of the twentieth century were oppressing the peoples of India, using their bodies as

2. DOHRA AHMAD, *LANDSCAPES OF HOPE: ANTI-COLONIAL UTOPIANISM IN AMERICA* 168 (Oxford University Press, 2009), citing W.E.B. Du Bois, *As the Crow Flies*, NEW YORK AMSTERDAM NEWS, Feb. 26, 1944, at 10.

3. HORNE, *supra* note 1, at 4.

4. See NICO SLATE, *COLORED COSMOPOLITANISM: THE SHARED STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM IN THE UNITED STATES AND INDIA*, 3–5, 15 (2012).

5. See MICHELLE ALEXANDER, *THE NEW JIM CROW: MASS INCARCERATION IN THE AGE OF COLORBLINDNESS*, 22–25 (2012).

6. HORNE, *supra* note 1, at 4.

expendable labor as they once had Africans, destructing their bodies with the same cruel racism the American South used in its lynching of Black people.⁷

Many racist Americans and Europeans drew similarities between the two groups. They regarded Black and Brown peoples as occupying a similar, low rung on the global racial hierarchy. They had to: the creation of this hierarchy was what justified their dominance and cruelty toward Blacks and Indians. For the British, it was the “White Man’s Burden” to civilize Indians, to lead them away from their old, untamed traditions and toward the light of Western ways.⁸ For the American South, it was Black peoples’ apparent savagery and animism that justified segregation and the violence perpetrated on Black bodies.⁹ Rhetorically subordinating Black and Indian people created a rationale that justified both colonialism and segregation. It gave Americans and Europeans cover for their own savage ways.

They often used much the same language to describe each race: “[t]he Hindu is unruly, boisterous, and quarrelsome when intoxicated” and “sodden with filthiness,”¹⁰ a description remarkably reminiscent of the way many American racists described Black people.¹¹ Both groups, too, were stereotyped as having predatory designs on European and white women.¹² Pursuing “Hindu” (a catch-all term for Indian people that casually dismissed the tens of millions of Muslims, Jains, Sikhs, Buddhists, and other groups whose home was India) criminals was difficult because “similarity of dress and complexion among [them] made it difficult to identify a certain one among a number.”¹³ Indians, like Black people, were also apparently hard to tell apart.

White supremacists globally lumped Blacks and Indians together, often under one term: “colored people.” They were unruly, animalistic, vermin-like, and incapable of self-governance.¹⁴ It was natural, then, that the vermin would start to talk to each other.

Black and Indian leaders came to understand their oppressions as one and the same. As author Nico Slate puts it, they developed a shared “colored cosmopolitanism through which they framed commonalities of struggle between ‘colored’ peoples fighting for their rights around the world.”¹⁵ Colored cosmopolitanism expanded the groups’ worldviews and moved them beyond a single-minded, parochial

7. ALEXANDER, *supra* note 5; BIPAN CHANDRA ET AL., *INDIA’S STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE* (2016).

8. *See generally* CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS, *BLOOD, CLASS, AND EMPIRE: THE ENDURING ANGLO-AMERICAN RELATIONSHIP* 63-64 (2004).

9. *See The Brute Caricature*, FERRIS STATE UNIVERSITY, <https://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/news/jimcrow/brute/homepage.htm> (last visited Dec. 7, 2022).

10. HORNE, *supra* note 1, at 53-54.

11. *See* Michael A. Ruane, *A Brief History Of The Enduring Phony Science That Perpetuates White Supremacy*, WASH. POST (Apr. 30, 2019 at 11:38 AM), https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/a-brief-history-of-the-enduring-phony-science-that-perpetuates-white-supremacy/2019/04/29/20e6aef0-5aeb-11e9-a00e-050dc7b82693_story.html.

12. HORNE, *supra* note 1, at 54.

13. *Id.*

14. *See generally id.*

15. SLATE, *supra* note 4, at 66.

understanding of their struggles.¹⁶ In sharp contrast to their oppressors, who painted people of color as a monolith uncivilized and savage, Black and Indian leaders crafted a truly egalitarian ideology that recognized everyone's, shared humanity—one that crossed lines of race, religion, or nation.¹⁷

As a result, Black leaders in the United States and Indian independence leaders took a deep level of interest in each others' stories. Recognizing the shared origins of their struggle and the similarities of their fights for independence, each group believed there was much to be gained, strategically and morally, in learning more about and helping the other.

Lala Lajpat Rai, an Indian author and revolutionary leader from Punjab, was an early adopter of this belief. Rai was a prolific writer in the Indian independence movement; and in his writings, he often drew parallels between that struggle and that of Black people in the United States. He asserted that when he arrived in the United States “for the first time, [he] was shocked by [the] treatment of the Negro.”¹⁸ He often spent personal political capital in British India to advocate for the cause of African Americans.¹⁹ He wrote to Du Bois insisting for “any recent literature which you can send me about the treatment of Negroes in the United States and about the activities of the Ku Klux Klan” and for “telling pictures of the cruelties inflicted on your paper by the whites of America.”²⁰ When Rai was killed by the British during a peaceful protest in 1928, Du Bois, by then a close friend of Rai's, publicly grieved his passing. He wrote to a Lahore paper, “When a man of his sort can be called a revolutionist and beaten to death by a great civilized government, then indeed revolution becomes a duty to all right-thinking men.”²¹ Colonial atrocities on one side of the world were beginning to influence the other side: the alliance was beginning to seriously question the white supremacist system.

Rai was not alone among Indian freedom fighters in his passion for Black freedom. Many who visited or lived in the United States were repulsed by the treatment of African Americans there. For example, the Indian scholar and anarchist Har Dayal came to the United States expecting a portrait of the then-prevailing reputation of the country: the “home of the brave,” a land of freedom, the birthplace of the Declaration of Independence.²² Instead he found a racial stratification whose abject cruelty arguably surpassed even India's own divisions of color and caste.²³ Ram Chandra, an Indian independence leader based in California, was similarly dismayed by the contrast between the legend of Abraham Lincoln, known the world over for emancipating enslaved Black people and shepherding the United States toward,

16. *See id.* at 66-7.

17. *See id.*

18. HORNE, *supra* note 1, at 47.

19. *See generally id.* at 47-48.

20. *Id.* at 73.

21. Aditya Indla, *Friends in a Shared Quest for Social Justice: Lala Lajpat Rai and W.E.B. Dubois*, INDIA CURRENTS, (Mar. 1, 2022), <https://indiacurrents.com/friends-in-the-shared-quest-for-social-justice-lala-lajpat-rai-and-w-e-b-dubois/>.

22. *See* HORNE, *supra* note 1, at 48-9.

23. *See generally id.*

apparently, a new era of freedom, and the contemporary reality of American racism. Rabindranath Tagore, the famed, Nobel Prize-winning Bengali poet, decried in a letter to an English friend the United States' "inhuman treatment of the Negroes, the instances of rank injustice, perpetrated by her highest courts of law,"²⁴ and wrote "Ode to Africa," a poem decrying Western imperialism and slavery.²⁵ Mohandas Gandhi began to correspond with Du Bois, Booker T. Washington, and Marcus Garvey.²⁶

There was a similar passion in the other direction. Du Bois was a leader in drawing a connection between the Black and Indian struggles, even going so far as to assert a borderline-mythic connection between the two races. In his novel *Dark Princess*, Du Bois depicted the romance between a Black college student and an Indian princess and the struggles they overcome as an interracial couple.²⁷ The novel ends with the birth of their son, who is hailed as a messiah-like figure of "the darker world."²⁸ Evoking religious imagery, Du Bois writes of three old men emerging from the forest to herald the baby's arrival.²⁹ The Indian princess raises her baby to the sky and speaks to the Hindu triumvirate of Gods, Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva, as the Black college student's mother chants to Jesus.³⁰

Other Black leaders may not have generally infused their words with such religious or mythic notions. But many were just as passionate in their belief in the alliance. Black activist and journalist Marcus Garvey's *The Negro World* newspaper often lauded the rise of "the dark world."³¹ Hubert Harrison heralded Mohandas Gandhi as the "Brown man who leads the way."³² The newspaper *Negro World* asked, "How much longer will England keep its foot upon the neck of India?"³³ Robert O. Jordan, president of the Ethiopian Pacific Movement in Harlem, wrote to Jawaharlal Nehru that "[w]e . . . are suffering the same as our brothers in India and we hope it won't be long before [we] will get away from the [yoke] of the white man."³⁴ That same year, 1936, Mohandas Gandhi returned the praise and nodded toward the burgeoning alliance: "It may be through the Negroes that the unadulterated message of non-violence will be delivered to the world."³⁵

24. Rabindranath Tagore, *A Hundred Years of Rule Over India*, THE GUARDIAN (Oct. 1, 1936), <https://www.theguardian.com/news/1936/oct/02/mainsection.fromthearchive>.

25. Monish Rajan Chatterjee, *Translation of Rabindranath Tagore's 'Ode to Africa'*, UNIV. DAYTON ECOMMONS, (Oct. 2015) https://ecommons.udayton.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1367&context=ece_fac_pub.

26. Lynn Burnett, *Gandhi's Connections with Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. DuBois, and Marcus Garvey*, CROSS CULTURAL SOLIDARITY, <https://crossculturalsolidarity.com/gandhis-connections-with-booker-t-washington-w-e-b-du-bois-and-marcus-garvey/>.

27. See generally W.E.B. Du Bois, *Dark Princess* (Univ. Press of Miss., 1928).

28. *Id.* at 308-11.

29. *Id.*

30. *Id.*

31. SLATE, *supra* note 4, at 70-71.

32. *Id.*

33. HORNE, *supra* note 1, at 59.

34. *Id.* at 14.

35. *Id.* at 15.

These words exemplified a common belief among the freedom fighters: that there was a natural brotherhood (the word is intentional; notably and predictably, few women were allowed into the leadership on either side at the time) between the Black and Brown races. It was an alliance that heralded a “transnational and transracial conception of color,”³⁶ as author Nico Slate puts it. As a natural reaction to the hegemony and oppression of white people, the “colored people” joined together with the hopes of overthrowing the global white supremacist system. In a description evocative of the later ideas of intersectionality pioneered by Black women activists in the United States,³⁷ these leaders “recognized how multiple oppressions intersected, and sought to forge alliances across social movements as well as national borders.”³⁸

There was a passionate emotional investment on both sides of this burgeoning alliance – a belief in each other’s causes and a solidarity that no colonial system could break. But did this mutual investment lead to something more—to *intellectual* exchanges between the two groups? In other words, did these grand, idealistic professions of transracial brotherhood translate into a shared set of ideas that would, ultimately, help break down their respective oppressions?

Cyril Briggs, a Black communist, seemed to think so. He told military intelligence interviewers, “Look what the Hindus, another colored race, are doing in India. All these things are factors that help us here, right here in Harlem.”³⁹

How, exactly?

THE ALLIANCE’S INTELLECTUAL EXCHANGE

Indian and Black leaders did more than express sympathy for one another: they learned from one another, exchanged ideas on strategy, and contributed to the growing movements for the others’ independence. Although they did this in innumerable ways, this essay focuses on two: Indian newspapers in America supporting Black rights and Black leaders learning nonviolent noncooperation strategy from the Indian Independence Movement.

In the first two decades of the twentieth century, South Asian immigrants began trickling into the United States, particularly the west coast.⁴⁰ The arrival of these immigrants precipitated a change in the Indian intellectual movement for independence to think not only in terms of their own anti-British struggle, but the broader, global struggle against colonialism and white supremacy.⁴¹ The newly-arriving Indians, often well-educated and students at west coast universities, were stunned by white peoples’ treatment of people of color (even in ostensibly more enlightened areas like San Francisco).⁴² As the newly-arriving Indians experienced an unexpected

36. SLATE, *supra* note 4, at 68.

37. See The Combahee River Collective Statement (April 1977), Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/lcwaN0028151/>.

38. SLATE, *supra* note 4, at 67.

39. HORNE, *supra* note 1, at 83.

40. See Seema Sohi, *Repressing the Hindu Menace: Race, Anarchy, and Indian Anticolonialism*, in *THE SUN NEVER SETS: SOUTH ASIAN MIGRANTS IN AN AGE OF U.S. POWER* 50, 52-3 (N.Y.U. Press, 2013).

41. See *id.* at 63-66.

42. See HORNE, *supra* note 1, at 47.

virulent strain of racism, they too noted that “there was a group that fell even beneath them on the social scale: African Americans.”⁴³

It was precisely this mixture—shock at their own treatment added to increased awareness and sympathy with the plight of Black people in the United States—that motivated a series of anti-colonial movements by the Indians within the United States. Arguably the most influential of these movements at the time was *Ghadar*—or, revolt.⁴⁴ The *Ghadar* Movement and its newspaper of the same name advocated for the overthrow of British rule in India and an end to global colonialism.⁴⁵ A secular movement, *Ghadar* refused to accept divisions in Indian society among religious lines. The movement was a strong reflection of the growing egalitarianism of Indian thought, influenced by its writers’ experiences with anti-Black racism in the United States.⁴⁶

Ghadar’s height of influence lasted for just a few years in the 1910s, during which its newspaper continually enraged British and American officials for its virulently anti-colonial professions.⁴⁷ But the philosophical underpinnings behind it had a far longer-lasting impact on the struggle. As late as 1927, a member of the *Ghadar* Party, Dr. B.V. Ghayanaa, held an interracial audience, including many Black activists, “spellbound” at the “Colored Elks’ home.”⁴⁸ Other figures were also routinely invited to Black-led conferences and events on the Civil Rights Movement.⁴⁹

Ghadar’s leaders were deeply influenced by the Black liberation struggle at exactly the time that the Indian movement was gaining not only more momentum, but a more global perspective.⁵⁰ Har Dayal, a leader of the *Ghadar* Party, was enraged by white treatment of Black people, so much so that one analyst said his hostility toward the white supremacist system in the United States influenced his anti-London fervor.⁵¹ The *Ghadar* movement, regarded as “the most revolutionary group of Indian migrants to organize outside of India during the early twentieth century,”⁵² was greatly influenced by their experiences in the United States with Black oppression. That intense oppression, and the Black liberation movement’s attempts to resist it, significantly influenced *Ghadar*’s voice in the Indian independence movement.⁵³ Interactions with Black leaders sharpened the Indian leaders’ understanding of global race relations and highlighted that this was a struggle not only for Indian independence but for independence movements globally.⁵⁴

43. *Id.*

44. See Chapter 7: *Ghadar*, in *Echoes of Freedom: South Asian Pioneers in California, 1899-1965*, BERKELEY LIBR., <https://guides.lib.berkeley.edu/echoes-of-freedom/ghadar> (Jul. 6, 2020, 9:40 AM).

45. *Id.*

46. See generally HORNE, *supra* note 1, at 47-49.

47. See SOHI, *supra* note 40, at 59-61.

48. HORNE, *supra* note 1, at 57.

49. See *id.* at 57-59, 97, 108-09, 183.

50. See generally *id.* at 49-51.

51. See *id.*

52. SOHI, *supra* note 40, at 64.

53. See generally HORNE, *supra* note 1, at 49-53.

54. See generally *id.* at 49-53.

The interaction between Indian and Black people in the United States also sharpened the Indians' side in the global debate on British colonialism. The British justification for its rule of India was that Indians were too backward and regressive to rule themselves.⁵⁵ Indian intellectuals responded by pointing to the perennial British ally, the United States, and how it used similar arguments to justify its horrific treatment of Black people.⁵⁶ The Indian immigrants' experience with white supremacy and Black oppression in the United States had a significant impact on the intellectual underpinnings of the rising movement for Indian independence. The movement began to promote non-sectarian strategies for Indian independence. It argued that only unity between all the diverse peoples in India—Hindus and Muslims, and those of different castes—and unity between all the “darker peoples” of the world, as Du Bois might have put it,⁵⁷ could overthrow British rule and the global the racist, white supremacist, colonial system.

As Indians learned from the Black experience in the United States, Black leaders learned much from India. This particular exchange of peoples and ideas occurred later, in the 1940s and 1950s. Figures such as Howard Thurman, Sue Bailey Thurman, Benjamin Mays, William Stuart Nelson, and others traveled to India at the height of the independence movement, fascinated by and eager to learn from the nonviolent noncooperation strategy being employed to great effect by Mohandas Gandhi.⁵⁸ Black leaders wanted to know how the Indians were doing it and how to emulate their growing successes.

Perhaps the best example of this interchange was the civil rights leader Bayard Rustin. Rustin, an openly gay man who would later become one of the principal organizers of the famous March on Washington in 1963, was inspired by the Indian nonviolent noncooperation movement, which emulated his own Quaker belief in nonviolence.⁵⁹ Mohandas Gandhi himself invited Rustin to India. However, Rustin arrived only after Gandhi was killed in early 1948.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, Rustin traveled India for four months observing and learning nonviolent strategies and philosophies. He returned to the United States and, ambassador-like, significantly influenced the Civil Rights Movement's movement toward nonviolence strategies.⁶¹ The circle was being completed. *Ghadar* and other Indian movements in the United States were influenced, enhanced, and sharpened by their leaders' experiences with Black activists, and now, Black leaders were learning from and emulating Indian nonviolent movements.

Furthermore, Black leaders in the United States took not just an intellectual interest in Indian freedom, but an active role in fighting for it. The famed Black leader

55. See HORNE, *supra* note 1, at 50.

56. *Id.*

57. See generally W.E.B. DU BOIS, *DARK PRINCESS* (University Press of Miss., 1928).

58. See HORNE, *supra* note 1, at 97, 108-09, 183.

59. Sebastian C. Galbo, *The “Roving Ambassador:” Bayard Rustin’s Quaker Cosmopolitanism and the Civil Rights Movement*, 6 *INQUIRIES* J. 4 (2014), <http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/articles/884/3/the-roving-ambassador-bayard-rustins-quaker-cosmopolitanism-and-the-civil-rights-movement>.

60. *Id.*

61. See *id.*

Marcus Garvey is exemplary of this. Garvey's organization, the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) attempted mightily to link the cause of Black and Indian freedom.⁶² UNIA chapters that spoke openly of the importance of Indian independence dotted the United States, from the South to Harlem.⁶³ Garvey declared in a conference in New York that he pledged "the support of all the Negroes of the world who support the principles of [UNIA] to the cause of India's freedom."⁶⁴

Another group, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (the NAACP), saw a "burst of pro-India activity" in the 1940s.⁶⁵ Its leader, Walter White, recognized the power that Black leaders in the United States had to influence politics in favor of anti-colonial goals.⁶⁶ In 1944, he, Channing Tobias, and Mary McLeod Bethune even met with President Franklin Roosevelt to urge him to pressure the Allies to "end colonial rule in Africa, India, and the West Indies."⁶⁷

The alliance between Black and Indian leaders in the first part of the twentieth century went beyond the purely ideological. It delved into tactics and strategy and shaped each other's worldviews. It was an intentional alliance, a forward-thinking and eager exchange of peoples and ideas across oceans to learn from one another's experiences, writings, and battle plans for freedom. In a remarkable stretch from 1940 to 1968, each side achieved their great goals. India gained its independence and, though the tragedy of Partition clouded it, constructed a constitution that exemplified an egalitarian philosophy influenced at the edges by Black thinkers and experiences.⁶⁸ Soon afterward, the Civil Rights Movement began in earnest in the United States; armed with Indian techniques of nonviolent noncooperation, it achieved victories from the Supreme Court to Congress. By 1968, India was free, and segregation had been broken.

But their fights did not end in 1968. India still faced the immense problems of poverty, day-to-day governance, the Cold War, and religious conflict between Muslims and Hindus.⁶⁹ Black people in the United States, while achieving legal equality, still suffered under wildly disproportionate rates of poverty and political disenfranchisement, and would soon come up against the challenges of mass incarceration and the drug war.⁷⁰ The ideological and strategic exchange between Indian and Black leaders could have continued past the 1960s and lent legitimacy and strategies to each other's newer struggles.

But this did not happen. By the late 1960s, the alliance had withered. The travel between the two peoples slowed to a trickle, and that sense of companionship, the belief that these two freedom struggles were really one and the same, and therefore must be fought together, dissipated.

62. HORNE, *supra* note 1, at 57.

63. *See id.* at 57-58.

64. *Id.* at 58.

65. *Id.* at 180.

66. *Id.* at 15.

67. *Id.*

68. *See generally* India Const.

69. *See generally* JOHN KEAY, INDIA: A HISTORY, 510-12 (2010).

70. *See* ALEXANDER, *supra* note 5, at 12-15.

Why did this happen? Why did such a fruitful, rich alliance between two groups that had so much in common not continue into the second half of the twentieth century?

THE ALLIANCE'S FALL

Two interrelated trends led to the decline of the Black-Indian alliance. First, with the destruction of Jim Crow and the increasing (though still vastly insufficient) participation of Black people in America's political and economic life, Black leaders' necessity to engage in the global anti-colonial struggle grew less urgent and less politically expedient. Second, Indian leaders' attention turned inward to, in their perspective, more pressing matters of governance. Moreover, Indian immigrants, whose numbers exploded beginning in the 1970s, by-and-large leaped to the top of the United States' political and economic ladders, which disincentivized them from joining with Black people in any anti-racist agenda.

The Black civil rights movement had dissipated in energy by the late 1960s to the early 1970s. By this time, despite immense progress, there remained legitimate anger and discontent among Black communities about the Civil Rights Movement's failure to produce the transformative economic reform that was needed to truly equalize Black and white living standards.⁷¹ This dissatisfaction helped contribute to the rise of a more militant wing of the Black rights movement, including the Black Panther Party.⁷² As time passed, then, Black leaders grew less attuned to learning from the Indian leaders' strategies of nonviolence.

Furthermore, Black support for India was complicated by Cold War politics. India was a committed member—indeed, probably the global leader—of the Non-Aligned Movement, a coalition of nations that refused to take sides in the conflict between the Soviet Union and the United States.⁷³ American leaders viewed this position with icy distrust. Shortly after independence, Ambassador Henry F. Grady told Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru that the United States considered neutrality an unacceptable position.⁷⁴ As Black leaders (theoretically) became more integrated into Washington's centers of power, it became more difficult for them to take foreign policy stances at odds with the political establishment.⁷⁵

Black activists' cessation of contact with Indian leaders was not necessarily an intentional decision. It may have simply been a result of inertia, the passage of time and changing political contexts. But one thing was clear: the once-rich stream of

71. See generally ORRO KERNER ET AL., REP. OF THE NAT'L ADVISORY COMM'N ON CIVIL DISORDERS (1968), https://belonging.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/kerner_commission_full_report.pdf?file=1&force=1

72. See Garrett Albert Duncan, *Black Panther Party*, ENCYCLOPEDIA BRITANNICA (Nov. 11, 2022), <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Black-Panther-Party>.

73. Debidata Mahapatra, *India's Non-Aligned Moment*, TIMES OF INDIA (Apr. 6, 2022), <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/periscope/indias-non-aligned-moment/>.

74. Mousumi Dutta & Kaushik Bhowmik, *India's Legacy of Non-Alignment*, ASIA TIMES (Mar. 22, 2022), <https://asiatimes.com/2022/03/indias-legacy-of-non-alignment/>.

75. HORNE, *supra* note 1, at 213.

peoples, ideas, and strategies that flowed from the United States to India and back had begun to dissipate.

A different, though related, set of incentives probably lessened Indian engagement with the alliance as well. With the release of the chokehold of British imperialism, Indian leaders seemed to lose their sense of urgency to engage with similarly-oppressed peoples around the world. Figures like Nehru continued to express sympathy with the plight of Black people worldwide (“There is nothing more terrible . . . than the infinite tragedy of Africa in the past few hundred years”).⁷⁶ But there was far less incentive to continue engaging with Black leaders in the United States, especially after they overthrew their own oppressive system, Jim Crow.

Victim of their own successes and growing more parochial in their interests, both Black and Indian leaders turned away from the alliance that once sparked such a powerful intellectual force for equality.

But could that alliance be rekindled in a new, more modern form?

THE BLACK-INDIAN AMERICAN ALLIANCE TODAY

In 1903, W.E.B. Du Bois asked a question of Black people: “How does it feel to be a problem?”⁷⁷ Nearly one hundred years later, Indian American author and intellectual Vijay Prashad asked a question for his own kin: “How does it feel to be a solution?”⁷⁸

The parallel inquiries drove questions of Black-Indian American relations for the next century. Despite the progress in racial equality made since 1903, Du Bois’ question still rings true. Black people are still regarded as a “problem” for America. They are a constant reminder of America’s own sins, a discomfiting, light that flashes for urgent attention, yet remains ignored.

Prashad’s question is newer not just in time, but in the situation it addresses. The population of Indian Americans in the U.S. has exploded in recent decades.⁷⁹ Indian Americans are growing in power culturally, economically, and politically. Their struggles are not identical to Black peoples’, but one element of their existence here, in particular, raises a disconcerting issue that must be addressed: Indian Americans are used as props to castigate Black people through the model minority myth. Prashad looks askance at this myth in his book *The Karma of Brown Folk*, a parallel to Du Bois’ *The Souls of Black Folk*. He asks of Indian Americans: how does it feel to be a solution?⁸⁰ How does it feel, in other words, to be a weapon used to further oppress Black people? This, naturally, leads to the critical question: can we collectively reject this white supremacist framing of race relations, and instead rekindle the alliance between Black and Indian communities?

76. *Id.*, at 4.

77. W.E.B. DU BOIS, *THE SOULS OF BLACK FOLK* 7 (1903).

78. VIJAY PRASHAD, *THE KARMA OF BROWN FOLK* 6 (2000).

79. *Indian Immigrants in the United States*, MIGRATION POLICY INSTITUTE (December 7, 2002) <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/indian-immigrants-united-states>

80. PRASHAD, *supra* note 78 at 6.

This section shifts its framing from the alliance between Black leaders and India, to a potential alliance between Black Americans and Indian Americans. First, however, we need to describe how we arrived at the present day-status of the Black-Indian American relationship. How has it changed from the 1960s, when the initial alliance withered, to today?

Arguably the most important development in Black-Indian relations since the 1960s was the mass migration of Indians to the United States. Because of draconian, racist American immigration laws and British attempts to stymie Indian mobility across the world, few Indians immigrated to the United States prior to the 1960s.⁸¹ These immigration laws placed severe quotas on the number of people from Asia and Africa who could arrive in the United States, and instead preferred white Europeans.⁸² This changed with the transformative Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965.⁸³ The Act completely overhauled the quota system, replacing it with a framework that prioritized highly-skilled immigrants and those who already had family in the United States.⁸⁴ The Act opened the floodgates for a new generation of Indians to immigrate to the United States.⁸⁵ Today's rapidly-diversifying America is largely thanks to the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965.⁸⁶

The Act itself is notably yet another nexus-point in Black-Indian relations. A driving force behind the Act's passage was the Civil Rights Movement.⁸⁷ As Black leaders succeeded in turning America's attention and sympathy toward victims of racism and the plight of Black people, the country's racist immigration laws were increasingly seen as an embarrassment.⁸⁸ The Civil Rights Movement contributed to the political context in which the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 could be passed. Most Indians in the United States owe their legal status here to that Act.⁸⁹ Indian Americans owe a debt of gratitude to the Black leaders of the Civil Rights Movement who fought not only for their own rights, but for the rights of all.

But this essential connection between the destinies of these two peoples did not lead to a continuation of their alliance. Instead, after the Act led to exploding rates of immigration to the United States, Indian Americans have become tools of white supremacy.

81. See Mary Hanna & Jeanne Batalova, *Indian Immigrants in the United States*, MIGRATION POLICY INSTITUTE (October 16, 2020), <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/indian-immigrants-united-states-2019>.

82. The Weeds, *Time Machine: Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965*, VOX (July 20, 2021), <https://open.spotify.com/episode/6yiYfw4Dleq35yBg0bVrpt?si=DQ79rZFeQ9CsAqIQKTKILg>.

83. *Id.*

84. *Id.*

85. *Id.*

86. *See id.*

87. *Id.*

88. *Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965*, HISTORY, ART, & ARCHIVES: U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES <https://history.house.gov/Historical-Highlights/1951-2000/Immigration-and-Nationality-Act-of-1965/> (last visited Dec. 7, 2022).

89. See Erika Lee, *Legacies of the 1965 Immigration Act*, SOUTH ASIAN AMERICAN DIGITAL ARCHIVE (October 1, 2015), <https://www.saada.org/tides/article/legacies-of-the-1965-immigration-act#:~:text=It%20explicitly%20prohibited%20discrimination%20on,professional%20status%20and%20family%20reunification.>

Indian Americans have become such tools of white supremacy in part due to the model minority myth. In the American context, this myth is the cultural expectation that certain subgroups—in this case, Indian Americans—are hard-working, intelligent, and successful.⁹⁰ At first glance, this seems like a complimentary framing. But nefarious ideas underlie the myth's intentions. First, its elevation of the subgroup is inherently dehumanizing.⁹¹ By raising its glass to the "success" of that subgroup, the model minority myth is ignoring that subgroup's complexity, its diversity, and thus its humanity.⁹² Furthermore, the model minority myth contains another assumption: those intelligent, hard-working people are also docile, submissive, and nothing more than good workers to build capital for the white-led American system.⁹³ For example, when former Texas Senator Phil Gramm, who ran for the 1996 Republican nomination for president,⁹⁴ he lamented that many "people who work in America often talk with distinct foreign accents." His explanation: the national welfare system "rewards our citizens for not working," so they are being replaced by immigrants who have a strong work ethic.⁹⁵ Translation: immigrants, including Indians, are good workers; Black people, who are on welfare, are not. Ed Koch, former mayor of New York City, extolled Indians because "they give us their culture and their taxes—and their wonderful restaurants."⁹⁶ Note the framing there: "they" means Indians, "us" means Americans—most likely, white Americans. Furthermore, according to Koch, Indians do not belong here on their own terms; they do not belong here because they are people, or because they are as valued a part of the American fabric as anyone else. They belong here because they *provide* something to the American capitalist system: taxes and restaurants.

But the model minority myth is not just a patronizing way to view Indian Americans. It is a way to subtly (or not so subtly) castigate Black Americans. A model minority implies the existence of a non-model minority. When white people condescendingly praise Indian Americans for their intelligence, work ethic, and material contributions to American capitalism, they are, in effect, looking down their nose at Black people, the minority group that (in their view) lacks these qualities.⁹⁷ After all, the (racist) argument goes, what do Black people have to complain about?—look at Indians, they emigrated here and are now successful in every industry.⁹⁸ Under this worldview, it is not racism that holds Black people back.⁹⁹ Indian Americans, then,

90. *Model Minority Stereotype for Asian Americans*, THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN COUNSELING AND MENTAL HEALTH CENTER, <https://cmhc.utexas.edu/modelminority.html#what> (last visited Dec. 7, 2022).

91. Zara Abrams, *Countering stereotypes about Asian Americans*, 50 AM. PSYCH. ASS'N 11, (Dec. 1, 2019).

92. *Id.*

93. *Model Minority Stereotype for Asian Americans*, *supra* note 90.

94. Martin Walker, *The US Presidential Election, 1996*, 72 INT'L AFFAIRS, 657, 664 (1996).

95. PRASHAD, *supra* note 78, at 3.

96. *Id.*

97. *See generally id.* at 7-9.

98. *Id.* at 7.

99. *Id.*

are the “solution” to the Black American “problem.”¹⁰⁰ They are the newest tools white supremacy uses to keep its foot on Black peoples’ necks.

The makeup of Indian immigrants that arrived in the United States after the 1960s lent support to this racist argument. The Immigration and Nationality Act did not just abolish racial and national quotas; it introduced preference categories that favored highly skilled and educated workers.¹⁰¹ The Indian immigrants who emigrated in the following decades, then, came from disproportionately privileged backgrounds in their home countries.¹⁰² Many (though not all) benefitted from graduate degrees and relatively secure financial situations.¹⁰³ As a result, they leaped to the top of this country’s socioeconomic ladder.¹⁰⁴ Today, at a population of four and a half million, or 1.4% of the country’s population, Indian Americans are the highest-earning minority group in the United States.¹⁰⁵ With high levels of educational attainment, significant wealth, and relative prosperity, Indians Americans do not necessarily have an incentive to ally themselves with Black Americans, who are still laboring under persistently anti-Black legal and social systems long after the destruction of Jim Crow. Indeed, the opposite incentive—to ally themselves *against* Black people—has caught hold in many sections of the Indian American population.

Indian Americans’ tendency to ally themselves with white people against Black people is not new. Back in the early twentieth century, even as he praised the work of Indian revolutionaries and allied himself with Brown folk, W.E.B. Du Bois recognized an underlying strain of anti-Black racism in Indians. He lamented Indians’ occasional “temptation to stand apart from the darker peoples and seek [their] affinities among whites. [They have] long wished to regard [themselves] as ‘Aryan,’ rather than ‘colored’”¹⁰⁶

Perhaps the best exemplification of Du Bois’ sentiment is Bhagat Singh Thind. Thind was an Indian man who arrived in the United States in 1913.¹⁰⁷ He was denied U.S. citizenship because American immigration law at the time only allowed “free white men” and “persons of African nativity. . . or African descent” to become citizens.¹⁰⁸ Thind argued in front of a series of courts that he ought to be conferred citizenship because he was a “high-caste” Aryan, and therefore Caucasian—or, white.¹⁰⁹ The case reached the Supreme Court, which rejected Thind’s argument

100. *Id.* at 3-7.

101. *Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965*, *supra* note 88.

102. See Hanna & Batalova, *supra* note 81; *Anti-Blackness, Caste, & Colorism, SOUTH ASIAN YOUTH IN HOUSTON UNITE (SAYHU)*, <https://www.sayhu.org/anti-blackness-caste-colorism> (last visited Dec. 7, 2022).

103. See Hanna & Batalova, *supra* note 81.

104. *Id.*

105. *Asian and Pacific Islander Population in the United States*, U.S. CENSUS BUREAU (April 30, 2020), <https://www.census.gov/library/visualizations/2020/demo/aian-population.html>.

106. PRASHAD, *supra* note 78, at viii.

107. *United States v. Bhagat Singh Thind*, 261 U.S. 204, 206-7 (1923).

108. *Id.* at 205-06.

109. *Bhagat Singh Thind*, PBS (2000), https://www.pbs.org/rootsinthesand/i_bhagat1.html.

based on the prevailing pseudoscience of race at the time; Indians simply could not be considered “white.”¹¹⁰

Few Indian Americans today would make the literal argument that they are “white,” but the principle behind Thind’s argument still rings true. Many Indian Americans deemphasize their Indian heritage and ally themselves with whiteness as a way to get ahead. Former Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal’s birthname was Piyush; he changed it before running for office.¹¹¹ Former South Carolina Governor and Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley was born Nimrata Randhawa to a Sikh family.¹¹² She later converted to Christianity and listed her race as ‘white’ on a voter registration card in 2001.¹¹³

Outright racism from Indian social and political leaders is dispiritingly common. In 1995, notorious conservative Dinesh D’Souza, a man of Indian descent, published *The End of Racism*, in which he claimed that enslaved Black people were treated well and called for a repeal of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.¹¹⁴ In a racist screed against Black people, he wrote: “Given the intensity of black rage and its appeal to a wide constituency, whites are right to be nervous. Black rage is a response to black suffering and failure. . . .”¹¹⁵ Governor Jindal once stated that “the left is obsessed with race. . . . The dumbest thing we can do is divide people by the color of their skin.”¹¹⁶ The Governor was evoking the concept of color blindness, a form of racial denial that white people use to avoid uncomfortable racial conversations.¹¹⁷ Color blindness makes it racist even to acknowledge one’s race.¹¹⁸ As an Indian American man, he was using his identity to lend credence to a fundamentally racist notion. Now, white people can point to him, a minority, and claim vindication.

Anti-Blackness in the Indian community is deeply tied to colorism. Colorism remains a deeply ingrained problem in India and among Indian American communities today, particularly affecting women and girls.¹¹⁹ To many Indians, being pretty or desirable is contingent upon being “fair,” or of light complexion—the lighter, the better. Colorism is related to India’s own version of the race problem: casteism, a social hierarchy in which “upper castes,” such as Brahmins, are given preferential

110. See *Thind*, 261 U.S. at 214-15 (holding “Hindus” and other people of “Asiatic” descent are not “Caucasian,” and thus not considered “free white persons” within the meaning of U.S. Rev. Stat. § 2169).

111. Sakshi Venkatraman, *Nikki Haley, Bobby Jindal And On-And-Off Relationships With Indian American Identity*, NBC (August 28, 2020), <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/nikki-haley-bobby-jindal-relationships-IndianAmerican-identity-n1238266>.

112. *Id.*

113. *Id.*

114. Jacob Heilbrunn, *Trump Pardoned Dinesh D’Souza to Troll Liberals*, POLITICO (May 31, 2018), <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2018/05/31/dinesh-dsouza-pardon-donald-trump-218583/>.

115. *Id.*

116. Jeremy Diamond, *Bobby Jindal: ‘You mean I’m not white?’*, CNN (February 10, 2015), <https://www.cnn.com/2015/02/09/politics/jindal-left-obsessed-with-race>.

117. See Heather Mcgee, *Why Saying “I Don’t See Race At All” Just Makes Racism Worse*, IDEAS, TED, (March 3, 2021), <https://ideas.ted.com/>.

118. *Id.*

119. Malavika Kannan, *What Colorism Feels Like as an Indian American Woman*, TEEN VOGUE (May 17, 2018), <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/colorism-as-an-IndianAmerican-woman>.

treatment over “lower castes,” such as Dalits,¹²⁰ who are stereotypically regarded as darker.¹²¹ These attitudes about color have been imputed into the American context where many Indian Americans consider Black peoples’ skin color to be unattractive, undesirable, or indicative of problematic character traits.¹²² The link between Indian colorism and anti-Black racism is perhaps best exemplified by the Indian skin-lightening brand “Fair and Lovely,” which changed its name to “Glow and Lovely” in response to a firestorm of criticism in India as a result of America’s Black Lives Matter movement in 2020.¹²³

But anti-Black Indian racism is far deeper, and far more nefarious, than simple stereotyping. There is a growing Indian American political movement that allies itself with the Republican Party and Donald Trump. While Indian Americans are a generally-Democratic voting bloc,¹²⁴ recently there have been signs of growing Republican curiosity among the group.¹²⁵ Attracted by Trump’s businessman persona, economically-driven reelection message, and social conservatism,¹²⁶ some Indian voters, particularly Hindu and higher-income voters, voted for him in far greater numbers during the 2020 election than they did in 2016.¹²⁷ One of the most significant events of the 2020 campaign cycle for Indian groups was Trump’s 2019 “Howdy Modi” event in Houston, Texas. During the event, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi—himself arguably a Trump-like figure in India who is known for his Hindu nationalist leanings and thinly veiled Islamophobia—stood proudly on stage with President Donald Trump.¹²⁸ Before them stood 50,000 Indian Americans who, despite the two leaders’ racism and President Trump’s anti-Black rhetoric, policy agenda, and anti-Black racist advisors in the White House, cheered them on.¹²⁹

120. *Caste in the United States: A Survey of Caste Among South Asian Americans*, EQUALITY LABS, (2018), <https://www.equalitylabs.org/castesurvey>.

121. *Black is Blemish in India*, AL JAZEERA (Oct. 7, 2003), <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2003/10/7/black-is-blemish-in-india>.

122. See generally *Anti-Blackness, Caste, & Colorism*, *supra* note 102.

123. Lauren Frayer, *‘Fair & Lovely’ Skin Lightening Brand, Popular In South Asia, To Change Name*, NPR (June 25, 2020), <https://www.npr.org/sections/live-updates-protests-for-racial-justice/2020/06/25/883322883/fair-lovely-skin-lightening-brand-popular-in-south-asia-to-change-name>.

124. *The Rise of Asian Americans*, PEW RESEARCH CENTER (June 19, 2012), <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2012/06/19/the-rise-of-AsianAmericans/>

125. See Dhruvil Mehta, *How Asian Americans Are Thinking About the 2020 Election*, FIVETHIRTYEIGHT, (September 18, 2020), <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/how-AsianAmericans-are-thinking-about-the-2020-election/>.

126. Max Bearack, *Indian Americans Vote Solidly Democratic, But Some Hope Trump Can Change That*, WASH. POST (October 14, 2016), https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/IndianAmericans-vote-solidly-democratic-but-some-hope-trump-can-change-that/2016/10/14/bc6820cc-915b-11e6-a6a3-d50061aa9fae_story.html.

127. Li Zhou, *What We Know About Who Asian American Voters Supported In The Election*, VOX (November 14, 2020), <https://www.vox.com/21561408/AsianAmerican-voters-presidential-election>; *Indian Americans Seem More Confident Voting for Trump*, THE TIMES OF INDIA (October 30, 2020), <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/us/us-presidential-elections/IndianAmericans-seem-more-confident-voting-for-trump/articleshow/78952461.cms>.

128. Devesh Kapur, *The Indian Prime Minister And Trump Addressed A Houston Rally. Who Was Signaling What?*, WASH. POST (September 29, 2019), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2019/09/29/prime-minister-modi-india-donald-trump-addressed-huge-houston-rally-who-was-signaling-what/>.

129. *Id.*

Less than two years later, an Indian flag flew in front of the Capitol Building on January 6th.¹³⁰ It would be tempting to see this as shocking or an anomaly—after all, minorities participating in the greatest act of white supremacist terror in recent years does not make immediate sense. Yet in the broader context outlined here, it is not altogether surprising. Indian Americans have participated, actively and passively, in anti-Blackness for years, benefited from systems of white supremacy and anti-Black policies, and in stark contrast to Indian leaders in the earlier parts of this century, have too often remained silent in the battle for Black rights in the United States. The alliance between Indian Americans and Black Americans, once predicated on a sense of common humanity and egalitarianism, withered after the 1960s. Instead, the alliance has been replaced by a lack of commitment on both sides and outright racism on the side of Indian Americans toward Black Americans.

But what about the future of the relationship? Instead of ambivalence, distrust, and prejudice, could the old alliance be rekindled?

THE FUTURE OF THE ALLIANCE

Indian Americans and Black Americans do not face identical problems. Black people do not often have to contend with the question, “Where are you *really* from?” Indian Americans, despite facing very real racism, do not suffer under a system specifically designed to oppress them, generally do not have families destroyed by mass incarceration, and do not labor under systemic poverty in the same way Black Americans do.¹³¹ Indian parents generally do not have to have “the conversation” with their children about how to act around the police.

Yet much like the Black revolutionaries and Indian leaders of the early twentieth century—those luminaries who found, despite all their differences and geographical distance, a common thread between their struggles—Black and Indian Americans can find great similarities between their struggles today. Hate crimes against Indian Americans are on the rise, putting them under a threat of white supremacist violence that, while it may not match the threat against Black people, does mirror Black Americans’ vulnerability in the country today.¹³² For example, in 2017, an Indian engineer was killed at a bar in a Kansas City suburb,¹³³ where the killer shouted: “Get out of my country.”¹³⁴ In Albuquerque, New Mexico, in August 2022, four Muslim men were killed in a series of linked hate crimes—three of the victims were

130. Michaela Stone Cross, *The Indian Americans Who Rallied at Capitol Hill*, THE JUGGERNAUT (January 8, 2021), <https://www.thejuggernaut.com/the-IndianAmericans-who-rallied-at-capitol-hill>.

131. See Hanna & Batalova, *supra* note 81.

132. Arun Kumar, *Hate Crimes Against Indian Americans Continue to Rise FBI*, THE AMERICAN BAZAAR (September 9, 2021), <https://www.americanbazaaronline.com/2021/09/09/hate-crimes-against-IndianAmericans-continue-to-rise-fbi-446990/>.

133. Arun Venugopal, The Truth Behind Indian American Exceptionalism, THE ATLANTIC (December 19, 2020), <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2021/01/the-making-of-a-model-minority/617258/>.

134. *Id.*

Pakistani.¹³⁵ In 2015, an Alabama man called the police to report a suspicious “skinny Black guy” walking around near his home.¹³⁶ That “Black guy” was Sureshbhai Patel, an Indian man who flew to the United States to help care for his week-old grandson.¹³⁷ The police arrived and assaulted him.¹³⁸

The rising tide of bigotry in the United States over the past seven years, ignited (though by no means caused solely by) Donald Trump’s “Make America Great Again” movement, may present an opportunity for Black Americans and Indian Americans to rekindle their alliance. Whereas the model minority myth previously pitted Indian Americans against Black people, today, the Republican Party’s growing and overt racism is threatening all people of color.¹³⁹ The Republican Party is increasingly controlled by overt white supremacists. Avowed racist Steve Bannon once sat on the National Security Council;¹⁴⁰ far-right policymaker Stephen Miller controlled immigration policy for years during the Trump presidency;¹⁴¹ and Donald Trump, after telling white supremacist groups to “stand by,”¹⁴² watched approvingly on television while white militia groups stormed the Capitol Building on January 6, 2021.¹⁴³ The American right is no longer controlled by closet racists who tolerated diversity and made rhetorical nods toward Indian success stories in the name of maintaining the anti-Black underbelly of the American system. Instead, it is increasingly controlled by genuinely apocalyptic thinkers who not only tolerate, but are willing to *use*, violent, white militia groups to achieve their ends.¹⁴⁴ These are people whose views on race are not political, but biological. They believe fervently in

135. Nouran Salahieh & Amir Vera, *Albuquerque Police Identify And Charge ‘primary Suspect’ In Killings Of Muslim Men*, *Police Say*, CNN (August 9, 2022), <https://www.cnn.com/2022/08/09/us/albuquerque-muslim-men-killings-tuesday/index.html>.

136. Challen Stephens, *Alabama Police Fire, Arrest The Officer Who Badly Injured Indian Grandfather During Sidewalk Stop*, ALABAMA.COM (February 12, 2015), https://www.al.com/news/2015/02/madison_police_fire_and_arrest.html.

137. *Id.*

138. *Id.*

139. Jeffrey Pierre, *His Ideology Is White Supremacy: Ta-Nehisi Coates On Donald Trump*, NPR (September 7, 2017), <https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2017/09/07/549098169/his-ideology-is-white-supremacy-ta-nehisi-coates-on-donald-trump>; Ronald Brownstein, *The GOP Can’t Hide From Extremism*, THE ATLANTIC (December 2, 2022), <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2022/12/gop-lawmakers-distancing-extremism-trump-fuentes-ye/672328/>.

140. Glenn Thrush and Maggie Haberman, *Bannon Is Given Security Role Usually Held for Generals*, N.Y. TIMES (January 29, 2017), <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/29/us/stephen-bannon-donald-trump-national-security-council.html>.

141. *Stephen Miller*, SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER, <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/individual/stephen-miller> (last visited Dec. 7, 2022).

142. The Associated Press, *Trump Tells Proud Boys: ‘Stand ack and stand by’*, YOUTUBE (September 30, 2020), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qIHhB1ZMV_o.

143. Patricia Zengerle and Richard Cowan, *Trump watched Jan. 6 U.S. Capitol riot unfold on TV, ignored pleas to call for peace*, REUTERS (July 22, 2022), <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-capitol-probes-season-finale-focus-trump-supporters-three-hour-rage-2022-07-21/>.

144. See generally Luke Broadwater and Matthew Rosenberg, *Republican Ties to Extremist Groups Are Under Scrutiny*, N.Y. TIMES (January 29, 2021), <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/29/us/republicans-trump-capitol-riot.html>; Isaac Arnsdorf, *Oath Keepers in the State House: How a Militia Movement Took Root in the Republican Mainstream*, PROPUBLICA (October 20, 2012), <https://www.propublica.org/article/oath-keepers-in-the-state-house-how-a-militia-movement-took-root-in-the-republican-mainstream>.

the Great Replacement Theory, a racist conspiracy theory that Democrats, Jews, people of color, and others are engaged in a systematic attempt to replace white people in this country.¹⁴⁵ They worship *The Turner Diaries*, a white supremacist manifesto from the 1970s that depicts a race war in which the protagonists celebrate the killing of all people of color in the United States through militia action and nuclear warfare.¹⁴⁶

In the same way that the white colonial system oppressed Black Americans and Indians on opposite sides of the globe during the first half of the twentieth century, triggering an alliance between them, a resurgent white supremacist movement threatens both groups, and all people of color, in the United States today. That threat should spark a new alliance, one designed for the new century. A new dialogue should be initiated between Black and Indian Americans, one that speaks openly of the anti-Blackness among the Indian community and offers solutions to address it. One that educates each group on the struggles of the other, that draws connections between each community's struggles, and one that teaches the history of solidarity and friendship between the two groups.

In many ways, this alliance may have already begun. Since the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests, Indian American writers have written more about anti-Blackness in their communities and the work that needs to be done to confront it.¹⁴⁷ The election of Kamala Harris, whose mother was Indian and father was Black, as Vice President has opened up a dialogue on relations between the two peoples.¹⁴⁸ South Asian advocacy organizations like South Asian Americans Leading Together,¹⁴⁹ Raksha,¹⁵⁰ and

145. See "The Great Replacement: An Explainer, ANTI-DEFAMATION LEAGUE, (April 19, 2021), <https://www.adl.org/resources/backgrounders/the-great-replacement-an-explainer>; Odette Yousef, *The 'great replacement' conspiracy theory isn't fringe anymore, it's mainstream*, NPR (May 17, 2022), <https://www.npr.org/2022/05/17/1099233034/the-great-replacement-conspiracy-theory-isnt-fringe-anymore-its-mainstream>.

146. See generally Andrew H. Kydd, *Decline, Radicalization, and the Attack on the U.S. Capitol*, 2 VIOLENCE: AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL 3, 12-14 (2021); Dan Primack and Russell Contreras, *A Racist Conspiracy Theory Goes Mainstream*, AXIOS (September 29, 2021), <https://www.axios.com/2021/09/29/white-replacement-theory-gains-ground-among-gop>.

147. See generally *id.*; Apoorva Verghese, *Opinion: South Asians Have Been Complicit In Anti-Blackness For Too Long*, THE TULANE HULLABALOO, October 7, 2020, <https://tulanehullaballoo.com/54576/intersections/south-asians-anti-blackness/>; Binu Varghese, *Indian Flag at the Capitol Insurrection and Anti-Blackness among Indian Christians*, GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY BERKELEY CENTER FOR RELIGION, PEACE, & WORLD AFFAIRS (June 7, 2021), <https://berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/responses/indian-flag-at-the-capitol-insurrection-and-anti-blackness-among-indian-christians>; Anil Hurkadli, *I Am an Indian American Man. I Had Anti-Racist Work to Do*, EDUCATION WEEK (June 10, 2021), <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/opinion-i-am-an-IndianAmerican-man-i-had-anti-racist-work-to-do/2021/06>.

148. Sakshi Venkatraman, *'Kamala Auntie' Prompts Examination Of Anti-Blackness For South Asians*, NBC (August 19, 2020), <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/kamala-auntie-prompts-examination-anti-blackness-south-asians-n1237339>.

149. *Black Lives Matter*, SOUTH ASIAN AMERICANS LEADING TOGETHER (SAALT) (May 25, 2020), <https://saalt.com/blogs/news/using-our-dollars-to-take-a-stand>

150. *Anti-Racism Resources for South Asians and AAPI Community*, RAKSHA (2021), <https://www.raksha.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/South-Asians-for-Black-Lives-AntiRacism-Sujatha.pdf>.

Equality Labs¹⁵¹ have also invested time and resources into anti-Black racism efforts, especially in the wake of the Black Lives Matter movement.

A concerted effort must be made to further deepen this relationship. Indian Americans must commit to using their fresh political, cultural, and financial power to advocate for Black Americans in every sector of American society. And the Black Lives Matter movement should go beyond its predecessor Civil Rights Movement by recognizing how America has changed since the 1960s with the introduction of Indian Americans and other Asian American groups to the country's racial topography, by making a strong effort to include these groups in the civil rights dialogue and to recruit young Indian Americans to join their ranks. A new Black-Indian alliance, designed for a new era, facing both new threats and new opportunities, could be a powerful force for change in American society: one that combines Black peoples' long history of civil rights advocacy with Indians' newer perspective and power to counter the danger posed by the American right, determined as it is to stamp its boot on both groups once again.

Most importantly, the moral need and power of this alliance would be necessary even without the growing threat posed by white supremacists. Indian Americans and Black Americans have much in common, including a common history, a common set of ideas, and a common belief in the individual dignity of human beings in the face of oppression. The new Black-Indian alliance should not simply be a product of need or political expediency, but instead an expression of human solidarity; a moral alliance more than simply a strategic one. The new century requires a new moral imagination. America needs new coalitions and new strategies to confront its challenges and enrich its soul. There are perhaps no two groups better able to provide that, together than Black people and Indian Americans.

151. *South Asians for Black Lives*, EQUALITY LABS, <https://www.equalitylabs.org/south-asians-for-black-lives> (last visited Dec. 7, 2022).