

Subject: Stand for Human Rights. Vote YES on ordinance to Ban Caste-Based Discrimination

Date: Monday, February 13, 2023 at 11:54:31 PM Pacific Standard Time

From: DFW Shri Guru Ravidass Org <DFWshrigururavidassorg@outlook.com>

To: LEG_CouncilMembers <council@seattle.gov>

CC: Stone, Meredith <Meredith.Stone@seattle.gov>

CAUTION: External Email

Jai Gurudev

We from DFW Shri Guru Ravidass Sabha, Mesquite, Texas, representing the Ravidassia community, are writing to you to urge you to the vote YES on Councilmember Kshama Sawant's legislation to outlaw caste discrimination.

Ravidassia is a tradition based on the teachings of Shri Guru Ravidass who lived in India in the 14th century. Ravidassia tradition itself is not a part of Sikhism but is part of the larger Sikh ethnic group. Some compositions and teachings of Shri Guru Ravidass Ji are part of the Sikh holy scripture, the Guru Granth Sahib. In 14th century India, Shri Guru Ravidass Ji, a Dalit by birth, taught spirituality and tried to unite the society divided on caste. He preached all men are born equal and asked for emancipation of the caste oppressed, from the oppression of the Indian caste system. He was born in an oppressed community known as Chamars, who were considered "Untouchable". Guru Nanak Dev, the first Sikh Guru, further spread this message of equality in the Indian subcontinent. Although Sikhism preaches equality, caste discrimination is still prevalent amongst Sikhs globally.

We are writing to tell you that our community, to this day, faces discrimination, ostracization and excursion at the hands of the so-called upper castes in India and the South Asian diaspora in the US. Another important thing that we would like to point out is that, unlike the popular discourse, this discrimination is not just limited to the Hindu religion but is very much a part of Sikhism and other South Asian religions as well.

We face discrimination at the hands of caste oppressors in our social lives in terms of marriages, food politics, and our professional lives in the US. We are given lower wages than our counterparts in upper castes. We are discriminated against in terms of hiring. We usually work in restaurants, gas stations, grocery stores, truck and taxi businesses and face discriminatory behavior every day from our customers and peers.

Caste still plays a very big role in our social and professional lives. Thus, it becomes imperative to have legal protection against this menace. Caste legitimizes itself in various ways. One of the big examples is the education system, where there is an attempt by caste oppressors to sanitize it or to minimize its horrors.

This ordinance, if passed, will be historical and protect caste oppressed people like us. Please vote YES and be on the right side of history.

Daulat R. Badhan
DFW Shri Guru Ravidass Organization