

Explainer: Ulterior Equality Labs, a controversial council member and Seattle City's absurd discrimination law.

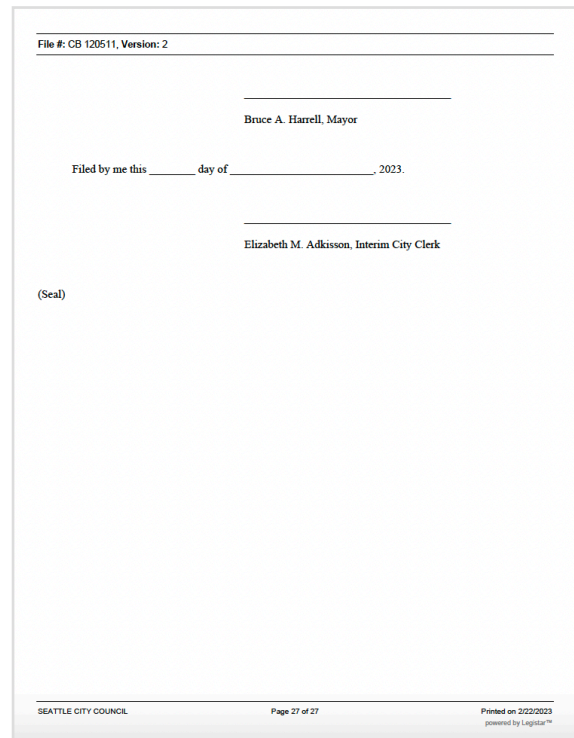
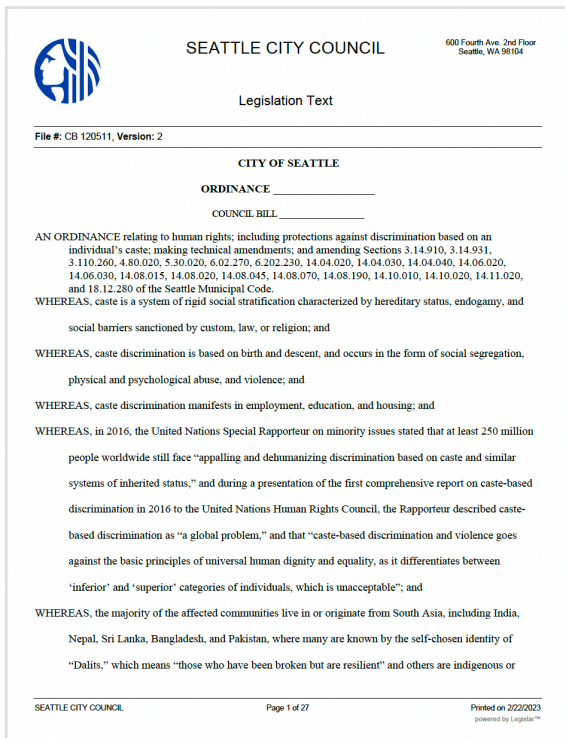
Context

The Seattle City Council enacted an amendment on February 22, 2023, which added "caste" to its anti-discrimination statutes. This makes Seattle the first city outside of South Asia to pass anti-caste discrimination legislation. According to the ordinance (now the legislation), caste is a system of social stratification that has been prescribed by law, traditions, and religion. In contrast, the passage of this Act is predicated on the discrimination of Hindus under the guise of an effort to abolish discrimination. In the West, motivated and agenda-driven organisations like the Equality Labs and contentious council members have used the opportunity to rally support to malign Hindus and Hindu practises, furthering falsehoods about Hindus and fueling hatred towards Hindus. The legislation derives its rationale from a 2016 report by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on minority issues, which asserts that caste is a global issue and cites Equality Labs which provides a local context and sees it as a human rights issue. However, the hasty ordinance rests its reasoning on the phenomenon, but fails to give statistical or scientific data to support its reasoning. As a result, the ordinance promotes institutionalise prejudice against a specific Hindu minority group. In this explainer, we analyse the anti-caste discrimination ordinance, its backers, and their possible reasoning for supporting an anti-Hindu and anti-Indian legislature.

The Ordinance

(Now legislation)

Calls for an anti-caste discrimination law by motivated entities and individuals in the United States lead to the addition of the word "caste" to Seattle's anti-discrimination laws. However, a majority of Hindu Americans have spoken out against the legislature, suggesting that this kind of law is unfair to Hindus. In this explainer, the rationale of the Anti-Hindu ordinance is explained in brief:



1. Caste is characterised by hereditary status, social status and barriers, and endogamy¹.
2. Caste discrimination has been defined as prejudice based on birth and descent, leading to social ostracisation, physical violence, and/or psychological abuse.
3. There are many ways caste discrimination exists in American society, that is, in employment, marriage and alliances, education opportunities etc.
4. Target communities are majorly “dalits” (indigenous communities) South Asia, *viz.*, from India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan. Several diaspora communities from Africa and the Middle East have also been identified.
5. The ordinance has also rooted its research and evidence on studies provided by Ambedkar King Study Circle that have a history of publishing against the Indian government and fanning anti-Hindu sentiments in the United States.

¹ Marriage and alliances only within a community, clan or tribe.

6. The ordinance lists professions which involve caste-based discrimination, like technology jobs, construction, and hospitality industry, without backing it with data or any credible evidence. It appears rushed and ill-intended towards the Hindu diaspora in the US.
7. The ordinance also bases its veracity on the conviction of Lakireddy Bali Reddy in 2001. The case has been an exception and such violations of human rights (as seen in the case) are not merely rooted in caste but also in violent sexual and psychological abuse.
8. It also cites examples of anti-discriminatory policies of private firms like Alphabet and universities like Brandeis University and California State University which prohibit caste-based discrimination. It should be noted that US universities and firms have far more cases of race-based discrimination and gender discrimination than other countries.

As can be understood from the ordinance, there is a high possibility that such a legal provision can be misused to create a further divide in the Hindu diaspora in the US. This can also set a wrong precedent for other state councils, universities, and private firms as they can formulate laws which are detrimental to the Hindus living in America.

Equality Labs

Equality Labs, a self-certified social justice group with its headquarters in Los Angeles, California, brands itself as an Ambedkarite social organisation. The organisation asserts that it works for the realisation of justice and the liberation of those who are classified as Dalits who are subjected to oppression. In point of fact, the organization's primary goals are to develop institutional prejudice, spread disinformation against Hindus, and promote discord among Hindus in the west. It is the driving force behind a group of allies that is making headway towards those ends, especially after the Seattle City Council enacted a contentious and unpopular anti-caste discrimination resolution that it supported and pushed nationwide in the US. Kshama Sawant, often dubbed a controversial council member, introduced the resolution. Sawant, who had previously spearheaded a movement against India's National

Registry of Citizens (NRC), absurdly Seattle City Council passed an alarming resolution against India's Citizenship Amendment Act, urging the Parliament of India to uphold the Indian Constitution by repealing the CAA and halt the National Register of Citizens, and to help refugees by ratifying various UN treaties on refugees. A fast diminishing culture of casteism in certain sections of India's society serves as the primary weapon of assault for this organisation and its supporters like Kshama Sawant. The founder and executive director of Equality Labs, Thenmozhi Soundararajan, promotes casteism and hatred towards practising Hindus by using her new media ability to change public opinion about Hindus by quoting selective case studies and concealing the fact that the vast majority of India lives in complete harmony and mutual respect. Thenmozhi has also been accused of misrepresenting and manipulating facts and figures. During organised farmer's protests and agitation concerning India's Citizenship Amendment Act, Equality Labs led by Thenmozhi, manipulated information and pretended to be a victim of the time. However, Thenmozhi and her self-identified Dalit community were not a matter of discussion during the protests.

Publicly available data strongly implies that Equality Labs is an activist organisation attempting to work against Hindu-American interests in the United States. This organisation regularly collaborates with a number of motivated entities and individuals in an effort to further its malicious objectives. Former Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey, for instance, once held a sign that said "Smash Brahminical Patriarchy." This action inflamed the anti-Hindu discourse, and it comes as no surprise that Thenmozhi Soundararajan drew this poster. Thenmozhi and her associates claim to be Ambedkarites; however, they propagate the abhorrent notion of destroying Hindus. However, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar never attempted or discussed the demonisation of Hindus or Hindutva. In contrast, Ambedkar consistently advocated for equal rights for everyone, regardless of gender, caste, colour, or religion.

The true nature of Equality Labs, its partners, and sympathisers reveals the organisation's problematic worldview and anti-Hindu perspective. Sharmin Hossain, the political director of her organisation and a native of Bangladesh, tweeted about the need to destroy "Hindutva," stating, "Arguing to salvage Hindutva is dominant caste rhetoric." Additionally, Equality Labs seeks and offers assistance to a number of South Asian religious institutions and community-based organisations, including South Asian Americans Leading Together, South Asian Histories for All, the Alliance for Justice and Accountability, the Bangladeshi Historical Project, the Indian American Muslim Council (IAMC), the South Asia Solidarity

Initiative (SASI), the Association for India's Development, the Organisation for Minorities of India (OFMI), et al. Despite the fact that the branded organisations may seem popular and moral, their actions are everything except what they appear to be.

For example, in practice, the Organisation for Minorities of India (OMI), which collaborates with the terrorist Khalistani separatist movement in the United States, supports the secession of India's Punjab state. Bhajan Singh Bhinder and Pieter Friedrich constitute this organization's core. In India, Bhajan Singh Bhinder is designated as a terrorist. His most prominent participation was in the Lal Singh case, a failed terrorist plot between Pakistan's dreaded spy agency ISI and Khalistani terrorists. Bhajan Singh sought to acquire explosives, M-16s, AK-47s, grenades, detonators, night-vision goggles, mobile communication devices, rocket launchers, and Stinger missiles in order to promote Pakistan's separatist, violent Project Khalistan, which sought to secede Punjab from India. After failing to carry out a terrorist act in India, Bhinder decided to wage an information war in the Internet era to discredit and criticise India internationally.

Similarly, the Indian American Muslim Council (IAMC) has been at the forefront of demonising America in India and India in the United States while disguising itself as a pluralist and advocacy organisation. It has consistently operated against US and Indian interests. They continually strive to foment discord amongst the world's oldest and greatest democracies. Moreover, under the guise of equality, a similar evangelical strategy seems to be in play nowadays. The corporate sector is likewise targeted by the reinforcement of the colonial narrative. Equality Labs, while claiming to be the voice of Dalits, is attempting to demonise Hindus, a strategy used by colonial governments and missionaries for millennia.

In its most recent attack on Hindus in the west, by ensuing a successful attempt at institutionalising bias against all residents of Indian and South Asian origin, all in the name of preventing bias and fueling an anti-Hindu and anti-India sentiment at the hands of a controversial council member, it is surprising to see how the world's oldest democracy approved an ill-intended and rushed ordinance that goes against the fundamental tenets of equality for all and institutionalises bias and rhetoric against a specific community.

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