

Subject: Support for your consideration of Legislation to ban Caste-based Discrimination in Seattle
Date: Tuesday, January 24, 2023 at 9:07:19 AM Pacific Standard Time
From: Jeremy Rinker <jarinker@uncg.edu>
To: LEG_CouncilMembers <council@seattle.gov>
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CAUTION: External Email

Dear Seattle City Councilpersons,

My name is Jeremy A. Rinker, and although not a Seattle City Resident, I am an American academic that studies caste in both India and the North American diaspora. As an Associate Professor in the field of Peace and Conflict Studies at The University of North Carolina Greensboro (UNCG), I have spent the last two decades reading and writing about caste and anti-caste activism around the world. Preparing to embark on my second Fulbright-Nehru grant to India (2022-23) in just a few weeks time, during which time I aim to understand and explore the caste system in India, I want to publicly voice my support of the legislation you are currently considering that would ban caste-based discrimination in all of Seattle's public works. This is an important first step in dismantling this hidden form of structural violence and oppression that so many South Asians face on a daily basis.

Caste is an extremely complex form of marginalization and oppression and after studying it for so long I still have many questions. It is not easy to understand and is often assumed that protections for religious and/or national origin would suffice to protect low-caste peoples from facing such discrimination in the United States. My research and discussion with caste-affected colleagues in India and the United States (including in Seattle) has shown that this simply is not the case. Caste is distinct from religion, national, or other marginal identities and, though operating sociologically in similar ways as racial discrimination, is actually not as visible as race as a marker of social difference. For this reason, I think your move to ban caste-based discrimination in Seattle is an important symbolic and actual response to manage the immediate and long-term impacts of caste discrimination. These impacts affect us all and make our communities weaker. I am happy to provide any further comments, support, or answer any questions that you may have. I am available by this email, or at the following cell phone number should you have need for follow up: 703-850-0765.

I wish you well in your discussion of this topic and hope that hearing from those that study caste and caste discrimination may help in persuading you of the great importance of such legislation such as that which you are proposing. The impacts of such a move would bring some level of solace and healing to this oppressed community.

Thank you for your efforts and I hope that your vote in support of this ban will be heard today.

Sincerely,
Jeremy A. Rinker

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Realizing Nonviolent Resilience: Neoliberalism, Societal Trauma, and Marginalized Voice (New York: Peter Lang, 2020). <https://www.peterlang.com/view/title/70098?format=HC>

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Editor:

The Journal of Transdisciplinary Peace Praxis (JTPP)
<https://jtp.p.uk/>