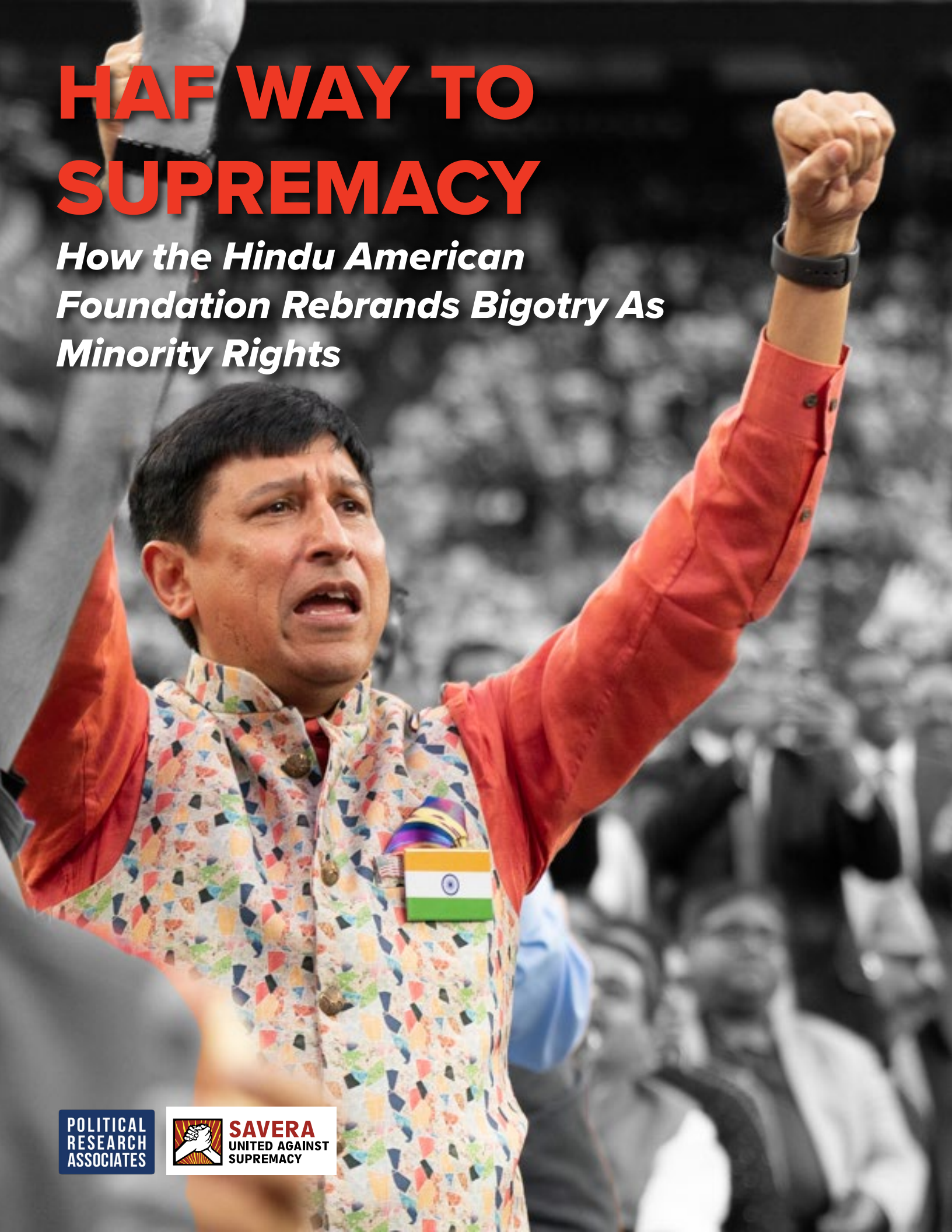


HAF WAY TO SUPREMACY

How the Hindu American Foundation Rebrands Bigotry As Minority Rights



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Executive Summary

The Hindu American Foundation, or HAF, describes itself as an advocacy group for Hindu Americans committed to “dignity, freedom, equality and justice.”¹ Rejecting these claims, our report shows that HAF is better understood as a key node in the global Hindu supremacist (or Hindutva) movement, and belongs to an emerging multiracial Far Right in the U.S.

In India, Hindu supremacists seek to establish an ethno-state marked by the political supremacy of Hindus. In diasporic locations like the U.S., Hindutva organizations—despite representing minority communities—work in concert with other far-right actors to advance an anti-democratic politics where the civil rights and religious freedoms of Hindus are framed in opposition to, and at the expense of, those of other communities.

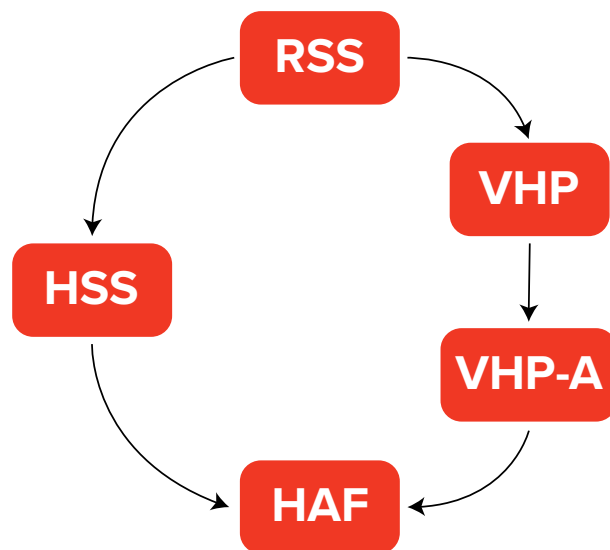
HAF’s Far-Right Track Record

Our report finds that HAF’s claims to uphold civil rights stand in stark contrast to a long and accelerating record of far-right advocacy. This is particularly visible along three salient fault lines within the Indian American community. First, HAF has furiously fought to prevent the institution of legal protections against caste discrimination, emulating White supremacist tactics against anti-racist organizing. Second, it has demonized Indian American Muslims, Christians, and Sikhs in the U.S. And third, it has made great efforts to justify the Hindu supremacist Bharatiya Janata Party’s (BJP) numerous human rights violations. In sum, HAF has perverted the concept of civil rights and abused it to attack other minority groups in the name of protecting Hindus.

Despite this record, HAF was often able to enter U.S. civil society spaces, exploiting the unfamiliarity with Hindu supremacy. This allowed HAF to advance the marginal and supremacist politics of Hindutva into spaces the movement had previously failed to reach.

HAF’s Deep and Ongoing Ties to Transnational Hindu Supremacist Networks

Our report further shows HAF’s deep and ongoing financial, organizational and interpersonal ties with other Hindu supremacist actors, including the Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America (VHP-A) and the Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh (HSS), which are in turn directly tied to Hindu supremacist organizations in India. We argue that HAF must be understood as the project of a second generation of Hindutva activists who cut their teeth in these older organizations, but who crafted a friendlier face for Hindutva that could strategically enter mainstream spaces while keeping their true allegiances covert.



HAF and Multiracial White Supremacy

HAF’s attempts to advance a far-right agenda while claiming to be a civil rights organization have grown increasingly untenable. In recent years, with the growth of the global Far Right, HAF has shifted further and further right. Abandoning previous (and strategic) claims to progressivism, HAF has openly embraced far-right tactics,

epitomized by its attempts to manufacture a moral panic around “critical caste theory,” a direct analogue to far-right attacks on Critical Race Theory. From its collaborations with known anti-Muslim actors like the Middle East Forum to its claims that Hindus are threatened less by White supremacists and more by Muslims, Sikhs, Dalits and progressives, HAF’s work increasingly serves to undermine the collective solidarity of communities of color and build an emergent multiracial Far Right. HAF therefore appears increasingly misaligned with the very spaces that, in seeking to include Hindu Americans in their multicultural and interfaith coalitions, first gave it patronage.

Recommendations

Based on the evidence presented in this report, we recommend that readers:

- Educate your organizations and your partners—including, if appropriate, by scheduling trainings with Savera—about the full extent of the Hindu supremacist network in the U.S., including ties that are kept covert. In particular,
 - Track far-right efforts to build ties and exchange strategies across racial lines, generating a “multiracial Far Right.”
 - Note that diasporic communities are not monoliths. In the case of the Indian American community, understand salient fault lines such as caste, class, and religion, as well as their relationship to supremacist politics.
 - Exercise vigilance around the Far Right’s weaponization of victimhood to (1) silence free speech; (2) introduce wedges between our communities and pit them against each other; and (3) advance White supremacy over multiracial solidarity. Claims to victimhood must be evaluated on their merits, rather than with uncritical deference.
 - Warn partner organizations about Hindu supremacist actors who may have entered our coalitions.
- Commit to supporting movements combating caste discrimination and Islamophobia in the United States.
- Support efforts to protect communities and activists from transnational repression (TNR) by foreign governments.
- Work to build more robust multiracial civil rights coalitions that can preemptively block the growth of the multiracial Far Right, rather than unwittingly nurture it.
- Join over 125 organizations in signing Savera’s declaration against Hindu supremacy: <https://www.wearesavera.org/take-action/statement/>

Civil society must know that retaining ties to Hindu supremacist groups like HAF is incompatible with the work needed to build a just, multiracial democracy. The time has come to show them the door.



'Very often, Hinduphobia is fomented by other people of Indian origin'

Foreword: The Multiracial Far Right

Still of "Suhag Shukla of Hindu American Foundation on 'Hinduphobia', Indian-Americans in US" uploaded on February 4, 2023, by The Print.

In a time of significant social and political upheaval in the United States, settled ideas about the political alignments of communities of color are being shaken loose.² Of course, evidence has never supported the notion that all racial and religious minorities are inherently "liberal" or "progressive."³ Yet the Democratic Party's ability to draw dominant support from these constituencies has often obscured the complex political tensions within them.

In recent years, however, growing numbers of non-white voters have abandoned the Democratic Party.⁴ In this shake-up, far-right political movements have found support within various minority communities—as evidenced by the rise of the "Chinese Tea Party,"⁵ the pro-Israel Jewish right-wing,⁶ and the increasing visibility of Latino leadership in white supremacist movements.⁷ Indeed, it is now possible to trace the outlines of an emerging "Multiracial Far Right," one that poses the greatest challenge yet to the unity of voters of color against white supremacy. As political analysts develop strategies to stem this rising far-right tide, it is necessary to understand why it is finding adherents among minorities.

The answers might not always make for comforting reading. After all, far-right actors of color, such as those in the Hindu Far Right, were first given patronage inside a host of civil society spaces otherwise committed to multiracial democracy, and also within the Democratic Party.⁸ How did they end up there? Paradoxically, it was often by instrumentalizing the language of multiculturalism, minority rights and representational politics. Often, this was facilitated by a prevailing tendency to simplify ethnic or religious identities into static and homogenous blocs, without internal tensions or conflicts.⁹ Taking advantage of this, actors within the Multiracial

Far Right have emphasized their minority identity while downplaying their far-right ideology, thereby claiming to speak on behalf of their communities while obscuring the reality of the significant internal contestation they have always faced.¹⁰ With many such groups now openly aligning with an ascendant MAGA movement, civil society must reckon with how entry points into the Far Right for communities of color have proliferated.¹¹

Perhaps the paradigmatic example of this phenomenon is the American Sangh, a network of U.S.-based organizations that uphold the principles of Hindu supremacy (or Hindutva), one of which is the subject of this report: the Hindu American Foundation (HAF).¹² The Hindu supremacist movement believes that India belongs only to Hindus and seeks to subordinate the country's other minorities, including Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Dalits¹³ and Adivasis.¹⁴ For more than 55 years, it has systematically built power in the U.S. in consort with its transnational counterpart in India.¹⁵ Although the American Sangh is characterized by its organizational centralization and a high degree of institutionalization, it until recently lacked a real political home in the U.S. Far Right,¹⁶ and instead sought to find space within liberal circles.¹⁷ As such, while Hindu supremacist organizations in India flagrantly oppose pluralism and democracy, demonize minorities, and regularly conduct hate crimes such as public lynchings, the American Sangh has sought to couch the politics of Hindutva in liberal language. Majoritarian fascism in one country is rebranded as defense of minority rights in another.

Hindu Supremacy: Hindu supremacy, sometimes referred to as Hindu nationalism or Hindutva, is a century old, ethno-nationalist political ideology distinguished from Hinduism by its emphasis on the absolute hegemony of Hindus in India. Hindu supremacists seek to create a Hindu state around a narrow interpretation of Hinduism based on a glorified mythical past. This political goal involves the expulsion or subordination of Muslims, Christians, and other religious minorities in India. It also intensifies the violent subordination of oppressed-caste and indigenous communities (Dalit and Adivasis, respectively). Hindu supremacists reject the notion of a secular, pluralistic, democratic India, and seek to redefine the territorial boundaries of the country and encompass territories across Asia based on ancient Hindu scriptures.

American Sangh: "The Sangh" (The Organization) is a term used both by analysts and movement participants to describe the global network of organizations, running in the thousands, centered around the Hindu supremacist paramilitary group, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS).¹⁸ The RSS's influence is such that its political wing, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), has ruled India for over a decade. The term "American Sangh" is used to describe the many dozens of U.S.-based affiliates of this network (i.e., a subset of the Sangh),¹⁹ centered around two primary organizations with explicit ties to the RSS: the Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America (VHP-A) and the Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh (HSS).²⁰

Perhaps no organization has gained more from this ploy than HAF. A key actor within the American Sangh, it describes itself as an advocacy group that works to protect the rights of Hindu Americans as religious minorities.²¹ HAF was founded in 2003 as a 501(c)(3) organization by a younger generation of activists who cut their teeth in older Hindu supremacist organizations like the HSS, VHP-A and HSC (the student wing of

the VHP-A).²² Since its inception, it has sought to strike a contradictory balance.²³ On one hand, it has consistently taken far-right positions on the three main issues that divide the Indian American community: caste, religious majoritarianism, and support for the Hindu supremacist Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP): HAF opposed attempts to redress caste-based discrimination in the U.S., has voiced anti-Muslim bigotry, and openly aligned itself with the BJP. On the other hand, it has gone to great lengths to pose as a civil rights group externally and maintain a semblance of legitimacy within mainstream American civil society.²⁴ In the process, HAF sought to have its cake and eat it too, advancing the otherwise marginal politics of Hindutva into spaces it had previously been unable to reach—spaces where it does not belong.

This balance has always been unstable, and in recent years it has come to the verge of collapse. Since the election to power of Narendra Modi and Donald Trump (and their re-elections or prospective re-elections), and with the growth of the global Far Right, the very terrain of politics has shifted. Civil rights coalitions are now embattled in the face of a growing anti-democratic front whose power the U.S. Hindu supremacist movement is increasingly aware of—and seeking proximity to.

There is ample evidence for this attempted convergence: the rise of Vivek Ramaswamy, who has close ties with the VHP-A²⁵ (and to a smaller degree with HAF);²⁶ the involvement of American Sangh leaders in the Edward Blum-led campaign to dismantle affirmative action;²⁷ and perhaps most ominously, the creation of new MAGA-aligned Political Action Committees (PACs), including the Steve Bannon-led Republican Hindu Coalition.²⁸

At the same time, a growing progressive movement—including within the Indian American community—has challenged Hindu supremacist politics, bringing HAF’s misalignment with civil rights causes into the open.²⁹ In the face of such developments, HAF has deprioritized the pursuit of legitimacy within U.S. civil rights institutions, perhaps aware that its bases of power are shifting. Far from claiming to uphold liberalism, it has embraced the moral panics of the Far Right, now publicly naming progressives as among its primary adversaries.³⁰

One could posit that HAF is revealing its true colors, finding its true allies among white supremacists in the US. Yet HAF is unlikely to give up its foothold—even if this is fast eroding³¹—within civil rights institutions overnight. Instead, there is likely to be a “division of labor,”³² with some groups within the American Sangh openly mobilizing their communities to support the Far Right (as we have described in previous reports)³³ while others work to draw power from a continued presence in civil rights institutions, advancing the cause of Hindutva on two fronts, as it were. If it has its way, HAF would love to orbit the broader US Far Right³⁴ even as it will likely seek to remain a bone lodged in the throat of civil rights coalitions, driving wedges between its constituents and stymieing effective action. This is what makes it a grave threat to the cause of a just, multiracial democracy.³⁵

“If it has its way, HAF would love to orbit the broader U.S. Far Right even as it will likely seek to remain a bone lodged in the throat of civil rights coalitions, driving wedges between its constituents and stymieing effective action.”



A saffron flag at a rally (Credit: Bharath Joshi/Flickr.com)

Introduction: HAF and the American Sangh

How does a movement that aspires to ethnic supremacy in its country of origin organize as a diaspora? This challenge has shaped the evolution of the American Sangh over time.

The origins of the American Sangh can perhaps be dated to 1970, when Mahesh Mehta, an RSS *pracharak*, or full-time worker, established the VHP-A. The language in its own documents recalls that of many first-generation immigrants who viewed their ties to their new country as relatively transient. Members referred to the U.S. as their *karmabhoomi* (“land of work”), but ultimately saw themselves working in service of their *janmabhoomi* (homeland, or “land of birth”).

Accordingly, organizations like the VHP-A and the HSS (which was officially established as a separate entity in 1989) organized themselves within the language and cadence of Indian politics. They cultivated members among a narrow but influential set of upper-caste immigrants, particularly those with previous backgrounds in the Indian Sangh.³⁶ Their politics, then, reflected and often responded to the Sangh’s Indian priorities.

For example, the VHP-A and its affiliates often orchestrated tours and conferences in the U.S. for their Indian counterparts,³⁷ including at junctures when the Sangh felt marginalized or under threat—such as during the Emergency of 1975–77, when opposition parties faced a clampdown from the ruling Congress Party.³⁸ In the late 1980s, the Ram Janmabhoomi movement (a campaign to demolish the 16th-century Babri Masjid

[mosque] in Ayodhya and replace it with a temple to the Hindu deity Ram)³⁹ propelled Hindutva into the Indian mainstream; the American Sangh offered political, moral and financial support to the cause.⁴⁰ Members of the American Sangh even traveled back to India to support the movement⁴¹ and created lobbying wings like the Overseas Friends of the BJP,⁴² and fundraising wings like the Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation USA.⁴³

The election of the BJP in 1999 was a watershed moment for Indian politics, marking the first time Hindu supremacists had national power. The American Sangh seized its opportunity and organized extensive programming in the U.S., including massive conferences on the sidelines of the UN and countrywide tours for Indian leaders on a chartered plane.⁴⁴ In 2002, however, it was put momentarily on the backfoot following the pogroms in Gujarat in which over 2,000 Muslims were killed during a horrific month of state-supported violence overseen by the state's chief minister, Narendra Modi. In response, the American Sangh—including members who would soon go on to found or work for HAF—mobilized to justify the pogrom and attack critics of Hindu supremacy in the U.S.⁴⁵

Across these decades, the American Sangh seldom engaged with American politics in any consistent manner, and its organizations did not actively seek alliances within domestic civil society. Indeed, in VHP-A founder Mehta's 350-page memoir, *Hindu Philosophy in Action* (2003), which details the first three decades of the American Sangh, American politics is conspicuous in its absence.⁴⁶

By the early 2000s, however, a new generation of leaders within the American Sangh began to critique their predecessors for this very reason. One of the most fervent voices for a new approach was that of Mihir Meghani, a veteran of the HSC, HSS, VHP-A and RSS who would go on to co-found HAF.⁴⁷ Meghani and his allies argued that the American Sangh's overt avowal of supremacist politics drew it into repeated PR embarrassments in the media and civil society, allowing it to be easily dismissed and isolated as a far-right network.⁴⁸ Moreover, its inability to ground itself in American politics prevented it from forging a Hindu American—rather than merely Hindu or Hindu supremacist—political identity, which would have offered far more power and legitimacy, and foreclosed accusations that it was a proxy of a foreign network.⁴⁹

Meghani and his allies called for a professional operation that could be more conversant in the language of American multiculturalism; this would serve as an instrument to advance the Hindutva cause in the mainstream advocacy circles it had previously been unable to reach. HAF was born out of this necessity. From the outset, its leaders have spoken the language not of messianic religious supremacism but rather of “advocacy,” “civil rights” and “human rights,” and they have insisted that it has “absolutely no affiliation or ties to any organizations or political parties in the U.S. or abroad.”⁵⁰

Much of HAF's subsequent public messaging has driven these themes home. In 2006, for example, Meghani claimed that HAF was specifically founded to be an “independent, moderate and credible Hindu American voice not associated with Indian politics.”⁵¹ In a 2008 essay, HAF's then-Managing Director (now Executive Director) Suhag Shukla wrote that HAF brings “a wholly US-centric approach to national and international advocacy,” representing “Hindu interests with no organizational, political or social affiliation with India or Indian religio-political groups.”⁵²

These claims to neutrality are worse than disingenuous. Meghani is a case in point. Long identified with an infamous essay promoting an overt commitment to Hindu supremacy that was spotlighted by the BJP itself,⁵³ he has instead repeatedly claimed in public that his ties to the VHP-A, HSS, and the Hindutva movement more broadly

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were a thing of the past—despite a wealth of contradictory evidence, which we lay out in Appendix A. In other settings, he has embraced rather different messaging: speaking of how the BJP’s electoral victories have been the best days of his life;⁵⁴ describing Modi as semi-divine;⁵⁵ and calling HAF “a voice for Bharat [India], our civilization... in the country which is most powerful country in the world, which is the United States.”⁵⁶ Nor are such efforts to disinform unique to him. In Appendix B, we present another case study of Rishi Bhutada, another long-time HAF board member, whose deep ties to the American Sangh were again falsely denied by HAF.

But the links between HAF and the American Sangh go beyond individual members; they are structural in nature. In further appendices, we offer, for interested readers, a deeper analysis of HAF’s leadership, financial and operational relations with the Sangh, from its genesis till today. Appendices C and D focus on HAF’s financial ties to the Sangh. They reveal the extent to which HAF was launched with a significant influx of donations from the American Sangh’s biggest donors, including senior HSS and VHP-A leader Braham Ratan Aggarwal, and that it continues to receive large amounts of funding from Sangh leaders and their foundations. Appendix E charts a range of shared personnel across HAF and other American Sangh organizations. Appendices F and G lay out an extensive record of operational partnerships with these organizations, from joint campaigns to regular cross-participation in each other’s events.

The key takeaway from this wealth of information is this: that HAF’s claims—and, often, lies—regarding its neutrality and independence are not *incidental but critical* to its functioning. Only by concealing its deep material and ideological ties to the rest of the Hindu Far Right can it maintain plausible deniability for the harms of Hindutva supremacy and claim its space within liberal civil rights coalitions.⁵⁷

“HAF’s claims — and, often, lies — regarding its neutrality and independence are not *incidental but critical* to its functioning.”

Notably, the maintenance of covert ties is not a new strategy within the Sangh. In India as well as in the diaspora, it relies on a many-headed approach described by scholars as “organisational diffusion.”⁵⁸ This involves the creation of a bewildering number of distinct but interconnected entities, some of which are more openly bigoted and violent (like, say, the VHP/VHP-A), and others that offer a veneer of respectability (like HAF, or CoHNA).⁵⁹ Organizational literature within the Hindu Far Right emphasizes, with almost fanatical insistence, this division of labor as central to the Sangh’s success.⁶⁰

Senior leaders of the American Sangh have explicitly acknowledged this strategy. Consider an August 2022 episode of *The Jaipur Dialogues*, a Hindu supremacist YouTube show hosted by Vibhuti Jha, a far-right influencer and former Republican candidate for New York State Assembly affiliated with the VHP-A and infamous for his hate speech against Muslims.⁶¹ Both HAF cofounder Aseem Shukla and VHP-A leader Bharat Barai were guest speakers on the episode. In his closing remarks, Jha asserts that “we have to create more bodies. We have seen the rise of CoHNA, we have seen the rise of HinduPACT,⁶² VHP-A is there...each group of people must do what they are best at and what they feel is the right approach.” He then endorses a “3C-M” strategy of “coordinate, cooperate, collaborate, and then mobilize.” Shukla can be seen nodding along in agreement as Jha speaks,⁶³ while Barai has himself publicly boasted about his use of front organizations on a VHP-A livestream.⁶⁴

VHP-A leader Utsav Chakrabarti has said much the same. “There are major Hindu advocacy groups out there with whom we coordinate,” he explained in a recent video. “As you saw today, Mihir Meghani, who is the Founder of Hindu American Foundation, made a donation appeal to us. It is possible because we worked with Hindu American Foundation and coordinated our efforts, strategically... I go to their platforms, we talk, we discuss, we share our resources in terms of research.”⁶⁵

HAF's Activities and Evolution

Evidently, therefore, HAF did not depart from the American Sangh; rather, it adopted a new strategy to work within the framework of what it called “Hindu American advocacy.” In its early years, it took positions in favor of religious liberty and pluralism, introduced a Resolution commemorating Diwali in the House of Representatives, and sought to communicate and represent Hinduism to the public and government through educational materials. In the process, HAF was welcomed, almost by default, into interfaith and civil rights coalitions, many of which were seeking more diverse representation of the Hindu minority in the U.S.⁶⁶



President Donald Trump participating in a ceremonial lighting on Diwali at the White House in 2018. (Credit: The White House/Wikimedia Commons)

These included, for example, coalitions working to oppose the Christian Right's efforts to blur the distinction between church and state. After HAF supported a few such lawsuits,⁶⁷ Shukla was quick to boast in 2008 that “our work has taken us to join hands with the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), Americans United for the Separation of Church and State, the Interfaith Alliance, and others.”⁶⁸ These and other collaborations where HAF largely played a minor sign-on role⁶⁹ allowed Shukla to claim that HAF has “established itself amongst religious liberty advocacy circles as the ‘go-to’ group for a Hindu perspective.”⁷⁰ “We are progressive” and “we are a human rights group” were two other claims she made in the process.⁷¹

HAF established a presence on Capitol Hill, organizing annual advocacy days, hiring a full-time staffer, and authoring reports on the rights of Hindu minorities across the world. However, HAF's stated commitment to civil rights and religious freedom was not quite universal. Indeed, it was markedly unwilling to apply these principles to minorities *within* India. Instead, it often attacked efforts to do so as “anti-Hindu.” Take the example of Ramesh Rao, the co-author of a majority of HAF's human rights reports between 2004 and 2012.⁷² (Rao is also a high-level HSS leader.)⁷³ Following the Gujarat pogroms of 2002, Rao slandered the work of human rights activists seeking to draw attention to the mass violence—including efforts by Human Rights

Watch and the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF)—as the “nefarious activities of the jihadi white-collar anti-Hindu activists.” Rao alleged a “vast conspiracy,” claiming that “Left and ‘pseudo-secular’ forces in India and the U.S. are about to crush all Sangh affiliate activities in the U.S.”⁷⁴ HAF cofounder Aseem Shukla also dismissed HRW’s report as “character assassination” and instead blamed Muslims for the violence.⁷⁵ (See further details of multiple such actions in support of the BJP in Appendix H.)

Such language presaged HAF’s pursuit of advocacy as a kind of zero-sum game in which the civil rights and religious freedoms of Hindus are framed in opposition to, and at the expense of, those of other communities.⁷⁶ In 2010, for example, it came to the defense of Sadhvi Rithambara, a Hindu supremacist monk infamous for her hate speech against Muslims, after she was disinvited from a religious function in New Jersey.⁷⁷ In 2011, HAF went well beyond its stated ambit to attack an Indian law, proposed by the non-BJP “United Progressive Alliance” coalition, to strengthen protections against anti-minority violence.⁷⁸ In 2013, HAF lobbied against a U.S. Congressional Resolution that argued for the inclusion of a human rights framework within the growing US-India strategic relationship and criticized Hindutva.⁷⁹ Three years later, it did the same for the VHP-A after the Council of the Parliament of World Religions, citing the group’s supremacist politics, withdrew its support for a VHP-A event.⁸⁰

In all these cases, HAF’s intervention was characterized by two familiar strategies. When on the defense, it exploits a mischaracterized notion of Hindu victimhood, dangerously conflating political critiques of Hindutva with a violation of Hindu American rights. For instance, in one of its first actions back in 2005, it worked with the HSS to oppose the inclusion of educational material on caste in California public school textbooks, arguing that educating students about caste-based discrimination would discriminate against Hindus.

“Rather than build solidarity grounded in a shared experience of racism, HAF and other actors in the American Sangh strategically amplified anti-Muslim rhetoric, so as to distinguish Hindu Americans, by contrast, as a model minority.”

On the other, HAF often counterattacked using familiar far-right tactics: accusing its political opponents, particularly Indian Muslim and leftist groups, of having ties to terrorist groups.⁸¹ Such an approach was in keeping with HAF’s response to the post-9/11 era, where South Asians were intensely racialized. Rather than building solidarity grounded in a shared experience of racism,⁸² HAF and other actors in the American Sangh strategically amplified anti-Muslim rhetoric, so as to distinguish Hindu Americans, by contrast, as a model minority.⁸³ Each of these episodes presaged its current alignment with the Far Right, from its partnership with anti-Muslim actors to its chosen bogey of “Critical Caste Theory.”⁸⁴

That HAF was able to get away with such claims owes in part to the low-information environment on such topics within broader U.S. civil society, for whom the nuances of Hindu-Muslim tensions and caste oppression were obscure. They remained far less legible than a simpler fact: HAF was offering itself as often the sole representative of the Hindu American community, and was thereby able to make supremacist positions seem like a matter of “culture.” Thus, HAF developed a specifically American articulation of Hindutva: strategically moderated at times, and grounded in the discourse of civil rights, but willing to bend that discourse to advance a divisive politics that harms other minority communities.⁸⁵

For at least a decade, all of this played out most distinctly within intra-community tussles, and remained structured within a broader paradigm where minorities were still, almost by axiom, tied to the Democratic Party. This is not to say that HAF’s positions on issues like caste and Islamophobia were even remotely liberal, but that there were few avenues to align these positions with the Far Right of American

politics—in other words, to combine the identity “Hindu” with the word “Republican.”

All that changed with the twin rise of the BJP in India and of the MAGA movement in the U.S.

In 2014, Narendra Modi was elected Prime Minister. His regime brought a newfound confidence and assertiveness to the American Sangh, but was also marked by an unyielding stream of violence against Muslims and other minorities,⁸⁶ which drew condemnation in both India and the U.S.⁸⁷ It also spurred progressive mobilization within the Indian American community — including among secular leftists, Sikhs, Muslims, progressive Hindus, Christians and Dalits. Many of these communities, which the American Sangh had made adversaries of, had attained a critical mass that allowed them to organize at a new scale. They raised issues of caste, class and religion in a manner that was legible beyond the South Asian community and found an audience among progressive social movements. HAF was thus put on the defense.

If these forces served as a “push” factor that hastened the slipping of HAF’s civil rights mask, there was an equally powerful “pull” factor. In 2019, Steve Bannon accepted a role leading the Republican Hindu Coalition,⁸⁸ signaling that the ascendant U.S. Far Right was opening itself up to their Hindutva counterparts. Soon after, HAF’s own long-time Director of Government Relations, Jay Kansara, left the organization, and began working with Hindu Voices for Trump and the right-wing pro-Republican PAC, Americans4Hindus⁸⁹ (Kansara remains closely tied to the Sangh).⁹⁰ With the white supremacist movement gaining renewed strength, the project of separating Hindus from other Indians and South Asians took on new intensity. HAF and other American Sangh groups began to frame the category of “Hindu American” in explicit distinction to “South Asian” or “Indian,” and as increasingly proximate to whiteness, marking Hindus as distinct from—and superior to—their Muslim, Christian, Sikh, atheist, or Dalit brethren. And by the time of the writing of this report, its expression has become explicit: that progressive movements for racial justice, rather than racism itself, had to be named as the enemy.⁹¹

“In 2019, Steve Bannon added his name of approval to the Republican Hindu Coalition, signaling that the ascendant U.S. Far Right was opening itself up to their Hindutva counterparts.”

In the following sections, we analyze three broad vectors along which HAF pursued its Hindutva agenda: opposition to anti-caste organizing, demonization of Muslims (and, increasingly, Indian Christians and Sikhs), and support for the BJP. Then, we examine the ways in which these positions brought it ever closer to an alignment with the U.S. Far Right.



Fighting “Critical Caste Theory” as Hindu American Civil Rights

Anti-Caste banners at a Seattle city council meeting. (Credit: Coalition of Seattle Indian Americans)

Caste: A form of hierarchical social organization prevalent across South Asia. In the caste system, individuals are separated into different hierarchically-organized groups known as jatis or castes, which are based on birth and maintained by a socially-enforced endogamy. Each caste is associated with a specific occupation and social status. The caste system has had a significant influence on social and economic relationships in India and continues to be the basis of severe systemic discrimination, prejudice, and violence. Various studies and testimonies⁹² have demonstrated that South Asian diaspora communities reproduce caste in the U.S.

The American Sangh has long virulently opposed anti-caste movements in the United States, which in recent years have found success in raising awareness about the persistence of caste among the South Asian diaspora. Emblematic in this regard is its campaign against SB403, a bill introduced in 2023 in the California state legislature, which sought to pass an additive law to existing anti-discrimination legislation.⁹³ The specter of SB403 triggered a veritable moral panic within the American Sangh. HAF spent a significant portion of its energy, time and resources—a whopping \$300,000 over the course of a few months, by its own attestations⁹⁴—to oppose the bill.

SB403: A bill, introduced in 2023 in the California state legislature, which sought to include caste as a protected category in the state’s civil rights law (alongside race, gender, sexual orientation, and so forth as categories along which discrimination is prohibited). SB403 passed the California Assembly by a margin of 55–3, and then in the California Senate by a vote of 31–5, but it was ultimately vetoed by Governor Newsom, under pressure from the American Sangh, which mobilized a couple of major Democratic Party donors to this end.⁹⁵

Why did HAF stand against SB–403? Far-fetched as it sounds, it held that the creation of an American discourse around caste-based protections would inherently victimize Hindus by portraying them in essentializing terms. In its advocacy, HAF claimed that SB403 “calls South Asians bigots, bullies, rapists, human traffickers, even murderers to justify an assault on their rights to equal protection under the law.”⁹⁶ (Needless to say, the bill said nothing of the sort.⁹⁷) An observer of American politics will note that such an argument borrows from the playbook used by the U.S. Far Right,⁹⁸ which protests that protections against racism would somehow target white people, that Title IX protections for women would somehow discriminate against men,⁹⁹ or that protections for LGBTQ+ individuals would somehow harm those not from the Queer community.¹⁰⁰

This analogy is not ours. The American Sangh is open about the intellectual debt it owes to the American Far Right in this regard.¹⁰¹ In June 2023, for example, VHP–A affiliate¹⁰² and “anti-woke”¹⁰³ activist Richa Gautam organized a “CasteCon” conference¹⁰⁴ in Fremont, CA. HAF and several other members of the American Sangh attended.¹⁰⁵ Speakers drew explicit connections between their opposition to SB 403 and other far-right positions, including on affirmative action, social science education, and “Critical Race Theory.”¹⁰⁶ VHP–A President Ajay Shah argued that “Asian Americans have felt the adverse impact of discrimination by Harvard and other prominent universities,” and claimed that “the Supreme Court voted for fairness” in striking down affirmative action.¹⁰⁷ HinduACTion leader Anjalee Swamy even cited wild speculation from a disinformation operation with ties to Indian intelligence agencies¹⁰⁸ that SB403 was a plot hatched by “Pakistan-linked extremist Islamist and Khalistan groups.”¹⁰⁹

“An observer of American politics will note that such an argument borrows from the playbook used by the U.S. Far Right, which protests that protections against racism would somehow target white people, that Title IX protections for women would somehow discriminate against men, or that protections for LGBTQ+ individuals would somehow harm those not from the Queer community.”

Echoing the overall tenor of the conference, HAF spun its own fearmongering narrative around the invented idea of “Critical Caste Theory.”¹¹⁰ Borrowed from the contemporary Far Right’s preferred bogeyman of “Critical Race Theory”¹¹¹ and the Christian Far Right’s appropriation of the language of religious freedom to argue that their particular beliefs entitle them to discrimination, such as against Queer people, the term seeks to manufacture a sense of victimhood by falsely claiming that the movement to ban caste discrimination is itself discriminatory against Hindu Americans.¹¹² Such exaggerated claims to victimhood are central to the larger Hindu supremacist project, and their particular expression in this case embodies the process of mutual recognition and exchange between the American Sangh and white nationalist groups.¹¹³

What explains the ferocity of the Sangh’s response? While the Hindutva movement’s upper-caste origins and its deep discomfort with anti-caste movements have been well-documented,¹¹⁴ the movement’s extreme opposition to even the mere discussion of caste in the diaspora (a record that goes back to HAF’s attempts to influence

how caste was presented in school textbooks in 2005)¹¹⁵ requires more specific and also more subtle context. In contrast, say, to affirmative action provisions in India, which could be said to materially affect upper-caste groups—that is, challenge their material privileges—a bill like SB403 merely offered an additive protection against discrimination.

And yet the very discussion of caste evidently posed an existential threat to the U.S. Hindutva movement that could not be treated as anything but existential. To admit the mere existence of caste would have meant to existentially disturb the edifice upon which the entire project of U.S. Hindutva is based: the claim to a homogenous ethnic identity without internal differentiations that is “perennially vulnerable”—in other words, animated solely by a claim to minority victimhood.¹¹⁶ To acknowledge the existence of caste privilege in the U.S. would be to fundamentally challenge the monopoly over representation Hindutva groups have sought to preserve, and thereby to disturb a certain natural assumption to power drawing on their presumed status as a “model minority.”

The battle over SB403 revealed where HAF had belonged all along—on the far-right end of the political spectrum. The bill was endorsed by major unions, civil rights groups, academic experts, and community organizations.¹¹⁷ In telling contrast, HAF worked extensively and almost exclusively with right-wing actors, including other Hindu supremacist groups such as the HSS, CoHNA, and the VHP-A, in opposing the bill. When the bill was passed, HAF emphasized that not a single Republican had supported the bill and that not a single Democrat had opposed it. “#WeWillRemember,” HAF tweeted.¹¹⁸

However, once the bill passed both chambers, American Sangh leaders kicked into rearguard action. Romesh Japra, the founder of Americans4Hindus, a MAGA-aligned Hindu supremacist PAC,¹¹⁹ activated Ramesh Kapur and Ajay Bhutoria, influential Democratic Party donors in the Indian American community, who successfully lobbied Newsom to veto the bill—offering further evidence of the Hindu far-right’s continued influence on both sides of the aisle.¹²⁰

“To acknowledge the existence of caste privilege in the U.S. would be to fundamentally challenge the monopoly over representation Hindutva groups have sought to preserve, and thereby to disturb a certain natural assumption to power imbricated in the category of the model minority.”

HAF'S REACTIONARY POSITIONS AND ACTIONS ON CASTE

2005-2006

HAF joins hands¹²¹ with the Vedic Foundation (VF) and the HSS¹²² to aggressively push for the rewriting of public school textbooks in California. Instrumentalizing claims that Hindu students could face discrimination, they demanded:

- Deleting references to caste, including replacing the word “caste” with the term “social classes,”¹²³ or alternately describing the caste system as a benign division of labor;
- Framing of Hinduism as a monolithic and monotheistic religion so as to erase its many diverse and heterodox interpretations;
- Removing the word “Dalits” (the name of political self-definition chosen by groups formerly known as “untouchables”);
- Including language arguing for the indigeneity of “Aryans” in the Indian subcontinent, and their equivalence with older civilizations like the Indus Valley Civilization;
- Deleting all references to the historical oppression of women.¹²⁴

The edits were largely rejected,¹²⁵ but the episode marked HAF's emergence within the American Sangh, and foreshadowed its extensive use of aggressive litigation and disinformation as key tactics.¹²⁶

2011

After a furious response from fellow members of the Hindu Far Right,¹³³ HAF backtracks and republishes its “Hinduism: Not Cast in Caste” report six months later with major revisions that ceded to Hindu supremacist voices, including talking points such as the claim that caste is derived from a Portuguese word and therefore distinct from the “varna/jaati tradition.”¹³⁴

2016-2017

HAF launches a second attempt to revise California's textbooks, partnering with the HSS¹³⁶ and the Uberoi Foundation, another American Sangh group.¹³⁷ (HAF remained at pains to hide its links to the HSS,¹³⁸ even when the HSS's parent, the RSS itself, tweeted in support of HAF's efforts.)¹³⁹ Despite significant opposition from South Asian academics and interfaith groups, HAF's aggressive tactics, including threats of litigation against the publishers and interference in the writing and review process, led to some edits favoring its narrative. These included disturbing edits arguing that the caste system had “both costs and benefits,” “brought stability to Indian society,” and helped “caste members [perfect] their skills.”¹⁴⁰ Note that such arguments echo the claims, pushed by the Far Right Florida in 2023, that “Black people benefited from slavery.”¹⁴¹

2008

HAF lobbies for textbook changes with the Virginia Department of Education, demanding the deletion of references to Aryan migration and the removal of references to caste from descriptions of Hinduism and India.¹²⁷ Scholars described the effort as an attempt to insert a Hindu supremacist interpretation of history; more specifically, as an “ideological effort to make ‘Aryans’¹²⁸ the progenitors of the Indus Valley civilization, thereby establishing them as the indigenous originators of a ‘Hindu’ India and rendering Christians and Muslims as ‘foreigners.’”¹²⁹

2010

HAF publishes a report, “Hinduism: Not Cast in Caste,” acknowledging that “caste-based discrimination is a serious civil and human rights issue in India,”¹³⁰ and insisting that “Hindus cannot ignore the subject of caste.” The report went on to list out—and reject—a series of bad-faith arguments that defend the existence of caste.¹³¹ Ironically, these are the very arguments HAF and its Hindu supremacist partners faithfully reproduced a decade later.¹³²

2015

HAF lobbies for edits to Texas public school textbooks, seeking to delete references to the word “caste,” or to otherwise reframe the caste system as an innocuous division of skills. After its success, HAF releases a poster celebrating the changes to the textbooks, including a correction that declared that the caste system “leads to the harmonious functioning of society.”¹³⁵

2021-present

HAF comes to the support of BAPS, a Hindu sect close to the Sangh¹⁴² and known for its temple construction,¹⁴³ after the FBI raided a BAPS temple in Robbinsville, NJ, alleging violations of labor and immigration laws.¹⁴⁴ (Days after the revelations, HAF's Suhag Shukla terms the raid “an opportunity to smear” Hindus.¹⁴⁵ In response to the workers filing a class action lawsuit against BAPS for labor trafficking and wage theft,¹⁴⁶ HAF begins to speak of “Hinduphobia” and frames the case as an attack on Hindu Americans.¹⁴⁷ While the federal investigation is ongoing, the Sangh has publicly lied that the legal battle has been won.¹⁴⁸

2022-2023

HAF aggressively opposes efforts to add caste as a protected category in universities and workplaces, including at Brandeis, Columbia, Harvard, Brown, UC Davis, the California Democratic Party, the American Bar Association, the California State University (CSU), Apple, IBM, and Cisco.¹⁴⁹ In its efforts, which have included petitions, op-eds, and a lawsuit against the CSU system, HAF has argued that caste protections would “discriminate against faculty of a particular background or faith” and termed it “an ethnically antagonistic policy.”¹⁵⁰

2023-present

In August 2023, a California federal court dismisses HAF’s 2022 lawsuit against the California CRD, labelling HAF’s argument “highly speculative and seemingly implausible,” although it allowed HAF an opportunity to amend its complaint on technical grounds¹⁵⁵—which HAF did a month later, although the judge had “also expressed skepticism that these shortcomings could be fixed.”¹⁵⁶

Despite this setback, HAF doubles down, spreading fear-laden messaging about anti-caste activism,¹⁵⁷ and even hosting one of the two CISCO managers at their fundraisers and podcasts.¹⁵⁸ HAF also begins to advertise and solicit donations for a legal fund.¹⁵⁹ This case is currently under review, although similar lawsuits, such as a lawsuit challenging the Seattle City Council’s addition of caste as a protected category, have been dismissed.¹⁶⁰

2020-present

In June 2020, the California Department of Fair Employment and Housing—now the California Civil Rights Department (CRD)—sues Cisco for allegedly discriminating against an oppressed-caste Indian American employee. The lawsuit claims Cisco allowed harassment by two managers, who were later dropped from the suit, though the case against Cisco is pending.¹⁵¹ (South Asian civil rights groups have reported testimonies of caste discrimination in tech companies.)¹⁵² HAF opposes the lawsuit, arguing it targeted Hindus and violated religious freedom,¹⁵³ and in September 2022 even files a counter-lawsuit against the CRD, alleging a denial of religious freedom and a violation of equal protections.¹⁵⁴

2023

HAF campaigns against SB 403, a bill to add caste as a protected category in California (which followed a similar bill in Seattle),¹⁶¹ arguing it discriminated against and maligned Hindus and South Asians,¹⁶² even though the bill did no such thing.¹⁶³ HAF unsuccessfully attempts, with the help of the Assembly Judiciary Committee Chairperson, to remove the word “caste” from the bill and replace it with “inherited social status.”¹⁶⁴ Hindutva groups explicitly link their campaign opposing the bill to efforts against affirmative action and critical race theory,¹⁶⁵ and HAF begins to speak of “critical caste theory.”¹⁶⁶ The bill passes in both legislative houses but is eventually vetoed by Governor Gavin Newsom, following extensive lobbying by Democratic Party donors with ties to the American Sangh.¹⁶⁷ HAF celebrates, claiming the veto protected civil rights and prevented discrimination against South Asians.¹⁶⁸

Wedge Politics and Anti-Muslim Bigotry

Hindu supremacist ideology is premised on a racialized expression of Hindu religious identity, with Hindu victimhood invoked and, more often, manufactured to justify the pursuit of supremacy over other religious groups, primarily Muslims.¹⁶⁹ Hindu supremacist thinkers have long characterized Muslims as inherently untrustworthy, backward, and aggressive, and as alien “invaders” in India. HAF has certainly repeated such expressions in more or less blatant terms from time to time.¹⁷⁰ On the whole, however, it has been more strategic and opportunistic, seldom articulating anti-Muslim bigotry as baldly as its counterparts in the American Sangh such as the VHP-A. Rather, HAF’s anti-Muslim rhetoric tends to be expressed in an American idiom, within the broader framework of white supremacy, in an effort to mark Hindus as more deserving of acceptance than their sibling communities—and as the true model minority. Bifurcating Hindus and Muslims into global oppositional civilizational categories, as the Hindutva movement has sought to do, has fed into this pursuit.

“HAF’s anti-Muslim rhetoric tends to be expressed in an American idiom, within the broader framework of white supremacy, in an effort to mark Hindus as more deserving of acceptance than their sibling communities.”

This zero-sum understanding of its mandate is accompanied by a consistent, if subtle, dissemination of anti-Muslim bigotry. While this has sometimes included a general vilification of the Muslim community, it has also taken a more specific form under HAF: the targeted smearing of Muslim advocacy groups in particular, whom HAF has often linked to terrorism or Islamism, with little evidence.

Much of these efforts can be grounded in the decades after 9/11, when Hindu far-right groups like HAF instead chose to ride the wave of anti-Muslim sentiment, emerging as key players in an anti-Muslim ecosystem. This was in stark contrast to other communities of color, who identified profiling and surveillance as a shared threat and built solidarities.¹⁷¹

In 2010, for example, HAF co-founder Aseem Shukla and other Hindu Far Right activists joined Far Right opposition to the construction of a mosque near Ground Zero, a campaign that galvanized large parts of the anti-Muslim Far Right, and where Hindutva organizers were prominent on the ground.¹⁷² “Any structure that would echo with the words that fed hijacker hate,” wrote Shukla, “should never be ascribed pride of place where innocents met their gruesome fate.”¹⁷³

A year earlier, Shukla authored an article following the 2009 Fort Hood shooting, in which a Muslim U.S. Army major killed thirteen people. Shukla went far beyond the details of the case to invoke sweeping anti-Muslim conspiracies, claiming that “there are violent voices aspiring for a global wave that establishes a world ruled under the Islamic crescent.”¹⁷⁴ More troubling still, Shukla goes on to interview a former serviceman of Hindu faith and ponders: “Where did the paths diverge that one serves his nation with pride and honor, while one stands accused of the horrors of fratricide?”¹⁷⁵ The implication, while implicit, is striking—that Hindu Americans are the epitome of morality and honor, in contrast to their Muslim counterparts, who represent violence and fanaticism.

Over the years, and in keeping with the rest of the American Sangh,¹⁷⁶ HAF has worked with a long list of anti-Muslim and far-right collaborators. Of late, for example, it has developed a close association with Abha Shankar,¹⁷⁷ the Research Director¹⁷⁸ for the Investigative Project on Terrorism (IPT), whose founder Steven Emerson has repeatedly spread anti-Muslim bigotry and disinformation.¹⁷⁹ In her writings for IPT, Shankar has sought out HAF leaders for quotes,¹⁸⁰ railed against a so-called “Woke

Army” of “radical Islamists and far left activists” funded by George Soros,¹⁸¹ and attacked human rights organizations like Amnesty International for “teaming with radical...groups” to promote “Islamist agendas.”¹⁸²

HAF has similarly developed a close partnership¹⁸³ with the Middle East Forum, a conservative think tank named “at the center of the Islamophobia network” in the U.S.¹⁸⁴ The two organizations and their leaders have repeatedly appeared on each other’s podcasts, taking turns to vilify Muslims and spread conspiracy theories about alleged Islamist infiltrations.¹⁸⁵ HAF and MEF also repeatedly cite each other to justify anti-Muslim positions¹⁸⁶ and have dangerously alleged, without evidence, that their political opponents are tied to terrorist networks.¹⁸⁷

HAF has also worked to platform several anti-Muslim voices from India. In October 2019, for example, it hosted and organized a sponsored speaking tour in the U.S.¹⁸⁸ for Aarti Tikoo Singh, a Hindutva provocateur who has called Islamophobia a “bullshit word,”¹⁸⁹ alleged the existence of a “US Left-Islamist War machine” working to subvert US democracy,¹⁹⁰ and described Muslim elected officials such as Ilhan Omar and Rashida Tlaib as “Muslim chauvinists” and cheerleaders of “Islamist fascism.”¹⁹¹ The tour included high-profile events at the National Press Club and a Congressional Hearing in Washington, DC, where Tikoo Singh was presented as an expert on Kashmiri politics. In her testimony, she justified the detention of political prisoners, violent clampdowns on civil society, and a five-month lockdown, including the shutdown of internet services, in Kashmir.¹⁹² (Although HAF later claimed they could not be held responsible for her views,¹⁹³ its Managing Director Samir Kalra joined Tikoo Singh for a webinar focused on the “weaponization of social justice, human rights and academic institutions” in 2024.)¹⁹⁴

Similarly, in 2022 HAF co-sponsored a nationwide screening tour for the anti-Muslim Bollywood propaganda film¹⁹⁵ *The Kashmir Files*.¹⁹⁶ HAF Board Member Rajiv Pandit even hosted¹⁹⁷ a screening of the film in Dallas with the director, Vivek Agnihotri—a close ally of the Modi government who has been compared to the Nazi filmmaker Leni Riefenstahl.¹⁹⁸ That year, HAF’s year-end fundraiser, titled “Distortions of India and Hinduism,” featured Abhijit Iyer-Mitra,¹⁹⁹ a far-right ideologue infamous for a long history of anti-Muslim speech.²⁰⁰

Muslim American civil society organizations appear to be particularly detested by HAF.²⁰¹ In October 2022, for example, after an interfaith coalition took out a full-page advertisement in *The New York Times* to raise concerns about anti-minority violence in India,²⁰² Suhag Shukla tweeted about “Islamist & radical fringe groups that paid 6-figures for that @nytimes ad.”²⁰³ Both Shukla²⁰⁴ and HAF itself²⁰⁵ have also promoted conspiracy theories against Muslim organizations that were produced by “DisinfoLab,” an India-based disinformation operation which a *Washington Post* investigation revealed to be run by an Indian intelligence officer²⁰⁶ (following that story’s publication in the *Post*, Shukla amplified a tweet by notorious alt-right media figure and white nationalist²⁰⁷ Jack Posobiec that attacked the *Post* reporter).²⁰⁸

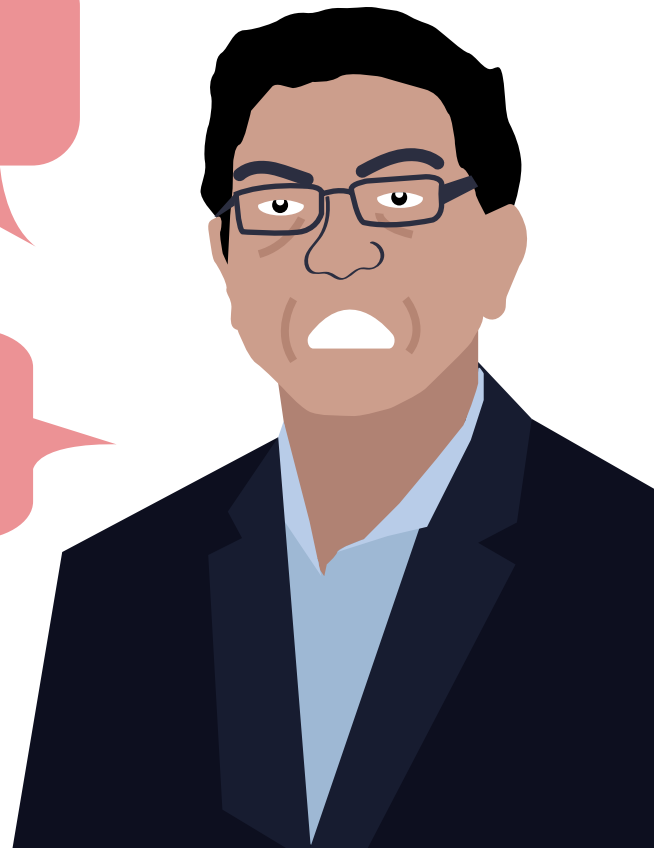
Perhaps the most vitriolic member of HAF’s senior leadership, however, has been board member Rajiv Pandit, who has used such rhetoric on several occasions:

What do self-described “progressive” Hindu groups do? They go on an Islamist group’s channel to talk about how Hindus need to behave better.²⁰⁹

I see that @Hindus4HR is at its usual attention-seeking game: attack @HinduAmerican to curry favor with Islamist @IAMCouncil & @EqualityLabs and try to get noticed.²¹⁰

In its non-response response to credible allegations of ties to SIMI, Jamaat-E-Islamii and Islamist work, @IAMCouncil puts up @Hindus4HR as the “good” Hindu group.²¹¹

Listen @IAMCouncil, if you’re upset about @MEForum exposing your Islamist advocacy, do try and rebut. And nah, HAF doesn’t team up with MEF to expose you—your poor choices and anti-Hindu work does that quite well.²¹²





HAF's Consistent Advocacy for the BJP Regime

President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi shaking hands at the Howdy Modi event in 2019. (Credit: The White House/Wikimedia Commons)

"I cannot support HAF's campaign against HR-417," wrote Malaysian Hindu activist Bhuvan Govindasamy in a 2013 email to Mihir Meghani. "HAF's primary mandate is to educate, represent, engage & fight for Hindus in America & all over the world. Not get involved in the Indian politics, or US-Indian relations. If HAF insists on involving in Indian political matters, then have them change their name & mandate."²¹³

The email came in response to a request from Meghani for the Malaysian American Foundation's support in HAF's campaign against H.Res. 417. Introduced in November 2013 by a bipartisan group of 14 Representatives, the resolution was titled "Praising India's rich religious diversity and commitment to tolerance and equality, and reaffirming the need to protect the rights and freedoms of religious minorities."²¹⁴ It called on the Indian government to take steps to protect religious minorities from violence and persecution and criticized Narendra Modi for his role in the 2002 Gujarat pogrom.

HAF worked doggedly to kill the resolution, which it allegedly described as "biased and anti-Hindu."²¹⁵ It mobilized its supporters to contact their members of Congress,²¹⁶ and was described to have visited the offices of every cosponsoring member of Congress, some of whom withdrew their support under pressure.²¹⁷ One Congressional staffer told a journalist that HAF was "definitely trying to undermine anyone in Washington who is critical of Modi."²¹⁸ In his email, Meghani dismissed H.Res.417's proponents as "communists, marxists and pro-Islamists" and boasted that "our efforts have kept many Congressmen from signing onto this bill."²¹⁹

Govindasamy's retort, however, revealed that advocates within the Hindu community had begun to see through HAF's claims of defending Hindu human rights and instead recognized a far more insidious underlying purpose: the defense of the BJP and the Modi regime in India.

Indeed, HAF has an extensive record of work advocating for and defending the BJP in DC—a role that it has taken on with such vigor that observers on Capitol Hill often remarked that they find the boundaries between HAF and an actor like the Indian Embassy to be difficult to ascertain.²²⁰ Their confusion is understandable. Particularly in the last decade—which corresponded with Modi's rise to national power in India—there has often been little daylight between HAF's messaging and the BJP regime's positions.

Since its founding, HAF and its leaders have:

- Launched strident defenses of the Modi regime's atrocious religious freedom and human rights record;²²¹
- Lobbied against a proposed 2011 Indian law that would strengthen protections against anti-minority violence;²²²
- Followed the Indian government in attacking the US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF);²²³
- Helped organize receptions for Modi in the US, such as the 2014 Madison Square Garden²²⁴ and 2019 Howdy Modi²²⁵ events;
- Defended the Indian government's revocation of Kashmiri autonomy and the draconian lockdown that followed;²²⁶
- Supported the Modi regime's discriminatory²²⁷ Citizenship Amendment Act.²²⁸
- Joined the Modi regime to smear farmers' protests as a conspiracy of Khalistani separatists,²²⁹ and even argued for the increased surveillance of Sikh communities; and
- Echoed the BJP's talking points defending assassination attempts on Sikh activists in the US and Canada.²³⁰

This long record of pro-BJP advocacy, which we cover in detail in Appendix H, reveals all there is to know about HAF: that it is not a civil rights or human rights group, but a far-right proxy using the garb of civil rights to advance a politics of supremacy.



HAF's Alignment with the Far Right

Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in 2017 (Credit: Press Information Bureau of the Prime Minister of India's Office/Wikimedia Commons)

In a 2020 blog post, HAF noted that Indian American support for the Democratic Party dropped by 12 percentage points between 2016 and that year, while support for President Donald Trump almost doubled in this period, to nearly 30 percent.²³¹ What explained this transformation? According to HAF, “unchecked attacks and recent anti-India activism from the so-called Super Progressive wing of the Democratic party” were to blame for the growing shift of Hindu Americans to the Republican Party.²³² However, HAF should have rather begun by looking in the mirror at its own role in the growing convergence between Hindu supremacy and White supremacy.²³³ After all, in recent years the organization has moved definitively toward the Far Right, epitomized by the involvement of its former Government Relations Director Jay Kansara in the Trump campaign.²³⁴

Indeed, HAF seems to have entered a new phase: one in which it openly and proudly embraces this Far Right. This is evidenced by its work to advance the narrative of “Critical Caste Theory,” for example, as well as a range of other activities: high-pitched attacks on ethnic studies and anti-racist education;²³⁵ the aggressive use of litigation, including filing SLAPP suits against progressive opponents, to attack free speech and academic freedom²³⁶ and advancing the culture war around “wokeness” on college campuses.²³⁷ Each of these have increasingly deepened its partnerships with far-right opponents of civil rights policies.²³⁸

Often, HAF has shown itself willing to collaborate with groups and individuals like MAGA Republicans and Christian Zionists whose central values explicitly go against the interests of the community it purports to represent. However, such concerns seem to have been dwarfed by HAF's pursuit of power within the Far Right, and its

articulation that progressives, rather than the bigotry of White supremacists and Christian nationalists, are its primary adversary. Sixteen years after Suhag Shukla claimed that HAF was “progressive,”²³⁹ such positioning on the part of HAF is not just scarce; it has been entirely reversed.

Consider an October 2023 op-ed written by Mat McDermott, HAF’s Senior Director of Communications. “Issues like xenophobic anti-Hindu bias and discrimination from the American public or skin color-based racism directed at Indians certainly exist,” he began.²⁴⁰ It appeared that he would repeat the general adage for any community of color, especially in the era of Trumpism: that racism was a common challenge that needed to be combated. But his piece immediately took a turn.

“But both of these are more slowly simmering background issues,” he continued. “The biggest challenges specifically faced by Hindu American advocacy groups... stem from two main sources”—first, “advocacy groups and activists whose primary focus is minority religious communities in India”; and second, “the Progressive movement in the U.S.”²⁴¹ Similar contentions would be made by other members of the HAF leadership—including the following month, when HAF’s Managing Director and CFO Sheetal Shah identified as HAF’s primary adversaries “activists spotlighting minority religious communities in India” and the “anti-India, anti-Hindu” progressive movement.²⁴²

Such words have been borne out in HAF’s actions, where it has increasingly sought out allies among other far-right actors. Its lodestar in this regard has been the pro-Israel Far Right, whose strategies and rhetoric it has long taken as a model.²⁴³ Even though their constituencies are significantly affected by White supremacy and Christian nationalism, both Hindutva and Zionist movements have downplayed such concerns. Instead, by sleight of hand, they have weaponized a bad-faith claim to victimhood that intentionally conflates racism from the Right with political opposition from the Left. In the absence of critical context, their specious arguments have often been misread as the legitimate grievances of a minority community rather than a reactionary response to a political critique of ethnonationalism.

“While the alliance between right-wing Zionism and Hindutva has often been framed in ideological or geopolitical terms, their functioning within the U.S. must also be understood in terms of the relationship both movements have sought to build with elements of the U.S. Far Right.”

While the alliance between right-wing Zionism and Hindutva has often been framed in ideological or geopolitical terms, their functioning within the U.S. must also be understood in terms of the relationship both movements have sought to build with elements of the U.S. Far Right. Zionism, as such, offers an appealing playbook to the American Sangh precisely through its strategic orientation to White supremacy and the Far Right, which offers it a dual positioning: proximity to and orbiting of the U.S. Far Right, but a simultaneous pursuit of acceptance beyond such far-right spaces, including in the very civil rights coalitions built to protect democracy from the Far Right.

The American Sangh and Zionist movements have openly strategized about leading an emergent Multiracial Far Right. In 2022, the Hindu American PAC, which HAF co-founder Mehgani chairs alongside other members of HAF’s senior leadership,²⁴⁴ donated \$5,000 in support of the 2022 Congressional run in Nevada of David Brog,²⁴⁵ the former Executive Director of CUFI (Christians United for Israel), who had helped establish the organization with the far-right pastor and televangelist John Hagee.²⁴⁶ In January 2023, Brog seemed to repay the favor, writing in *Jewish Journal* in which he emphasized the need for an “anti-woke” alliance, led by Hindus and Jews, to counteract the influence of “radicals” and “race baiters.”²⁴⁷ He went on:

“Jews and Hindus can be core of such a new alliance. But it cannot end with us. We need to reach out to other immigrant communities that lean Democratic but are increasingly anti-woke, including Chinese Americans, Filipino Americans, Nigerian Americans, Hispanic Americans and Muslim Americans (beginning with Muslims from Israel, India and the Gulf).”²⁴⁸

Two months later, Meghani appeared on a podcast with Brog. In it, they denied the existence of institutional racism, and blamed the “woke left” for undermining the “meritocracy” that had advanced Hindus and Jews in the U.S.²⁴⁹ Brog and Meghani were effectively outlining a vision for a Multiracial Far Right, one where the appeals of moral panics (which on face value are often race-neutral) could bring more non-white groups into the Far Right.

Admittedly, such an effort will not be free of contradictions. For example, in his essay Brog appeared willing to bring in other “anti-woke” immigrant communities, including Muslim Americans—a small section of whom have been sought out by the Far Right through an anti-LGBTQ politics.²⁵⁰ Yet Meghani positioned a Hindu-Jewish alliance in explicit opposition to Arabs and Muslims. “Clearly the Arab and Muslim immigration has overtaken the Hindu and Indian community...and [is] perhaps approaching the Jewish community population, so we’re gonna need to forge these alliances,” he said on the podcast.²⁵¹

Evidently, for Meghani and perhaps HAF as well, the focus is straightforward and rather more proximate: a pursuit of supremacy over solidarity, where the rights of Hindus and Hindu Americans are seen in direct opposition to those of other minority communities, and where the advance of the American Sangh is unencumbered by civil rights opposition.

Now that such an articulation has become crystal clear, the question turns slightly: How will it be received by civil society? We examine this question, and offer our call to action, to conclude this report.

HAF'S RECENT EMBRACE OF RIGHT-WING POLITICS

2019

HAF joins a coalition that opposed the introduction of ethnic studies in California.²⁵² In 2023, Suhag Shukla called the move “a veil for something nefarious,” referencing the University of California Ethnic Studies Council’s support for Palestinian rights.²⁵³

September 2021

HAF joins a number of Hindu supremacist forces, including officials of the Modi government, in attempting to shut down the Dismantling Global Hindutva conference, a three-day virtual academic conference on Hindutva. In less than forty-eight hours, HAF, along with CoHNA and the HSS,²⁵⁷ mobilizes its supporters (and, it was later shown, Hindu supremacist troll farms in India)²⁵⁸ to send nearly a million emails to universities whose departments had cosponsored the conference, demanding that they disavow any official affiliation. But not a single department backs out.²⁵⁹

July 2022

HAF begins to adopt a right-wing expression of the language of parents’ rights, coining the term “doing a 180.” Its language describes the university as a site where the survival of Hinduism is threatened, and where 18 years of parenting can be undone.²⁶²

March 2023

Mihir Meghani appears on a podcast with David Brog, the former Executive Director of a prominent Christian Zionist group, Christians United for Israel (CUFI). Discussing the need for Hindus and Jews to form a coalition and work together more closely, he explicitly positions these communities in opposition to Arabs and Muslims.²⁶⁶ The Hindu American PAC, which Meghani chairs alongside other members of HAF’s senior leadership, donates \$5,000 to Brog’s 2022 Congressional run in Nevada.²⁶⁷

2021-2024

In 2021, HAF partners with right-wing Zionist organization StandWithUs (SWU)²⁷¹ for a virtual event titled “Indo-Judaic Ties: Ancient Cultures, Common Challenges, Modern Miracles.”²⁷² Later, HAF co-sponsors an SWU campaign and press conference against the UN Human Rights Council,²⁷³ co-releases a pamphlet, and co-hosts more webinars with SWU.²⁷⁴

April-May 2021

After *Al Jazeera* publishes two articles about HAF and other Hindutva groups receiving over \$800,000 in federal COVID aid funds,²⁵⁴ HAF files a defamation lawsuit against four activists quoted in the piece and an academic,²⁵⁵ a textbook example of a Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation (SLAPP).²⁵⁶

October 2021

HAF files a federal civil rights complaint against the University of Pennsylvania, demanding an investigation into whether the university and its faculty had “created a hostile environment for students and faculty of Indian and Hindu descent” for participating in the Dismantling Global Hindutva conference.²⁶⁰ Note the similarities with the strategies used by other far-right efforts, such as in the weaponization of the language of student safety.²⁶¹

2023

HAF builds a relationship with Jewish Institute for Liberal Values (JILV), a right-wing Zionist group that opposes “Critical Race Theory.”²⁶³ In May 2023, Suhag Shukla travels to Israel with JILV’s Director of Education and Community Engagement Brandy Shufutinsky,²⁶⁴ and a month later HAF invites Shufutinsky to be a featured speaker at the “Hindu American Summit” that it co-organized with the Far Right Americans4Hindus PAC.²⁶⁵

2020-2023

HAF has worked extensively with the Middle East Forum (MEF). In June 2020 and December 2023, HAF’s Samir Kalra invites Sam Westrop, the director of MEF’s “Islamist Watch” program, to be a guest speaker on HAF’s podcast.²⁶⁸ Kalra similarly appears on an MEF webinar in August 2020.²⁶⁹ On these occasions, the pair uses Islamophobic tropes to imply that Muslim Americans opposing discriminatory policies in India are linked to terrorist networks.²⁷⁰

2023-2024

In the months following the October 7 Hamas attacks and Israel’s subsequent bombardment of Gaza, HAF aligns ever further with Far Right actors,²⁷⁵ particularly in their attempts to spread a moral panic about student activism on college campuses.²⁷⁶ In April 2024, for example, it shares a letter written by Far Right Republican Rep. Virginia Foxx to the administration of Rutgers University, informing the school of the committee’s investigation into Rutgers for pro-Palestinian advocacy among faculty and students.²⁷⁷



Conclusion: Toward Solidarity Over Supremacy

Dalit Solidarity Forum and Hindus for Human Rights at a Black Lives Matter protest in Selma, Alabama

Across its two decades of existence, HAF has consistently opposed anti-caste activism, spread anti-Muslim rhetoric, and supported the BJP, alongside its various positions opposing progressive groups in the U.S., all while pretending, with partial success, to be a civil rights organization and a legitimate, independent representative of a monolithic Hindu American community. In the process, it has developed a particular strategy that indeed diverges from traditional far-right groups: the pursuit of legitimacy within civil society.

On the one hand, it has often done so because of the relationships and financial support facilitated by its fellow Hindu supremacist groups, with whom it has regularly sought to conceal its ties. On the other, it has also done so by maintaining a strategic (if contradictory and superficial) alignment with liberal values on certain policy questions in a manner that sought to conceal its casteism, its anti-Muslim politics, and its pro-BJP advocacy.

In this approach, HAF relied on the fact that some civil and human rights organizations have taken HAF's claims—of liberalism, multiculturalism, or minority representation—at face value, falling victim to its doublespeak and to the low-information environment around a topic like Hindu supremacy. As a result, these spaces have nurtured the very organization that is now in deeper and deeper alignment with the U.S. Far Right. Such spaces often made a poor bargain that deferred to HAF's exaggerated representational claims over their constituencies. Not only did this logic pass over HAF's casteism, anti-Muslim bigotry and pro-BJP

advocacy, but it also missed the extent that HAF relied on a facade of mainstream acceptability for that very clout. (Indian Americans, after all, when considered across the full diversity of religion, caste, and class, are not only among the most reliably liberal political constituencies on most issues,²⁷⁸ but also reject Hindu supremacy in significant numbers.)²⁷⁹

It is in part because of this growing anti-Hindutva majority that the mutually reinforcing cycle we describe—representational capture, uninformed patronage, and the resulting clout that makes the open repudiation of HAF or Hindutva difficult—is now under immense strain. However, the demise of this phenomenon will produce contrasting ripple effects in its place, one of which does not augur well for democracy. As HAF and the American Sangh aligns further with the US Far Right, choosing supremacy over solidarity, we are at risk of seeing a direct on-ramp for Indian Americans into the Far Right. That tragedy will be manifold; as that Multiracial Far Right grows, more communities of color will be mobilized into upholding a racist regime that ultimately harms us all.

Our argument, therefore, for solidarity over supremacy is founded on a simple principle. We insist that HAF cannot have it both ways. It cannot claim to advocate for civil rights, appropriating our movements' legacies of collective liberation, while simultaneously allying with far-right actors, whitewashing the discriminatory policies of a foreign regime, spreading Islamophobia and disinformation, introducing new conspiracy theories to target anti-caste activism, and launching SLAPP suits against those who dare criticize it.

Those contradictions cannot, and must not, hold. But the ultimate determinants of that, after all, are you, the readers, as members of American civil society. When HAF's doublespeak has found some success, it has often been because civil society actors have remained unaware of, or underemphasized, HAF's true nature and the extent of its harms. But as we have demonstrated, the danger presented by HAF is more serious than many mainstream organizations have understood. Through its historic and ongoing ties to groups such as the VHP-A and the HSS, HAF is both ideologically and materially linked to a hundred-year-old fascist movement that represents a serious threat to even the most rudimentary forms of racial, economic, and gender justice—and has consciously and explicitly aligned itself with the US Far Right,²⁸⁰ actively opposing the cause of universal civil rights framed around shared values and interests.

Building a multiracial democracy will require blocking the advance of a Multiracial Far Right, and building a deeper understanding of the internal politics of all the communities that constitute it.²⁸¹ Civil society institutions must now recognize that the toleration of the Hindu Far Right is incompatible with the work needed to build a substantive multiracial democracy. The time to show them the door has come.

“Building a multiracial democracy will require blocking the advance of a Multiracial Far Right, and building a deeper understanding of the internal politics of all the communities that constitute it.”

Appendix A

Mihir Meghani's Ties to the Sangh

Mihir Meghani's ties to the Sangh stretch back over a decade before HAF's founding. Born in Philadelphia in 1972, Meghani emerged in 1991 as a cofounder²⁸² of the student wing of the VHP-A,²⁸³ the Hindu Students Council (HSC), and moved through the VHP-A and HSS, before eventually co-founding HAF in 2003.

In between, Meghani even spent considerable time in India, working with the RSS. In 1995, he attended the RSS Vishwa Sangh Shibir in Vadodara, a training camp for overseas functionaries of the RSS.²⁸⁴ In their coauthored 2018 book *The RSS: A View to the Inside*, RSS scholar Walter Andersen and Sangh leader²⁸⁵ Shridhar Damle describe the Vishwa Sangh Shibir as a key event reserved for core members of the overseas Sangh that seeks to "create an international pool of potential RSS workers to be assigned anywhere in the world to spread the message of Hindutva."²⁸⁶ Attendees at the Shibir, they revealed, are required to complete three years of prior training with the Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh (HSS), the RSS's overseas equivalent.²⁸⁷ Meghani's presence at this camp therefore implies one of two things: either that he was already a high-ranking HSS member, or that he was considered an exceptionally promising leader for whom these requirements could be waived.

Meghani's engagement with the RSS did not stop with the training camp. He stayed in India for a significant while longer, working with the RSS in the northeastern state of Meghalaya in 1996, and only returning to the U.S. after that stint.²⁸⁸ In 1996, Meghani went on to publish "Hindutva—The Great Nationalist Ideology," a manifesto that openly endorsed a Hindu supremacist agenda.²⁸⁹ He wrote of "Islamic society's innate unwillingness to change," pushed Far Right conspiracy theories such as the existence of a "pseudo-secularist apparatus" that kept Hindus in check, and praised the Hindu supremacist mob that demolished the Babri Masjid in 1992.²⁹⁰ "The future of Bharat is set. Hindutva is here to stay," he concluded.²⁹¹ Meghani's text was republished several times by the BJP as an ideological manifesto.²⁹²

Meghani's time with the RSS in India no doubt brought him significant political capital in the American Sangh, where he joined the Governing Council of the VHP-A.²⁹³ In the VHP-A, Meghani began to push for a more sophisticated organizational strategy, noting that the American Sangh struggled to penetrate mainstream civil rights spaces in the United States. Ultimately, he joined hands with fellow second-generation graduates of the VHP-A's student wing, the HSC, to create HAF;²⁹⁴ its mission statement grew out of language proposed by Meghani to the VHP-A's senior leadership.²⁹⁵

Meghani's trajectory—from a leadership role in the VHP-A and HSC in the 1990s to authoring a BJP ideological manifesto while with the RSS—makes clear that he is a staunch adherent of Hindutva—and furthermore, that he formally institutionalized HAF to advance the Sangh's agenda.²⁹⁶ This evidence is dangerous for HAF, who have repeatedly sought to downplay his connections to the RSS, HSS and VHP-A as past affiliations. In 2014, for example, it dismissed a report on the matter as a "regurgitation of a more than decade old connection between one of HAF's co-founders and board members, Mihir Meghani, in his individual capacity, and other religio-cultural non-profit organizations."²⁹⁷

However, such denial is untenable. Indeed, Meghani's ties with the American Sangh remain intact and as robust as ever, as we tabulate below, alongside a litany of HAF's lies to the contrary.

HAF'S PUBLIC CLAIMS	CONTRADICTORY EVIDENCE
<p>HAF has often argued that its members' past affiliations with the VHP-A or its student wings were merely those of youth choosing from limited options. "There was a paucity of organized fora for Hindu religio-cultural expression in the United States and many youths participated in VHP-A activities with necessarily no knowledge or ideological allegiance to socio-political activities in India," it claimed.²⁹⁸</p>	<p>In September 2023, Meghani traveled to Florida (alongside Priya Pandit, another member of HAF's National Leadership Council²⁹⁹) to meet the high-ranking Hindu supremacist leader Ram Madhav, who sits on the RSS's National Executive and was formerly National General Secretary of the BJP.³⁰⁰ In the summer of 2021, Meghani praised the RSS on his Facebook page, terming it "the world's largest social service organization."³⁰¹</p>
<p>In 2006, Meghani wrote: "I left Hindu groups I was earlier involved with."</p>	<p>In September 2020, Meghani recorded a video for the VHP-A in which he endorsed the organization and credited the VHP-A and its affiliates for introducing him to Hindutva. "Many of you know me as the cofounder and board member of the Hindu American Foundation," Meghani said. "But did you know that my exposure to Hinduism came from VHP-A?" He ended his video message with the line "I've been a patron member of VHP of America for thirty years," then announced a \$10,001 donation to the organization.³⁰² (Patron Membership is the highest tier of membership available within the VHP-A.³⁰³)</p>
<p>Meghani claims that he does not "stand by what is written" in his 1996 essay "Hindutva—The Great Nationalist Ideology," and that it "cannot be held up as representative of my views now."³⁰⁴</p>	<p>In the September 2020 video, Meghani name-checked senior VHP-A leaders like Gaurang Vaishnav, Mahesh Mehta, Anjlee Pandya, Ramesh Patel, Jyotish Parekh, Yash Pal Lakhra, Kanchan Banerjee, Ajay Shah, Sharad and Veena Gandhi, and Abhaya Asthana for their influence on him, and repeatedly used the terms "VHP-A family" and "our family."³⁰⁵ He praised the VHP-A for holding far-right positions "when it was a fad to be pseudo-secular," and claimed that the fruits of their work are now visible in the success of the Ram Mandir movement (which he had praised in his 1996 manifesto).³⁰⁶</p> <p>In an August 2019 speech, Meghani remarked: "There are some great great days in life. In my life, one was when the first BJP government, with Vajpayee, came in. Next was Pokhran and India's nuclear blast. There was BJP 2, Modi's first election, [Modi's] second election."³⁰⁷</p> <p>At an August 2023 event, Meghani went even further in his idolization of Modi. "We consider Modi ji, Rajiv ji [Hindutva ideologue Rajiv Malhotra] our avatars, our modern-day avatars," he said. "These are our gurus come down to help us out."³⁰⁸</p>
<p>Meghani claims that he "left Hindu groups I was earlier involved with."</p>	<p>Meghani appeared again on a VHP-A platform in 2023, when he recorded a video for HinduACTION, an organization founded and run by VHP-A leaders Renu Shah and Utsav Chakrabarti.³⁰⁹ In it, he entreated the audience to donate "more than you may think you are capable of" to HinduACTION and declared that he was "proud to support HinduACTION financially and strategically."³¹⁰</p> <p>In November 2023, Meghani revealed that in addition to a total of \$1.5 million that he has donated to HAF, he has contributed "a million dollars—more—over the last 15 years, to other Hindu and Indian organizations and causes"—a euphemism, no doubt, for other American Sangh organizations to which Meghani has announced donations.³¹¹ "Over the next eight years, we're making a pledge of a million and a half dollars to pro-India and Hindu organizations, and out of that we're going to give a million dollars to the Hindu American Foundation, and we're very proud of that," he said.³¹²</p>
<p>HAF has claimed on its website that Meghani has "no affiliation or formal ties" to the HSS, and that "Dr. Meghani is neither a member of Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh USA, nor is that organization one that offers membership."³¹³ It also argued that "not a single HAF member has ever been a member of HSS or RSS."³¹⁴</p>	<p>A 2003 report by Ramesh Rao, who would go on to be HAF's own long-time staffer, explicitly identifies Meghani as "Dr. Mihir Meghani of the Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh," and thanks him for "being a general resource person on the RSS and VHP (America)."³¹⁵</p> <p>In a 2018 email to the HSS leadership asking for their help to distribute a HAF survey, Meghani asked the HSS to "disseminate this over email and encourage our local shakhas to promote this anonymous survey."³¹⁶ Note the collective pronoun in the phrase "our local shakhas." Not only does the email attest to him being in regular conversation with the HSS, but it makes clear that he still identifies as part of the HSS and its basic unit of a shakha, or branch.</p> <p>In fact, this is corroborated in other statements. In a 2023 video with Hindu Far Right ideologue Rajiv Malhotra, Meghani asked the audience to donate to Malhotra's Infinity Foundation, and promised to match up to \$5,000 in donations on the spot. "We have the concept in HSS, you know, guru dakshina," Meghani said while urging the audience to donate.³¹⁷</p> <p>In a November 2023 public appearance, Meghani explicitly credited the Sangh for inspiring him to build HAF. "I came from Hindu Students Council," he said, before adding: "the selflessness of HSS, this is what I had in me."³¹⁸</p>

Appendix B

Rishi Bhutada's Ties to the American Sangh

HAF's duplicity around their leadership's ties to other American Sangh organizations is not limited to Meghani. Take the example of Rishi Bhutada, who, like Meghani, has long been an influential figure at HAF, sitting on its Board of Directors for over a decade. Bhutada also entered HAF via the youth wing of the VHP-A, the Hindu Students Council (HSC), where he held multiple leadership positions.³¹⁹ Yet HAF has continuously misinformed and prevaricated about these links, arguing in response to a 2014 report that "neither Kavita Pallod [Rishi's cousin, and another HAF Board Member] or Rishi Bhutada have ever held a leadership position in VHPA or any other VHP organization." They claimed that his involvement with the VHP-A was limited to a distant involvement in operating a youth camp, run merely by "second generation Hindu young professionals and college students," which the VHP-A's Houston Chapter "only provides logistical and financial support" to.³²⁰

These are flagrant lies. Reports of these camps by former attendees, including a camp in Houston run by Bhutada, clearly describe the camp as organized and sponsored by the VHP of America, occasionally with the help of its student wing, the HSC.³²¹ They even describe the camp as repeatedly featuring RSS songs and prayers, known internally as the Sangh Prarthana.³²² They also show that other high-ranking VHP-A and HSS leaders like Sharad Amin are involved in running the camp every year since 1985, and that important VHP Houston decisions, such as the transfer of leadership from one year to another, are announced at the camp.³²³ Amin has even attested to the fact that "The Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America (VHP-A) and the Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh (HSS) families meticulously planned the six-hour camp" in 1985, and that "after 25 years the camp has not changed a lot except for the duration; the once 3-day camp is now 5 days long."³²⁴

In fact, the VHP-A explicitly claims ownership of the camps, writing that "VHPA camps have been running continuously since 1979."³²⁵ They go on to list out several such camps, including in the Houston Metro Area (where Bhutada participated), the DC Metro Area, Massachusetts, New Jersey, the Atlanta Metro Area, and Florida, as their projects. Reporting on these camps clearly identifies Rishi Bhutada as the primary leader of the Houston camp, noting that he has been "counselor for the past five years and a former camper since its inception in 1985," and that Bhutada personally recruited all other counselors.³²⁶ In fact, the Facebook website for the camp even lists a drop-off address for the camp as none other than the Bhutada family's property.³²⁷

Such intensive involvement requires additional context about the extent of the Bhutada family's ties to the American Sangh. Rishi's father, Ramesh Bhutada, is a prominent figure in its leadership and the Joint President of the HSS.³²⁸ One of Bhutada's uncles, Vijay Pallod, is a former member of the OFBJP and the Governing Council of VHP-A.³²⁹ Another uncle, Jugal Malani, is an advisor to the Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation of USA, another Sangh organization founded by the VHP-A, and was the Chairperson of the Howdy Modi event in Texas.³³⁰ Ramesh Bhutada and Vijay Pallod, like Meghani 15 years prior, also attended the Vishwa Sangh Shibir, in 2010,³³¹ and in 2014 even led a delegation of overseas Sangh members to campaign for Modi.³³² Pallod's daughter, and Rishi Bhutada's cousin, Kavita Pallod, is also on HAF's Board of Directors.³³³

In fact, the Houston address (4018 Westhollow Parkway) of Star Pipe Products, the company run by the extended Bhutada family,³³⁴ is not just the listed address for

various youth camps run by the VHP-A and the HSS. It is also listed as the address for the HSS office; for the VHP-A's Yelp page; for Sewa International events; as the location for speeches from India-based Hindu supremacist leaders such as Nivedita Bhide; and as the address of a yoga foundation with close ties to Narendra Modi.³³⁵ The family's commitment to the Sangh is only further made clear by the name given to this location—Keshav Smruti, a name used by many RSS offices in India, named after RSS founder Keshav Baliram Hedgewar.³³⁶

In fact, HAF's claims that Bhutada has no ties to other Sangh organizations are contradicted by Bhutada's own attestations. In a 2019 speech, he proudly declared:

*I attended Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh shakhas on a regular basis, and I was a dedicated attendee of the Hindu Heritage Youth Camp. In fact, I only missed one year of camp growing up, and that was because a hurricane came that year and forced the camp to postpone to a different week where I was in India. I still regret missing that one camp.*³³⁷

Moreover, Bhutada has also served as the co-chair and head spokesperson of the Howdy Modi event,³³⁸ leading several American Sangh organizations in their embrace of Modi. During his wedding, Bhutada even encouraged guests to donate to the Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation in lieu of wedding gifts, yielding over \$10,000.³³⁹

Appendix C

Braham R. Aggarwal and the Sangh's Incubation of HAF

If on one hand HAF has sought to mislead the public about the affiliations of its leadership, it has on the other continued to enjoy the political and financial fruits of these relationships. While complete information about HAF's finances is not available to the general public, a range of public sources—including newspaper reports, financial disclosures and other accessible records—make clear that it has consistently been bankrolled by key officers of the American Sangh. This story begins at its very inception, when HAF's co-founders, for nearly the entirety of its first decade, simultaneously held positions within one of the American Sangh's largest philanthropic organizations—an organization that provided the funding needed to launch HAF.

HAF was founded in 2003; its IRS 990 filings, mandated for 501(c)(3) organizations, are available beginning the year 2005, when it had no paid staff members. But just a year later, in 2006, its co-founder and current Executive Director, Suhag Shukla, joined the board of Vivek Welfare and Education Fund (VWEF) as a director.³⁴⁰ VWEF, today renamed as the Aggarwal and Gupta Family Foundation, is one of two foundations dedicated to distributing the fortune of Braham Ratan Aggarwal.³⁴¹

Aggarwal appears to be one of the single largest ever donors to the Sangh.³⁴² A real estate developer, Aggarwal has been a longtime regional director of the HSS's South-East division.³⁴³ In over two decades, he has donated tens of millions of dollars to the Sangh through his family foundations,³⁴⁴ including massive amounts of money to Sangh projects such as the Hindu University of America³⁴⁵ and Ekal Vidyalaya,³⁴⁶ as well as Sadhvi Ritambhara's Param Shakti Peeth³⁴⁷—all projects whose affiliation to the RSS and Sangh Parivar is self-attested. Aggarwal even maintains a close relationship with key members of the Sangh in India.³⁴⁸ In 2023, he received the VHP of America's Lifetime Contribution Award.³⁴⁹

In 2007-08, while Shukla was on the VWEF board,³⁵⁰ HAF received a \$120,000 donation from the organization, a single grant that almost matched HAF's entire annual budget in previous years.³⁵¹ This donation allowed HAF to virtually double in size. By 2008, it could afford four full-time staff, including Shukla herself.³⁵² When Shukla moved to HAF to begin full-time work, Nikhil Joshi, another HAF co-founder, took her place as Director of VWEF between 2009 and 2016.³⁵³

This relationship between HAF and Braham Aggarwal proved to be an enduring one. HAF continued to receive major donations from VWEF in 2010, 2011, and 2013, totaling more than \$70,000. In fact, between 2008 and 2017, HAF was one of four organizations (including the Hindu University of America and Ekal Vidyalaya USA, both run by the American Sangh) whose funding was noted to be the explicit purpose of VWEF.³⁵⁴

Appendix D

How the American Sangh Funds HAF

Braham Aggarwal's links to HAF are no exception; rather, they are illustrative of the ways in which HAF has benefitted from the support of key American Sangh members. Key members of the VHP-A and the HSS have continued to pour money into HAF's coffers, and key Sangh leaders from the likes of the VHP-A and HSS often take charge of hosting fundraiser events for HAF in their respective cities.³⁵⁵ While an exhaustive investigation into all sources of HAF's funds is impossible with public data alone, the visualizations below offer a few illuminating examples.

Take, for example, the Bhutada Family Foundation, run by Ramesh Bhutada and his son Rishi Bhutada—who, as we discussed, come from a family with deep ties to the Sangh.³⁵⁶ Between 2005 and 2020, the Bhutada Family Foundation donated nearly \$450,000 to HAF, according to IRS 990 records;³⁵⁷ Ramesh Bhutada has since promised a further \$1 million.³⁵⁸ The organization is also a major donor to other Sangh organizations, including the HSS.³⁵⁹

The Bhutadas' support, moreover, extends into spheres that cannot be captured on IRS 990 forms. They play essential roles in HAF's fundraising events in Houston, where their political influence is well known. HAF fundraisers are held nearly every year by the Hindus of Greater Houston, an organization that counts among its leaders multiple American Sangh members across the VHP-A, HSS, Ekal, and Sewa International among its leaders.³⁶⁰ At these HAF fundraisers, the Bhutadas encourage others to donate, often kicking things off with seed donations, or promises to match certain amounts. In November 2014, for example, at HAF's annual fundraiser in Houston, Ramesh Bhutada announced a \$10,000 donation for a potential future HAF office in India—evidence that it has never seen itself as merely a domestic advocacy organization.³⁶¹

The Bhutadas' appeals in Houston have not gone in vain. Between 2013 and 2022, for example, the Subhash and Saroj Gupta Charitable Foundation, based in Sugar Land, Texas, donated over \$55,000 to HAF. Subhash ran the Houston chapter of the VHP-A for over twelve years, and has been a member of its national governing council. He has also served as the President of Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation. His wife, Sarojini, meanwhile, is the present director of Sewa International, and led its Houston chapter from 2013 to 2016.³⁶²

Between 2013 and 2019, the Uberoi Foundation, run by Ved Nanda, a long-time Sanghchalak (President) of the HSS USA, donated \$165,000 to HAF— including funds specifically earmarked for HAF's Director of Education and Curriculum Reform.³⁶³

Avadhesh Agarwal (no relation to Braham Aggarwal), another major Sangh donor affiliated with both the OFBJP and the VHP-A, has donated over \$40,000 to HAF. He too is a recipient of the VHP-A's Lifetime Award; his LA-based Agarwal Family Foundation has donated millions of dollars to the Sangh in recent decades, including to HSS, Ekal, and Param Shakti Peeth.³⁶⁴

In Chicago, Bharat and Panna Barai, VHP-A leaders and close associates of PM Modi himself, have hosted fundraisers for HAF.³⁶⁵ In Florida, figures like Chandresh Saraiya and Sekhar Reddy, Sangh leaders with ties to the Aggarwal and Gupta Family Foundation (previously known as the Vivek Welfare and Education Foundation) and Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation of the USA, respectively,³⁶⁶ have made donations. In 2022 alone Saraiya donated \$75,000 to HAF, including funds specifically earmarked to

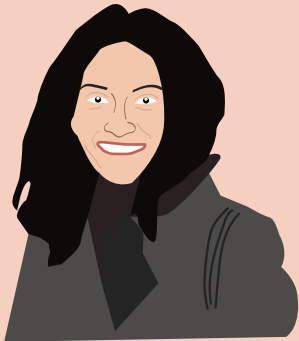
“help build infrastructure which can track anti-Hindu elements in media,” as well as “legal funds for defamation.”³⁶⁷ Indeed, evidence has recently emerged that suggests that HAF has used its attacks on civil society opponents, particularly its lawsuits, to further fundraise.³⁶⁸

At HAF’s Bay Area fundraisers, Meghani has in the past announced hefty six-figure donations to HAF, or made public commitments to donate 25 percent of his annual income to HAF every year in the hope of encouraging others to follow suit.³⁶⁹ In November 2023, he pledged to take his total giving to \$4 million, noting that HAF hopes to reach a budget of \$5 million the following year, and \$20 million by the end of the decade. “In the history of the world, the Hindu-American community in America is the most well-off community ever, in the history of humankind. We are spending less than \$1 per Hindu-American for advocacy,” he said in an appeal. “The number that Muslims and Khalistanis and Sikhs and Christians are spending is upwards to \$50 per member of their religion in advocacy. We’re not spending enough... We need to raise the level of giving so that we create those institutions that are going to sustain our civilization for another 5000 years, so that we don’t face a Holocaust, so that we don’t disappear from the face of this planet.”³⁷⁰ Note Meghani’s use of key Hindu supremacist tropes and constructs—from the framing of Hinduism in civilizational terms to the notion that Hindus are in imminent danger.

Appendix E

HAF's Personnel Overlaps with HSS and VHP-A

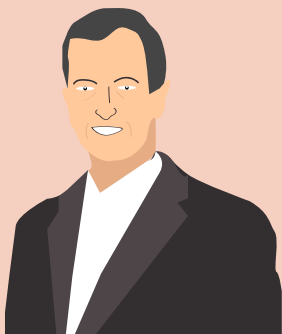
Previous sections of the report have already demonstrated the organizational affiliations shared by the likes of Mihir Meghani, Nikhil Joshi and Suhag Shukla—all cofounders of HAF who remain in its key leadership positions. In this section, we offer evidence about other HAF leaders and board members with ties to the Sangh. This analysis cannot be exhaustive—especially given HAF's notable history of maintaining covert associations with the VHP-A and HSS—but it certainly is illustrative.



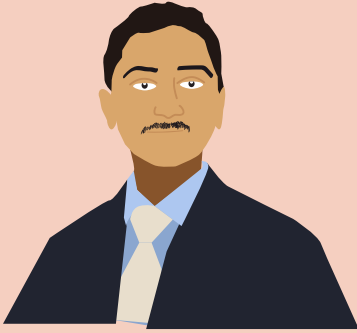
Sheetal Shah, the current Managing Director and CFO of HAF, was identified in past reports as the former Southeast Regional Coordinator of the HSC—which HAF denies.³⁷¹ However, that Shah has strong ties to the Sangh and Hindutva is not in doubt. For example, in 2009, Shah spoke at an event³⁷² organized by Forum for Hindu Awakening, an affiliate of the Hindu Janajagruti Samiti (HJS)³⁷³ (a year later, Mihir Meghani was featured as a speaker at an event by the same group).³⁷⁴ The HJS openly advocates for a Hindu Rashtra and was later implicated in the murders of anti-Hindutva dissidents in India.³⁷⁵ In 2017, Shah also attended and inaugurated an HSS camp in Atlanta as the guest of honor.³⁷⁶



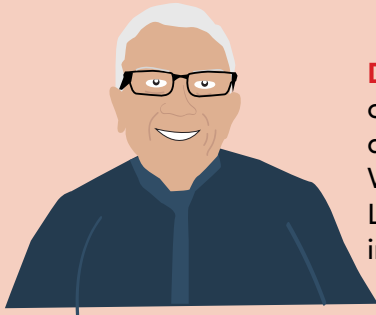
Rajiv Pandit, a longtime HAF board member, was also previously part of HSC, where he served as Coordinator of the group's Community Action Network.³⁷⁷ Recently, in the aftermath of a controversy over the propaganda film *The Kashmir Files*, he called for "retribution" against Kashmiri Muslims.³⁷⁸



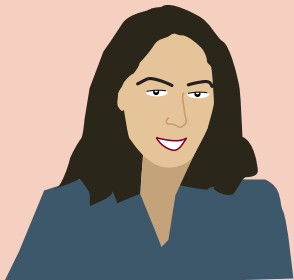
Aseem Shukla, a HAF cofounder, remains part of HAF's National Leadership Council.³⁷⁹ Aseem serves as a member of the Board of Trustees of the Hindu University of America (HUA) and chairs its Strategic Affairs Committee.³⁸⁰ The HUA is a project of the VHP-A, set up with significant funding from the VWEF/Aggarwal and Gupta Family Foundation; it has close ties with the HSS as well.³⁸¹



Rutvij Holay, a member of HAF's Advisory Board,³⁸² is Director of Expansion and Partnerships at HinduPACT, the policy and advocacy wing of the VHP-A.³⁸³ In a May 2023 YouTube video, he acknowledged his involvement in a number of Sangh-affiliated groups including HAF, the Coalition of Hindus of North America (CoHNA), the Hindu Education Foundation (a project of the HSS),³⁸⁴ and the VHP-A.³⁸⁵ Holay is also an Executive Committee member of Americans for Equality PAC, which advocates against affirmative action policies.³⁸⁶



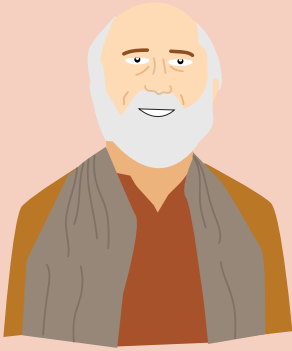
Dilip Amin, a member of HAF's Advisory Committee, has participated at conferences held by the VHP-A's Hindu Mandir Executive Conference,³⁸⁷ and attended events hosted by the HSS.³⁸⁸ In 2018 he presented at the VHP-A's World Hindu Congress, infamously headlined by RSS Sarsanghchalak (Supreme Leader) Mohan Bhagwat. At the conference, Amin shared a poster calling interfaith marriages a "Silent Holocaust of Hindus."³⁸⁹



Priyanka Deo Jain, HAF's Social Media Director until late 2023,³⁹⁰ has significant connections to Hindutva groups in both India and the U.S. In fact, the RSS mouthpiece, *Organiser*, revealed that Deo Jain was personally tapped by the BJP to support its 2019 election campaign.³⁹¹ Deo Jain, a social media influencer, helped run and establish New India Junction, a right-wing digital media platform that regularly platforms BJP and RSS leaders.³⁹²

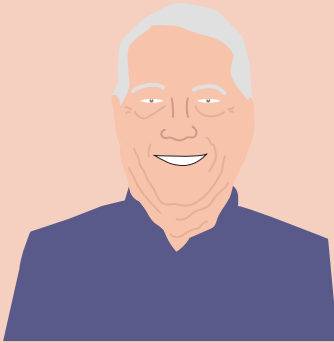
Deo Jain regularly amplifies Hindu supremacist talking points and propaganda—including disinformation targeting Muslims and other minorities, narratives that blame Muslim victims for Hindu supremacist violence, and puff pieces on RSS organizations and the BJP.³⁹³ She regularly writes for well-known disinformation and far-right propaganda outlets such as OpIndia and Swarajya,³⁹⁴ endorsing the BJP government and other Sangh organizations.³⁹⁵ In 2022 Deo Jain was awarded a prize by the media and communications wing of the RSS, the Indraprastha Vishwa Samvad Kendra.³⁹⁶ In November 2023, she traveled to Bangkok, Thailand, for the World Hindu Congress (WHC), a major quadrennial gathering of the Global Sangh organized by the VHP³⁹⁷ (former HAF staffers Deepali Kulkarni and Padma Kuppa also attended the 2023 WHC).³⁹⁸

Deo Jain's Hindu supremacist politics have increasingly converged with those of the U.S. far-right.³⁹⁹ For example, she described a trans rights bill in California as "a serious case of the woke mind virus at its finest."⁴⁰⁰ She has even penned op-eds arguing that Modi should "play the 'Trump' card," and support the Republican Party in the U.S. election. "For India, President Trump is indisputably the preferred candidate to win the upcoming American presidential election," she wrote.⁴⁰¹ Although Deo Jain no longer appears employed by HAF, her successor as HAF's Social Media Director, **Swati Arun**, served as Director of Communications for the HSS for eight years.⁴⁰²

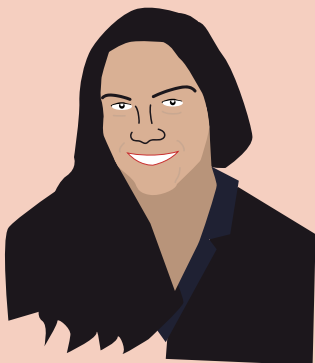


David Frawley, also known as Vamadeva Shastri, sits on HAF's Advisory Committee. He is infamous for his open promotion of Hindu supremacist politics, and has coined the term "intellectual kshatriya" (warrior) to describe the aggressive and adversarial role required of Hindu Supremacist ideologues.⁴⁰³ He told the *Deccan Herald* that "Hindus have been asleep for a long time and they have been very passive. But they are now waking up."⁴⁰⁴

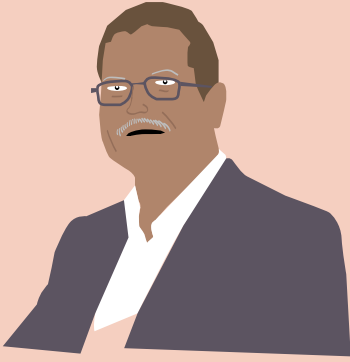
Frawley was a founding member of the International Forum for India's Heritage (IFIH), an RSS-affiliated think tank based in New Delhi.⁴⁰⁵ Frawley is personally close to many high-ranking RSS leaders, including RSS Sarsanghchalak Mohan Bhagwat, RSS pracharak Ram Madhav, Hindu supremacist ideologue and pseudohistorian Subhash Kak, and none other than Prime Minister Narendra Modi, whom he has known for over twenty-five years.⁴⁰⁶ Frawley has regularly praised and defended the RSS and its vision of Hindu supremacy, and has repeatedly attacked academics critical of Hindutva.⁴⁰⁷



Easan Katir, HAF's National Programs Director, has also enjoyed a long association with both HSS and VHP-A. HSS reports describe him leading youth camp sessions on at least four separate occasions,⁴⁰⁸ including with Saumitra Gokhale, the RSS pracharak and HSS global coordinator.⁴⁰⁹ Katir has similarly attended and presented at the VHP-A's Hindu Mandir Executives Conference on multiple occasions, including their first-ever gathering in Atlanta in 2006.⁴¹⁰



Kavita Pallod Sekhsaria, a long-serving member of HAF's Executive Council and Board of Directors, is part of a deeply embedded Sangh family.⁴¹¹ Pallod's father, Vijay Pallod, and her uncles, Ramesh Bhutada and Jugal Malani, are high-ranking leaders of the HSS and OFBJP, among others. All are affiliated with Bhutada's firm, Star Pipe Products.⁴¹² Pallod herself has also been involved with the VHP-A, directing its youth camps in Houston on multiple occasions.⁴¹³



Shekar Reddy has been affiliated with HAF for over a decade. He is a trustee of Param Shakti Peeth of America,⁴¹⁴ a foundation established by the militant VHP leader Sadhvi Ritambhara to raise funds in the United States; the Ekal Vidyalyaya Foundation of the USA,⁴¹⁵ a fundraising organization established by the VHP-A that sends nearly \$10 million a year to India, and is explicitly claimed by the RSS as a project; and the Global Hindu Heritage Foundation (GHHF), a Hindu supremacist organization based in Frisco, TX, that has fundraised for the demolition of churches in India, routinely promoted anti-Muslim conspiracy theories, and publicly advocated that “India should declare itself to be a Hindu Rashtra.”⁴¹⁶ Reddy sat on HAF’s Advisory Committee as recently as 2022, and has been a profiled donor of HAF.⁴¹⁷ In 2018, Reddy and his wife Shylaja received HAF’s Lifetime Achievement Award.⁴¹⁸



Chandresh Saraiya, another HAF donor and supporter,⁴¹⁹ is an office-bearer at the Ekal Vidyalyaya Foundation of the USA, as well as the Aggarwal and Gupta Family Foundation (previously known as the Vivek Welfare and Education Foundation).⁴²⁰

Appendix F

HAF's Close Ties with HSS

2005-2007

HSS and HAF partner in an attempt to rewrite public school textbooks in California.⁴²¹

2011

Hindus of Greater Houston, which includes members of different Sangh groups, report involvement in activities with HAF and HSS.⁴²³

August 2013

HAF and HSS collaborate on food donation program in Sacramento.⁴²⁶

November 2015

HAF and HSS collaborate again in an attempt to rewrite social science curriculum about caste in California's textbooks.⁴²⁸

May 2017

HSS and HAF both listed as part of the "Friends of Yoga" group.⁴³⁰

May 2018

Suhag Shukla featured at HSS Guru Vandana event.⁴³²

2019

HAF awards the HSS the "Dharma Seva" award.⁴³⁴

April 2021

HAF listed as a supporter of "SEWA with FEMA" event co-organized by HSS.⁴³⁶

October 2022

HAF joins HSS, VHP-A and a range of other Hindutva groups in organizing the Hindu Heritage Month, whose keynote speaker is RSS General Secretary Dattatreya Hosabele.⁴³⁸

June 2023

HAF listed alongside HSS and VHP-A as participant in Hindu American Summit on Capitol Hill.⁴⁴⁰

August 2008

HAF and HSS representatives attend an International Kashmir Federation conference calling for the abrogation of Article 370, which offered a degree of autonomy to Kashmiris.⁴²²

July 2012

Sheetal Shah featured alongside Hindutva leader Subramanian Swamy⁴²⁴ as a speaker at HSS Annual Hindu Unity Day.⁴²⁵

July 2015

Mihir Meghani featured at a conference co-sponsored by HSS.⁴²⁷

April 2016

HAF and HSS leaders both featured as speakers at Hindus of Greater Houston youth awards event.⁴²⁹

September 2017

Sheetal Shah listed as speaker at HSS-organized Sevika Camp for elementary and middle schoolers in Atlanta.⁴³¹

May 2018

Nikhil Joshi listed as a speaker at an HSS event.⁴³³

2020

HAF and HSS listed as collaborators by the Cleveland chapter of Sewa International USA.⁴³⁵

October 2021

HAF co-sponsors October 2021 Hindu Heritage Month event with VHP-A and HSS, headlined by Indian VHP leaders Ashok Chowgule and Swami Vigyananand.⁴³⁷

November 2022

Suhag Shukla comes to the defense of HSS leader Chandru Acharya, terming reporting on his ties to the HSS "anti-Hindu hate."⁴³⁹

October 2023

Rishi Bhutada featured as a speaker at HSS panel event.⁴⁴¹

Appendix G

HAF's Close Ties with the VHP-A

September 2007

HAF commends⁴⁴² event featuring Sadhvi Ritambhara, VHP leader infamous for hate speech against Muslims.

October 2013

HAF condemns interfaith group for withdrawing from event organized by VHP-A.⁴⁴⁵

September 2017

HAF's Raman Khanna featured alongside VHP-A representatives at Hindu Mandir Empowerment Council conference panel.⁴⁴⁸

October 2021

HAF co-sponsors Hindu Heritage Month event with VHP-A and HSS, headlined by Indian VHP leaders Ashok Chowgule and Swami Vigyananand.⁴⁵⁰

August 2022

Aseem Shukla speaks on the Jaipur Dialogues YouTube channel with VHP-A leaders/affiliates Bharat Barai and Vibhuti Jha on the interconnectedness of Hindutva organizations in America.⁴⁵²

November 2023

Three HAF representatives listed as speakers for VHP-A-organized World Hindu Congress.⁴⁵⁴

2023

HAF, VHP-A and VHP India listed as part of the umbrella group behind Pakistani Hindu Refugee Relief Program.⁴⁵⁷

August 2012

Mihir Meghani featured as a speaker at the VHP-A's 7th Hindu Mandir Executives Council.⁴⁴³ HAF and VHP-A announce a joint Hindu American chaplaincy initiative.⁴⁴⁴

August 2015

Gaurang Vaishnav, longtime VHP-A leader, thanks⁴⁴⁶ VHP-A and HAF for raising awareness about "love jihad" case.⁴⁴⁷

October 2020

Ahead of the 2020 elections, HAF and the VHP-A co-host an event streamed on the VHP-A's YouTube channel.⁴⁴⁹

October 2022

HAF joins HSS, VHP-A and other Hindutva groups in organizing the Hindu Heritage Month, whose keynote speaker is RSS General Secretary Dattatreya Hosabele.⁴⁵¹

June 2023

HAF listed alongside HSS and VHP-A as participant in Hindu American Summit on Capitol Hill.⁴⁵³

2023

HAF co-founder Aseem Shukla listed on Board of Trustees for Hindu University of America (HUA),⁴⁵⁵ a VHP-A project; his fellow HAF co-founders Suhag Shukla and Nikhil Joshi previously worked on maintaining HUA during their tenure on the board of Braham Aggarwal's foundation.⁴⁵⁶

Appendix H

HAF's Consistent Advocacy for the Modi Regime

Despite its public claims, HAF has consistently been a vocal cheerleader for Narendra Modi and the BJP,⁴⁵⁸ shielding them from criticism about the regime's human rights and religious freedom violations. We detail HAF's track record of pro-BJP activism in the table below. The case studies detailed are illustrative, but not exhaustive.

Date	Action
2002	<p>Just a few months after the Gujarat pogroms, Aseem Shukla publishes an op-ed dismissing HRW's report⁴⁵⁹ on the violence and Modi's role in orchestrating it as "character assassination" aimed at "nothing less than the humiliation, disintegration and disembowelment of a Chief Minister, the ruling political party, the vernacular press and an entire population."⁴⁶⁰ Bizarrely, Shukla instead blames Muslims, nearly 2,000 of whom had been killed, for the violence.</p> <p>Shukla cofounds HAF a year later.</p> <p>"Muslim provocateurs had instigated communal conflagrations before, and this time was no different," he writes in a second op-ed nearly a decade later.⁴⁶¹</p>
2005	<p>Narendra Modi is denied a U.S. visa under the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998, which debar any foreign official responsible for "severe violations of religious freedom."⁴⁶² (The visa ban lasts until 2014, when Modi becomes Prime Minister of India and thus receives diplomatic immunity.) U.S. Representatives John Conyers (D-MI) and Joe Pitts (R-PA) introduce H.Res.160, titled "Condemning the conduct of Chief Minister Narendra Modi for his actions to incite religious persecution and urging the United States to condemn all violations of religious freedom in India."⁴⁶³</p> <p>HAF campaigns against the resolution, calls it "Hinduphobic" and a "political agenda" pushed by "Islamist groups" and "radical communist groups." In the press release, HAF announces that it was launching a "campaign to educate the nearly 2 million Hindus in the United States of the efforts...to systematically promote a Hinduphobic and anti-India agenda within the United States."⁴⁶⁴</p>

<p>2011</p>	<p>The Working Group of India’s National Advisory Council (NAC) publishes a draft of the Prevention of Communal and Targeted Violence Bill.⁴⁶⁵ (The BJP, at that moment, has been voted out of power and was in the Opposition.)</p> <p>The draft bill will have recognized hate crimes against minorities and organized mass violence as special offenses, emphasized accountability for public officials, and created a National Authority on communal and targeted violence.⁴⁶⁶ In response, HAF writes a letter to the NAC, as well as to the Prime Minister and senior parliamentarians from both parties, expressing “serious concern” about the Communal Violence Bill, calling it a “blow to India’s secular democracy” and demanding that it be “withdrawn from any legislative consideration.”⁴⁶⁷</p> <p>The arguments raised by HAF in opposition to the bill bear a striking resemblance to the talking points of BJP politicians and other Hindu supremacist leaders. HAF’s claims that the Bill would deal a “blow to India’s secular democracy” echo statements made by RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat, who claims that the legislation was the “deceitful action of destructive minds detrimental to democratic values” and represents a “distorted ideology which will destroy the very spirit of the Constitution.”⁴⁶⁸</p> <p>Similarly, in its letter to Indian officials, HAF writes that the Bill “will consequently only serve to further instigate inter-religious and communal tensions as it wrongly singles out a particular community—the Hindu majority.” This closely resembles the VHP’s official statement that the Bill “only targets Hindus while remaining silent on acts of violence by Muslims against the majority community or other minority communities.”⁴⁶⁹ In an essay written around the same time, Arun Jaitley—the leader of the BJP in the Rajya Sabha—similarly argues that the Bill “proceeds on a presumption that communal trouble is created only by members of the majority community and never by members of the minority community...The law makes only members of the majority community culpable.”⁴⁷⁰</p> <p>In its letter, HAF also argues that “the Bill, in establishing a National Authority and various State Authorities, grants bodies of unelected citizens the power to interfere, obstruct, and override some of the essential functions of both National and State governments...[violating] basic principles of separation of powers and the rights of States.” Similarly, the VHP’s statement claims that the Bill “interferes with the powers of state governments.” Jaitley also uses similar language, writing that “if the proposed Bill becomes a law, then effectively it is the Union Government which would have usurped the jurisdiction of the States and legislated on a subject squarely within the domain of the States.”</p>
<p>2012</p>	<p>As Modi begins laying the groundwork to contest for Prime Minister in the 2014 election, efforts to rehabilitate his image picked up pace. In December 2012, Aseem Shukla pens another op-ed⁴⁷¹ criticizing U.S. legislators for taking a stand on the Gujarat pogroms, dismissing it as “ten years passed over”—though, at the time of his writing, thousands of victims who had lost their homes were still languishing in relief camps without any compensation,⁴⁷² and most of the perpetrators still had yet to be brought to justice.⁴⁷³</p>

<p>2013</p>	<p>HAF launches an all-out assault to kill H.Res.417, titled “Praising India’s rich religious diversity and commitment to tolerance and equality, and reaffirming the need to protect the rights and freedoms of religious minorities.”⁴⁷⁴ Introduced by Representative Joe Pitts (R-PA) and co-sponsored by Keith Ellison (D-MN), the resolution criticizes Modi for his role in the Gujarat pogrom, commends the U.S. government for denying Modi a visa under the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998, and calls for the Indian government to protect religious minorities from violence, harassment, and persecution.</p> <p>HAF calls the resolution “anti-India and anti-Hindu” and mobilizes its supporters to contact their members of Congress in opposition to the bill.⁴⁷⁵ It visits the offices of every cosponsoring member of Congress, causing many to withdraw their support. One Congressional staffer tells a journalist that HAF was “definitely trying to undermine anyone in Washington who is critical of Modi.”⁴⁷⁶ In an email to a Malaysian Hindu organization, Mihir Meghani smears H.Res.417’s proponents as “communists, marxists and pro-Islamists” and boasts that “Our efforts have kept many Congressmen from signing onto this bill.”⁴⁷⁷ (In response, Meghani is castigated for instrumentalizing the cause of Hindu minorities around the world to advance HAF’s pro-BJP positions.)⁴⁷⁸</p>
<p>2014</p>	<p>Modi visits the United States for the first time following his visa ban, and addresses a massive rally at New York City’s Madison Square Garden.⁴⁷⁹ HAF’s cofounder and board member Aseem Shukla is one of the lead organizers of the event, for which HAF was listed as a “Welcome Partner.”⁴⁸⁰ Other organizers include Mahesh Mehta, founder of the VHP-A; Ramesh Shah, Vice President of the Overseas Friends of the BJP USA; and Yelloji Rao Majrekar, General Secretary of the Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh.⁴⁸¹</p> <p>At a November 2014 HAF fundraiser, board member Rishi Bhutada thanks HAF’s then-Associate Director for Government Relations Jay Kansara for his “role in getting all the Congressmen onstage with Modi in Madison Square Garden.”⁴⁸² HAF claims in an official statement that the organization and its leadership had worked “in varying capacities to ensure a successful reception for Modi.”⁴⁸³ A few months after the rally, HAF shares a Facebook post boasting: “In September, HAF and dozens of other committee partners, welcomed Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Madison Sq. Garden,” where “a dynamic team of HAF volunteers shared our work with thousands of individuals.”⁴⁸⁴</p>
<p>September 2015</p>	<p>Modi visits the United States once again, this time going to the San Francisco Bay Area to meet with Silicon Valley business leaders.⁴⁸⁵ HAF’s Mihir Meghani serves as Co-Chair of the Government and Legislative Committee for Modi’s visit, and works to bring elected officials to the reception organized in his honor.⁴⁸⁶ HAF is listed as an organizational “Welcome Partner” for the reception, and acknowledges in a blog post that the organization has facilitated the distribution of tickets for the event.⁴⁸⁷</p>

<p>2017</p>	<p>The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) issues a report titled <i>Constitutional and Legal Challenges Faced by Religious Minorities in India</i>. It points to the rise of vigilante violence against Muslims and Dalits, including lynchings, often under the guise of cow protection.</p> <p>HAF attacks the report for being authored by a “Pakistani-origin” activist and “terrorist sympathizer.”⁴⁸⁸ HAF’s Samir Kalra accuses it of peddling “alternative facts” and claims that its description of the existence of caste-based discrimination was “Hinduphobic.”⁴⁸⁹</p>
<p>2018</p>	<p>Numerous BJP-ruled Indian states pass anti-conversion laws restricting interfaith marriages and religious freedom,⁴⁹⁰ while advancing conspiracy theories that India’s Dalits and Adivasis are being forcibly converted to other faiths.⁴⁹¹ HAF defends such laws as important tools for defending the religious freedom of Hindus against “predatory proselytization,” and claims that they were formulated as a reaction to “religious imperialism” in order to “prevent vulnerable populations from being preyed upon.”⁴⁹²</p>
<p>2019</p>	<p>In a 2019 blog post, HAF Executive Director Suhag Shukla accuses USCIRF of “weaponizing” the term Hindutva to “harm Hindu Americans,” repositioning any documentation of the violence of Hindu supremacist political ideology as an attack on Hinduism.⁴⁹³</p>
<p>2019</p>	<p>The Modi government announces the revocation of Article 370 of India’s constitution, which had granted a special autonomous status to the state of Jammu & Kashmir.⁴⁹⁴ The Indian state deploys thousands of troops into the region, which was already one of the most militarized zones on Earth, and places it under a draconian lockdown and internet blackout that lasts for months. Severe human rights abuses are reported.⁴⁹⁵</p> <p>HAF closely echoes the BJP’s talking points⁴⁹⁶ about the move, claiming that the revocation will in fact benefit Kashmiris by granting them “equal protection under the law and all the rights afforded other Indian citizens.”⁴⁹⁷ It also claims that the decision to revoke Kashmiri autonomy was justified and legitimate because the articles in question “were only intended to be temporary provisions,” and brushes aside the severity of the crackdown, downplaying the communications blackout as “a measure routinely taken by many governments to ensure safety and security” while defending the mass detention of Kashmiri political leaders as “preventative measures to ensure peace, law, and order.”⁴⁹⁸</p>
<p>2019</p>	<p>Modi, flanked by then-U.S. President Donald Trump, addresses a crowd of more than 50,000 at the “Howdy Modi” rally in Houston, Texas.⁴⁹⁹ HAF board member Rishi Bhutada is the official spokesperson for the event.⁵⁰⁰ The rally’s souvenir publication lists HAF as a “Welcome Partner,” and the names of five senior HAF leaders as volunteers, Organizing Committee members, or Working Committee members: Executive Director Suhag Shukla, board members Rishi Bhutada and Rajiv Pandit, and National Leadership Council members Arvind Chandrakantan and Priya Pandit.⁵⁰¹ Before the rally, Suhag Shukla and Rajiv Pandit meet with Modi at a gathering of Kashmiri Hindus.⁵⁰²</p>

<p>2019</p>	<p>U.S. Representative Pramila Jayapal (D-WA) introduces H.Res.745, titled “Urging the Republic of India to end the restrictions on communications and mass detentions in Jammu and Kashmir as swiftly as possible and preserve religious freedom for all residents.”⁵⁰³</p> <p>HAF launches an email campaign opposing the bill, which it calls a “bad, anti-India, anti-Hindu resolution.”⁵⁰⁴ When the resolution was finally blocked from proceeding to a vote, HAF took credit, congratulating members in a newsletter for generating “over 2,500 emails to Congress in the first 48 hours.”⁵⁰⁵ In an April 2020 press release, HAF gloats about having “successfully prevented consideration of H.Res.745 in December, January, and March of this year.”⁵⁰⁶ In the aftermath of HAF’s pressure campaign, a Kashmiri human rights advocate noted to the Indian magazine <i>Caravan</i> that “the talking points that come out of HAF are almost carbon copies of the exact talking points the Indian government itself uses.”⁵⁰⁷</p>
<p>2019</p>	<p>The Modi regime passes the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), which explicitly links citizenship to religion for the first time—and excludes Indian Muslims from protections offered to other groups.⁵⁰⁸ In conjunction with the proposed National Register of Citizens (NRC)—a law whose implementation in the northeastern state of Assam had already rendered nearly two million people stateless⁵⁰⁹—it raises fears that the law could be used to eventually strip Indian Muslims of their citizenship.⁵¹⁰ It prompts widespread concern and criticism from human rights organizations, European parliamentarians, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the U.S. State Department.⁵¹¹ In stark contrast, HAF issues a press release celebrating the CAA’s passage.⁵¹²</p>
<p>February– May 2020</p>	<p>In solidarity with anti-CAA protests, multiple U.S. cities introduce resolutions opposing the CAA and condemning the brutal state response to dissent. HAF vehemently opposes these resolutions. In February 2020, HAF mobilizes supporters to testify against an anti-CAA resolution in Seattle, WA, which passed despite the opposition.⁵¹³ In an op-ed, HAF’s Executive Director Suhag Shukla accuses the resolution’s proponents of “Trumpian tactics.”⁵¹⁴ When a similar resolution is introduced (and later passes) in St. Paul, MN, in May 2020, HAF sends a letter to the St. Paul City Council opposing the resolution.⁵¹⁵</p>

<p>March 2020</p>	<p>In a written statement for the record submitted in advance of a USCIRF hearing on “Citizenship Laws and Religious Freedom,” HAF outlines its defense of the CAA in greater detail, claiming that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The “sole intent of the law is to provide long overdue relief to refugees,” • “The CAA has no impact on the citizenship status of Indian Muslims,” • “The CAA is not tied in any way to the National Registry of Citizens (NRC),” and • The NRC is nothing more than “a mythical nationwide NRC” because it “has not been implemented at the national level nor even formally proposed or introduced as legislation in the parliament.”⁵¹⁶ <p>These arguments echo the defenses advanced by Modi and other BJP leaders. In a December 2019 speech, for example, Modi claims that the “CAA had nothing in it against Muslims” and that “no decisions” had been taken by the government on implementing the NRC at the national level.⁵¹⁷ Another senior BJP leader, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Ajay Mohan Bisht (Yogi Adityanath), repeats the same points, claiming that the “CAA has nothing to do with NRC” and that the CAA is “all about” giving shelter to refugees.⁵¹⁸ Another BJP parliamentarian, Swapan Dasgupta, uses language eerily similar to HAF, saying the “NRC is a mythical concept at present” and has “neither been formulated nor presented in the parliament.”⁵¹⁹</p>
<p>2020</p>	<p>Following the introduction of the CAA and NRC, USCIRF issues a factsheet on the topic, and moves to designate India a CPC (Country of Particular Concern).⁵²⁰ In response, the Modi government—and HAF—ramp up their attacks on USCIRF. An Indian government spokesperson terms the report “biased” and claims that “its misrepresentation has reached new levels.”⁵²¹ In similar language, HAF claims that USCIRF was “perpetuat[ing] misinformation about the intent and impact of India’s Citizenship Amendment Act.”⁵²²</p>
<p>2020</p>	<p>In response to a letter by fifteen Senators requesting the State Department to take forward USCIRF’s recommendation to designate India a CPC, HAF submits a counter letter urging them to reconsider.⁵²³</p>
<p>2021</p>	<p>In keeping with the Modi regime’s rhetoric,⁵²⁴ HAF falsely claims that protests by millions of Indian farmers⁵²⁵ opposing three new farm bills were “neither widespread nor diverse,” commends the government because it “allowed protestors to occupy and block major roadways for months on end,”⁵²⁶ and condemns protesters for the “hardship” they caused with these actions.⁵²⁷ Most notably, HAF echoes the government of India in trying to link the protests to the Khalistani movement.⁵²⁸</p>

<p>2023</p>	<p>Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announces that the Canadian government has ironclad evidence⁵²⁹ to demonstrate that the Indian government was involved in the extrajudicial assassination of Canadian citizen and Sikh separatist leader Hardeep Singh Nijjar.⁵³⁰ In the wake of this murder, the FBI warns multiple Sikh leaders in the U.S. of similar threats.⁵³¹</p> <p>HAF, whose approach to Sikh American groups has also grown increasingly adversarial,⁵³² launches efforts to discredit Trudeau and defend India’s government against the allegations. Two days after Trudeau’s comments in Parliament, HAF uploads a video recording of an interview with Canadian journalist Terry Milewski, titled “Khalistani attacks on Western Soil.” In the video, Milewski claims that Trudeau’s approach to the issue was motivated instead by electoral considerations.⁵³³ These comments are uplifted in other social media posts by HAF, who claim in their description of the video that Milewski offered insight on the “growing threat of Khalistani separatist extremists.”⁵³⁴ Note, again, that this messaging follows closely on the heels of similar comments put out by the BJP regime.⁵³⁵</p> <p>The day before, HAF also shares an article from Canada’s National Post that dismisses Trudeau’s allegations as nothing more than a fanciful conspiracy theory spearheaded by Khalistani extremists “who for years had been fomenting violence in India from their Canadian safe haven.”⁵³⁶ In the tweet accompanying the article, HAF writes that the piece provided “important context.”</p> <p>One day later, HAF shares a tweet calling the allegations “hilarious and atrocious” and repeats the Indian government’s claim that Nijjar was a “Khalistani terrorist.”⁵³⁷ In the video accompanying the tweet, Suhag Shukla can be seen sitting next to Indian journalist Aditya Raj Kaul, who was hosted by HAF for an event, and laughing along as Kaul mocks Trudeau for having “faced a lot of embarrassment during the G20 because nobody really cared about him.”⁵³⁸</p> <p>In a co-authored op-ed for <i>The Hill</i> on September 27th, HAF’s Samir Kalra echoes the Indian government’s talking points about the allegations being politically motivated. Kalra claims that Canadian Sikhs are a major voting bloc for Trudeau’s Liberal Party, arguing that “for Trudeau, choosing between a community that could bring him back to power versus India’s national security was an easy choice.”⁵³⁹</p> <p>HAF is soon left with egg on its face, however, when U.S. intelligence backs up Trudeau’s allegations.⁵⁴⁰ Nevertheless, it keeps sharing unfounded claims to support the Indian government. For example, in October 2023, HAF’s then-Director of Social Media Priyanka Deo Jain gleefully claims that Trudeau was “royally cold shouldered” by India at the G20 summit and that Trudeau’s “political motivations to win elections have led to efforts to appease extremist organizations.”⁵⁴¹</p>
<p>2023</p>	<p>A second similar assassination plot is revealed, this time against a United States citizen—Sikh separatist leader Gurpatwant Singh Pannun—in New York City.⁵⁴² The plot is allegedly coordinated by an Indian government official. Once again, HAF echoes the Indian government’s talking points on “Khalistani terrorists.” Its Senior Director of Communications Matt McDermott points out that “[Pannun’s organization] Sikhs for Justice is a banned organization in India, and Pannun himself is officially labeled a terrorist by India.”⁵⁴³</p>

Endnotes

1 “Our Guiding Principles,” Hindu American Foundation, <https://www.hinduamerican.org/about#guiding-principles>.

2 For examples of recent coverage of this phenomenon, see Edwin Rios, “The Allure of Fascism: Why Do Minorities Join the Far Right?,” *Guardian*, May 22, 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/may/22/minorities-extreme-right-wing-groups-ideology>; Hannah Allam and Razzan Nakhlawi, “Black, Brown and Extremist: Across the Far-Right Spectrum, People of Color Play a More Visible Role,” *Washington Post*, May 16, 2021, https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/minorities-far-right-visible-role/2021/05/16/e7ba8338-a915-11eb-8c1a-56f0cb4ff3b5_story.html.

3 Most surveys have shown, for example, that Black, Latino and Asian voters have significant conservative and moderate blocs. Liz Hamel et al., “KFF/theGrio Survey of Black Voters,” KFF, October 18, 2022, <https://www.kff.org/report-section/kff-the-grio-survey-of-black-voters-findings/>; “Asian American Voter Survey,” APIAVote, accessed June 15, 2024, <https://apiavote.org/policy-and-research/asian-american-voter-survey/>; BSP Research, “National Survey of Latino Voters,” November 2023, https://unidosus.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/unidosus_national_surveyoflatinovoters.pdf.

4 In the 2020 Presidential Elections, for example, approximately 38% of Latino voters and 28% of Asian voters voted for Trump, according to Pew Research. CNN’s exit polls similarly found 32% of Latinos and 34% of Asian voters voting for Trump.

See “Exit Polls,” *CNN*, <https://edition.cnn.com/election/2020/exit-polls/president/national-results>. Ruth Igielnik, Scott Keeter and Hannah Hartig, “Behind Biden’s 2020 Victory,” Pew Research Center, June 30, 2021, <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2021/06/30/behind-bidens-2020-victory/>.

In the years since, commentators have been noting that Black, Latino and Asian voters are sliding further out of the Democratic party’s grasp. See Perry Bacon Jr., “Voters of Color Are Shifting Right. Are Democrats Doomed?,” *Washington Post*, March 19, 2024, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2024/03/19/black-latino-asian-voters-2024-presidential-election-republican/>; Jeffrey M. Jones and Lydia Saad, “Democrats Lose Ground with Black and Hispanic Adults,” Gallup, February 7, 2024, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/609776/democrats-lose-ground-black-hispanic-adults.aspx>.

5 See “Power, Platforms and Politics: Asian Americans and Disinformation,” Asian American Disinformation Table, 2022, https://www.asianamdisinfo.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/AsianAmDisinformation_LandscapeReport2022.pdf; Alex T. Tom, “Understanding the Chinese American Right,” *Lausan Collective*, October 27, 2020, <https://lausancollective.com/2020/understanding-the-chinese-american-right/>. For a similar phenomenon in another Asian American community, see Anthony C. Campos, “I Went to a ‘Filipinos for Trump’ Rally. Here’s What I Found,” *Color Lines*, October 16, 2020, <https://colorlines.com/article/i-went-filipinos-trump-rally-heres-what-i-found/>.

6 Aidan Orly, “101: Christian Zionism,” *Political Research Associates*, April 24, 2024, <https://politicalresearch.org/2024/04/24/101-christian-zionism/>; Steve Gardiner, “End Times Antisemitism,” *Political Research Associates*, July 9, 2020, <https://politicalresearch.org/2020/07/09/end-times-antisemitism/>; Lindsay Schubiner, “How White Nationalists Are Exploiting the Crisis in Israel and Gaza,” Western States Center (blog), *Medium*, November 22, 2023, <https://westernstatescenter.medium.com/how-white-nationalists-are-exploiting-the-crisis-in-israel-and-gaza-14b282c8bdea>; Ben Lorber, “Meet the ‘Bronze Age Zionists’ — Far-Right Jews Embracing Fascism in the Wake of October 7,” *Religion Dispatches*, February 12, 2024, <https://religiondispatches.org/meet-the-bronze-age-zionists-far-right-jews-embracing-fascism-in-the-wake-of-10-7/>; Ben Lorber, “The ADL is Making It Less Safe to be a Progressive Jew,” *In These Times*, November 21, 2023, <https://inthesetimes.com/article/adl-defamation-league-jvp-ifnotnow-musk>.

7 The cases of the white supremacist leader, Nick Fuentes, and Enrique Tarrio (the leader of the Proud Boys, recently convicted for seditious conspiracy) are often cited as examples of this phenomenon. See Michael German and Mireya Navarro, “Why White Supremacist Groups Attract Latinos to Their Ranks,” *Brennan Center for Justice*, June 30, 2023, <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/why-white-supremacist-groups-attract-latinos-their-ranks>; Russell Contreras and Astrid Galván, “The Rise of White Nationalist Hispanics,” *Axios*, last modified March 12, 2022, <https://www.axios.com/2022/03/10/rise-white-nationalist-hispanics-latinos/>; Jennifer Medina, “The Rise of the Far-Right Latina,” *The New York Times*, July 6, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/06/us/politics/mayra-flores-latina-republicans.html>;

Gender — and the rise of male supremacism in particular — is often an important analytic to understand the multiracial Far Right. See “What Is Male Supremacism?,” *The Institute for Research on Male Supremacism* <https://www.theirms.org/what-is-male-supremacism/>; Alex DiBranco, “Before the Alt Right: Anita Hill and the Growth of Misogynist Ideology,” *Political Research Associates*, August 13, 2018, <https://politicalresearch.org/2018/08/13/before-the-alt-right/>; Megan Kelly, Alex DiBranco and Dr. Julia R. DeCook, “Misogynist Incels and Male Supremacism,” February 18, 2021, <https://www.newamerica.org/political-reform/reports/misogynist-incels-and-male-supremacism/a-brief-overview-of-intersections-with-race-and-class>.

8 Examples of such actors include the various strands of the Chinese American Right; the Filipino American Right; and right-wing pro-Israel institutions such as the ADL. Other minority communities largely within the Democratic Party, such as Arab Americans and Armenian Americans, certainly have right-leaning factions, but their politics has often been more strongly shaped by U.S. support for foreign wars or (in different directions) by post-9/11 Islamophobia on the Right.

See Peter Beinart, *The Crisis of Zionism* (New York: Henry Holt, 2012); DroptheADL, “Open Letter to Progressives: The ADL Is Not an Ally,” accessed June 15, 2024, <https://droptheadl.org/>; Alex T. Tom, “Understanding the Chinese American Right,” *Lausan Collective*, October 27, 2020, <https://lausancollective.com/2020/understanding-the-chinese-american-right/>; Anthony C. Campos, “I Went to a ‘Filipinos for Trump’ Rally. Here’s What I Found,” *Color Lines*, October 16, 2020, <https://colorlines.com/article/i-went-filipinos-trump-rally-heres-what-i-found/>; Matthew Petti, “The Armenian-Azerbaijani Conflict Comes to Michigan,” *Reason*, February 29, 2024, <https://reason.com/2024/02/29/the-armenian-azerbaijani-conflict-comes-to-michigan/>.

9 This is discussed in detail, for example, in Vijay Prashad, *The Karma of Brown Folk* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000). Also see Chetan Bhatt and Parita Mukta, “Hindutva in the West: Mapping the Antinomies of Diaspora Nationalism,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 23 (3): 407–41. doi:10.1080/014198700328935; Arvind Rajagopal, “Hindu Nationalism in the US: Changing Configurations of Political Practice,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 23 (3): 467–96, doi:10.1080/014198700328953; Dheepa Sundaram, “The neocolonial futurism of US Hindutva,” *The Immanent Frame*, November 23, 2022, <https://tif.ssrc.org/2022/11/23/the-neocolonial-futurism-of-us-hindutva/>.

10 The lack of a clear understanding of the internal politics of different communities has furthered this phenomenon. For example, the low-information information about Hindu supremacy and its US-based progenitors has contributed to a broader fungibility of language, allowing Hindu Far Right groups to enter conversations with actors unaware about the true nature of their politics.

However, the American Sangh has long been contested within the Indian American community by diverse streams of political opposition. In fact, VHP-A founder Mahesh Mehta alludes to the fact that even back in 1993, the VHP-A’s Global Vision 2000 conference, organized after the demolition of the Babri Masjid, faced significant pushback and nearly had to be canceled. See Mahesh Mehta, *Hindu Philosophy in Action* (India: Team Spirit, 2003), pp. 8–9.

Similarly, following the 2002 Gujarat pogroms, the diaspora organized in various ways, such as the 2002 “The Foreign Exchange of Hate” report, which was accompanied by campaigns and investigations into the funds distributed by the US-based Non-Profit IDRf to a range of Sangh groups across India. A series of similar investigations were also conducted in the UK, for example into Sewa International UK and its disbursements to Vanvazi Kalyan Ashram in Gujarat. See Awaaz – South Asia Watch Limited, *In Bad Faith? British Charity and Hindu Extremism* (London: Awaaz South Asia Watch Limited, 2004); Sabrang Communications, “The Foreign Exchange of Hate: IDRf and the American Funding of Hindutva,” 2002, <http://www.sacw.net/2002/FEHI/FEH/>.

11 This follows from the work of scholars of race and the Far Right in the U.S., such as Daniel Martinez HoSang. See Vinita Srivastava, “Why Are Brown and Black People Supporting the Far Right?,” *The Conversation*, October 5, 2023, <https://theconversation.com/why-are-brown-and-black-people-supporting-the-far-right-214800>; Daniel Martinez HoSang and Joseph E. Lowndes, *Producers, Parasites, Patriots: Race and the New Right-Wing Politics of Precarity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019).

12 Although HAF, for many years, sought to deny or obfuscate its commitment to Hindutva—in a 2021 blog post, Suhag Shukla wrote that “‘Hindutva’ is not a word we use at the Hindu American Foundation to describe our work”—it has increasingly leant into a wholehearted embrace of the term.

For example, in September 2022, HAF held an event featuring right-wing historian Vikram Sampath, who’s talk was titled “Defining Hindutva.” Sampath repeated the BJP/RSS narrative of Hindutva as an inclusive concept and claimed that Hindutva is about Hindus “standing up for [their] rights, for [their] legitimate resistance, and for [their] survival.” In the caption of a tweet promoting a clip from Sampath’s talk, HAF denied that Hindutva is “some kind of Hindu nationalism.”

Meanwhile, Shukla’s 2021 blog post claimed that “Hindutva is popularly translated as ‘Hindu-ness’ and a good many Hindus simply think of Hindutva as the idea and practice of living a life according to Hindu teachings or even just a descriptor of being Hindu.” Notably, the essay cited RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat’s claim that “Hindutva is one that takes everyone along, brings everyone together, unites everyone within itself, and makes everyone prosper.” While Shukla’s essay did acknowledge that some view Hindutva as “an imminent global threat to freedom, equality, and democracy,” she remained largely dismissive of such criticisms, instead arguing that the term ‘Hindutva’ is frequently “weaponized by activists and scholar-activists to negatively stereotype and marginalize Hindus.”

See Suhag Shukla, “What does Hindutva Really Mean?” *Hindu American Foundation*, October 5, 2021, <https://www.hinduamerican.org/blog/what-does-hindutva-mean/>; PTL, “Hindutva Takes Everyone Along: RSS Chief Mohan Bhagwat,” *Times Now News*, last modified September 29, 2021, <https://www.timesnownews.com/india/article/hindutva-takes-everyone-along-rss-chief-mohan-bhagwat/817921>; Hindu American Foundation, “Fireside Chat – Defining Hindutva (HAF’s 2022 Virtual Advocacy Forum ⅓),” YouTube Video, September 26, 2022, 1:06:00, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c1nrV4oO7-M>; See Felix Pal, “Weaponised Pluralism: Why Hindu Nationalists Need Muslims Friends,” *Australian National University*, 2021, <https://openresearch-repository.anu.edu.au/bitstream/1885/251255/1/Weaponised%20Pluralism%202022.pdf> for a sharp analysis of how pluralist rhetoric is used by bigoted actors to launder legitimacy.

In 2024, HAF even published a reporter’s guide on Hindutva and Hindu Nationalism, which HAF claimed was “not intended to be a defense of Hindutva per se,” but in which it claimed that “Hindutva is about India’s pluralistic culture and how this inclusive ethos can inform governance” and argued that the movement “does not have any similarity with Christian nationalism.” Since the release of the guide, HAF has hosted further podcasts from pro-Hindutva speakers on the topic. Suhag Shukla, “Hindutva Doesn’t Start with Savarkar. It’s Start with the Bengali Renaissance | Hindol Sengupta,” *That’s so Hindu*, July 25, 2024, Podcast, RSS Feed, 35:00, <https://shows.acast.com/thats-so-hindu/episodes/669ec9af7a1cf2aa7ca04ce1>; Hindu American Foundation, “Hindutva & Hindu Nationalism,” *Hindu American*

Foundation, 2024, <https://www.hinduamerican.org/hindutva-guide/>; Suhag Shukla, “How the History of Hindutva and the RSS has been so misunderstood in the West | Walter Andersen,” *That’s so Hindu*, July 4, 2024, Podcast, RSS Feed, 38:00, <https://shows.acast.com/thats-so-hindu/episodes/666075435259600012aa91af>.

13 The preferred term of self-definition for India’s formerly untouchable communities, the “lowest” in the caste system.

14 An umbrella term for India’s various indigenous communities, which number in the hundreds of millions.

15 See Savera, “Cut from the Same Cloth: The VHP-A’s Ties to Its Indian Counterpart,” *Savera*, April 2024, https://www.wearsavera.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Cut-from-the-Same-Cloth_Savera-Report-2.pdf.

16 Steve Bannon’s association with the Republican Hindu Coalition is considered to be a landmark moment, signaling to the Hindu Far Right that even avowed White supremacists like Bannon were willing to make space for them—and were keen to accept their votes and money.

17 The phenomenon of right wing movements within immigrant communities finding space within liberal parties is widespread. This is true not just of the Indian diaspora, and not merely within the Democratic Party in the United States, but also, for example, the Labour Party in the UK. See Edward T.G. Anderson, *Hindu Nationalism in the Indian Diaspora: Transnational Politics and British Multiculturalism* (Oxford University Press, 2024).

18 For scholarly work on the Sangh, see: Thomas Blom Hansen, *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999); Pralay Kanungo, *RSS’ Tryst With Politics: From Hedgewar to Sudarshan* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2002); Des Raj Goyal, *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* (New Delhi: Radha Krishna Prakashan, 2000); Shankar Gopalakrishnan, *Understanding the RSS and the Sangh Parivar* (New Delhi: Aakar, 2018); Felix Pal, “The Shape of the Sangh: Rethinking Hindu Nationalist Organisational Ties,” *Contemporary South Asia* 31, no. 1 (October 9, 2022): 133–43, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09584935.2022.2132219>. For internal publications of the RSS that corroborate the concept of the Sangh as an extensive network, see M.G. Chitkara, *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh: National Upsurge* (New Delhi: A P H Publishing Corporation, 2004); H.V. Seshadri, (ed.). *RSS: A Vision in Action* (Bangalore: Jagarana Prakashana, 1988); Walter Andersen and Shridhar Damle, *The RSS: A View to the Inside* (Gurgaon: Penguin Books, 2018).

19 HAF has often claimed that the “Hindu Right” is an artificial construct and that most HAF leaders are “not even conversant in what the ‘Sangh Parivar’ actually connotes.” Hindu American Foundation, “Lies about HAF in Oxford Research Encyclopedias Remain Uncorrected Eight Months after Publishers Were Informed,” July 18, 2023, <https://www.hinduamerican.org/press/lies-about-hindu-american-foundation-oxford-research-encyclopedia>.

However, the academic and expert consensus on this matter is clear. Both academic analyses and investigative reports have linked the Hindu American Foundation (HAF) to the broader transnational Hindu supremacist network, suggesting that HAF’s claims amount to bad-faith evasiveness and disinformation. See:

Bridge Initiative Team, “Factsheet: Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS),” Bridge, May 18, 2021, <https://bridge.georgetown.edu/research/factsheet-rashtriya-swayamsevak-sangh-rss/>; Ken Chitwood et al., “Reporters’ Guide on Hindu Nationalism: Experts & Resources,” *HindutvaWatch*, accessed June 15, 2024, <https://hindutvawatch.org/reporters-guide-on-hindu-nationalism/>; Raqib Hameed Naik, “Hindu Right-Wing Groups in US Got \$833,000 of Federal COVID Fund,” April 2, 2021, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/4/2/hindu-right-wing-groups-in-us-got-833000-of-federal-covid-fund>; “Testimony: Transnational Hindutva Networks in United States,” USCIRF, accessed June 15, 2024, <https://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/Statement%20from%20a%20South%20Asia%20scholar.pdf>; Niha Masih, “Under Fire from Hindu Nationalist Groups, U.S.-based Scholars of South Asia Worry about

Academic Freedom," *Washington Post*, October 3, 2021, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/10/03/india-us-universities-hindutva/>; Max Daly, Sahar Habib Ghazi, and Pallavi Pundir, "How Far-Right Hindu Supremacy Went Global," *VICE News*, October 26, 2022, <https://www.vice.com/en/article/n7z947/how-far-right-hindu-supremacy-went-global>; Hannah Ellis-Petersen, "Death Threats Sent to Participants of US Conference on Hindu Nationalism," *Guardian*, September 9, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/sep/09/death-threats-sent-to-participants-of-us-conference-on-hindu-nationalism>; Coalition Against Genocide, *Affiliations of Faith: Hindu American Foundation and the Global Sangh, Spotlight Series Report*, December 15, 2013, <https://www.coalitionagainstgenocide.org/reports/2013/cag.15dec2013.haf.rss.pdf>; Coalition Against Genocide, "Affiliations of Faith: Joined at the Hip," *Spotlight Series Report*, December 22, 2013, <https://www.coalitionagainstgenocide.org/reports/2013/cag.22dec2013.haf.rss.2.pdf>; Dheepa Sundaram, "Hindutva 2.0: How a Conference on Hindu Nationalism Launches a Change in Strategy for North American Hindutva Organizations," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 90, no. 4 (2022): 809–14, <https://academic.oup.com/jaar/article/90/4/809/7205785>.

20 In recent reports on the VHP of America (VHP-A), we have described the extent of its destructive politics in both India and the US, and outlined the depth of its ties to the Hindu supremacist movement in India. See Savera, "Reports," accessed June 15, 2024, <http://wearesavera.org/resources/reports>.

21 See Hindu American Foundation, "About," accessed June 17, 2024, <https://www.hinduamerican.org/about>.

22 As we describe later in this report, these claims have been challenged by HAF, but the evidence to support them remains incontrovertible. See Appendices A–G, as well as Jasa Macher, "Hindu Nationalist Influence in the United States, 2014–2021," May 2022, https://s3.documentcloud.org/documents/22041101/20220523_hninfluenceusa.pdf; Coalition Against Genocide, "Affiliations of Faith: Hindu American Foundation and the Global Sangh," *Spotlight Series Report*, December 15, 2013, <https://www.coalitionagainstgenocide.org/reports/2013/cag.15dec2013.haf.rss.pdf>; Coalition Against Genocide, "Affiliations of Faith: Joined at the Hip," *Spotlight Series Report*, December 22, 2013, <https://www.coalitionagainstgenocide.org/reports/2013/cag.22dec2013.haf.rss.2.pdf>.

23 This is to some degree acknowledged by HAF, who write that some positions "might be considered center-left, progressive, liberal, or moderate," and others "might be considered center-right, conservative, classical liberal, libertarian, or moderate." See Hindu American Foundation, "About," accessed June 17, 2024, <https://www.hinduamerican.org/about>.

24 We use "mainstream civil society" in this case to describe a large variety of organizations, social movements and coalitions that would be otherwise uninterested in, and in all likelihood opposed to, a Far Right/supremacist politics.

25 See Usha Kumar, "Vivek Ramaswamy Represents the Convergence of White Supremacy and Hindu Supremacy—and He May Well Be Trump's Running Mate," *Religion Dispatches*, December 12, 2023, <https://religiondispatches.org/vivek-ramaswamy-represents-the-convergence-of-white-supremacy-and-hindu-supremacy-and-he-may-well-be-trumps-running-mate/>.

26 HAF leaders have spoken highly of Ramaswamy and boasted of their personal ties to him. See, for example, Suhag A. Shukla (@SuhagASHukla), "Always great spending time with family friends @VivekGRamaswamy, Apoorva & their cute boys! Bonus that @rajiv-pandit & family happen to be in #Philly. None of us who've known them are surprised by their commitment to our country, family, friends & living their values," X, July 1, 2023, <https://archive.is/wip/112kw>

27 See Savera, "The Global VHP's Trail of Violence," <https://www.wearesavera.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/The-Global-VHPs-Trail-of-Violence-v2.pdf>, p. 30–33.

28 See Savera, "The Global VHP's Trail of Violence," p. 32.

29 Members within the Indian American community, who had

experienced its fundamentally right-wing orientation up close, had long warned of the Hindu Far Right, and HAF in particular. Reports on HAF and other Hindu Far Right groups have regularly been written since 2002, beginning with the South Asia Citizens Web's "Foreign Exchange of Hate" report to a 2008 report on the Hindu Students Council, and a two-part 2013 report on the HAF.

See Sabrang Communications and the South Asia Citizens Web, "The Foreign Exchange of Hate," Sabrang, November 20, 2002, https://www.sabrang.com/hfund/sacw/downloads/sabrang_sacw.pdf; Campaign to Stop Funding Hate, "Unmistakably Sangh: The National HSC and Its Hindutva Agenda," South Asia Citizens Web, 2008, accessed on WayBack Machine, accessed June 17, 2024, <https://web.archive.org/web/20230515020854/http://www.sacw.net/DC/CommunalismCollection/ArticlesArchive/2008HSC-FINAL-REPORT.pdf>; Coalition Against Genocide, "Affiliations of Faith: Hindu American Foundation," and "Affiliations of Faith: Joined at the Hip."

This is further discussed in later sections of the report.

30 See the statements made by McDermott and Shah and quoted in the penultimate section of this report.

31 The argument that HAF has lost mainstream legitimacy has been made by none other than HAF itself in its SLAPP lawsuit, where the organization argued that statements by the defendants associating the organization with Hindu nationalism were defamatory and materially affected HAF's reputation. Documents unsealed in the case revealed HAF's expulsion by the Alliance Against Genocide, the failure of its fundraising applications to the likes of Oak Foundation and AllState Foundation, and the loss of an opportunity to present a "Hinduism 101" course at a Fortune 500 Company. See Pavan Korada, "Details Revealed During Hindu American Foundation's SLAPP Lawsuit Counter Org's Previous Claims," *The Wire*, June 24, 2024, https://thewire.in/world/details-revealed-during-hindu-american-foundations-slapp-lawsuit-counter-orgs-previous-claims/?mid_related_new; Gregory Stanton, "Notice: The Hindu American Foundation is no longer a member of the Alliance Against Genocide," *Alliance Against Genocide*, August 26, 2021, <https://www.against-genocide.org/post/notice-the-hindu-american-foundation-is-no-longer-a-member-of-the-alliance-against-genocide>; Audrey Truschke, "Documents from the Hindu American Foundation SLAPP Lawsuit," *Audrey Truschke*, 2024, <https://www.audreytruschke.com/documents/hafslapp>; Hindu American Foundation v. Sunita Viswanath, Raju Rajagopal, Rasheed Ahmed, John Prabhudoss, & Audrey Truschke, 1:21-CV-01268-APM (DC District Court, 2022), <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5fd8d19b84774a17d4cd0bf7/t/666eef44a948f54857d61a1d/1718546245700/067+-+UNREDACTED+UNSEALED+SMJ+Brief.pdf>.

32 This term is often used to describe the strategy pursued by the Sangh through "organizational diffusion." See Noorani, Abdul Gafoor Abdul Majeed. *The RSS and the BJP: A Division of Labour*. India: LeftWord Books, 2000 and Felix Pal (2023) *The shape of the Sangh: rethinking Hindu nationalist organisational ties*, *Contemporary South Asia*, 31:1, 133–143.

33 See Savera, "Reports," accessed June 15, 2024, <http://wearesavera.org/resources/reports>.

34 Beyond the arguments made in this report, this is also visible in innocuous tweets and comments celebrating Hindu Republicans. See Hindu American Foundation (@HinduAmerican), "Their Hindu faith makes Usha Vance, her parents and all Hindu Americans better Americans!," X, June 27, 2024, <https://x.com/HinduAmerican/status/1806362338129306052>; Fernanda Figueroa, "What Usha Vance's Rise to prominence means to other South Asians and Hindu Americans," *AP News*, last modified July 19, 2024, <https://apnews.com/article/who-is-usha-vance-south-asians-2024-92b428b0f7b368031b29d6221fa882ff>; Richa Karmarkar, "As Usha Vance Fazzles, Hindu Americans leaning further right than ever," *Religion News Service*, July 18, 2024, <https://religionnews.com/2024/07/18/as-usha-vance-dazzles-hindu-americans-leaning-further-right-than-ever/>; Deepa Bharath, "Vivek Ramaswamy's Hindu Faith Is Front and Center in His GOP Presidential Campaign," *AP News*, August 6, 2023, <https://apnews.com/article/vivek-ramaswamy-hindu-republican-presidential-campaign-68a09925f38fb23d69fa31a2271c0ca8>.

35 One could argue, in fact, that this reflects an excellent granular example of the ways in which “contemporary fascism erodes or suffocates [democracy] gradually from within,” as described in Matthew N. Lyons, “Book Review: Spectres of Fascism,” Political Research Associates, November 9, 2020, <https://politicalresearch.org/2020/11/09/book-review-spectres-fascism>.

36 VHP-A leader Gaurang Vaishnav notes that VHP-A founder Mahesh Mehta “actively sought out NRIs, all young at that time, who had either RSS background or were infused with a desire to serve the Hindu society and their motherland.” See World Hindu Council of America (VHPA), *Hindu Vishwa*, Volume XXXVII, No. 2 (April-June 2017), p. 5, as quoted in Savera, “Cut from the Same Cloth.”

37 Mehta describes organizing a total of 10 Annual National Conferences between 1971 and 1984, as well as a host of tours and conferences organized around the visits of Indian Sangh leaders. See Mehta, *Hindu Philosophy in Action*, p. 5-9 and Appendix B in Savera, “Cut from the Same Cloth.”

38 This is also discussed by Mehta, who played an important role in organizations such as FISl (Friends of India Society International) and IFD (Indians for Democracy) that were set up during the Emergency. In his memoirs, as well as in public interviews, Mehta describes his role hosting future leaders of the BJP who had “gone underground” at the time, including Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Kidar Nath Sahani and Makarand Desai, as well as his role in publishing a monthly anti-Emergency magazine, *Satyavani*, which was smuggled into India.

See Mehta, *Hindu Philosophy in Action*, p. 306-328; Vaniya Mehta, “Foreign Returns: The BJP’s US branch outstrips its Congress counterpart,” *Caravan Magazine*, April 1, 2014.

39 See Ramachandra Guha, *India After Gandhi* (MacMillan, 2007), pp. 582-98; Outlook Web Desk, “Babri Masjid Demolition: The Events That Led to the Fall of the Domes,” *Outlook India*, December 6, 2022, <https://www.outlookindia.com/national/babri-masjid-demolition-the-events-that-led-to-the-fall-of-the-domes-news-242542>.

40 See Savera, “Cut from the Same Cloth,” p. 19 and Savera, “The Global VHP’s Trail of Violence,” pp. 15-16.

41 See Savera, “Cut from the Same Cloth,” p. 19.

42 The OFBJP was founded in April 1991 in New York City by members of FISl and other Sangh leaders.

Mahesh Mehta is also credited as a founding member of the OFBJP, and also served as its national coordinator. See World Hindu Council of America (VHPA), *Hindu Vishwa*, Volume XXXVII, No. 2 (April-June 2017), <https://www.vhp-america.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Hindu-Vishwa-Apr-June-2017-Inside-Pages.pdf>; Vaniya Mehta, “Foreign Returns: The BJP’s US branch outstrips its Congress counterpart,” *Caravan Magazine*, April 1, 2014.

43 Both Mehta and the VHP-A explicitly claim EVF USA as their project. EVF USA was founded after RSS pracharak Shyam Gupta traveled across 30 cities of the USA to pitch the project to VHPA members. “VHPA has spared four very dynamic leaders, Dr. Basant Tariyal, Dr. Veena Gandhi, Dr. Yash Pal Lakhra, Shri Ramesh Shah to make this institution successful,” Mehta writes in his memoirs.

See Mehta, *Hindu Philosophy in Action*, p. 16 and Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America, “VHPA History and Milestones,” accessed June 20, 2024, <https://www.vhp-america.org/about-vhpa/vhpa-history-and-milestones/>.

44 The Millennium World Peace Summit, held on the sidelines of the U.N. in 2000, and the Dharma Prasaar Yatras in 1999 and 2001, which saw VHP-affiliated religious leaders touring the U.S. on a chartered plane, are described in Mehta, *Hindu Philosophy in Action*, pp. 18-20, pp. 236-244.

45 See our analyses of the writings of Aseem Shukla and Ramesh Rao, as well as Savera, “The Global VHP’s Trail of Violence,” pp. 17-18.

46 See Mehta, *Hindu Philosophy in Action* as well as Biju Mathew and Vijay Prashad, “The Protean Forms of Yankee Hindutva,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 23, no. 3 (January 1, 2000): 516-34, <https://doi.org/10.1080/014198700328971>.

47 See Appendix A for further details.

48 In fact, this point was made by Rishi Bhutada back in 1998, as a high school student writing from his uncle (specifically his father’s cousin-in-law) Vijay Pallod’s account to the VHP-A Governing Council listserv. “After reading it, I think that the VHP is being badly misrepresented by them,” he wrote. “Quotes are given by purported members of the VHP who really aren’t, there are serious and grave factual errors, and we are being generally put into a negative light. The only way we can counteract this is by focusing on public opinion. We may think we are doing good, but if the public hates us, all our work is for naught. Specifically, I think there are 4 areas we can focus to counteract the negative publicity we are getting.” See VHP Governing Council, Listmail Archive, HinduNet, archived on WayBack Machine, accessed June 20, 2024, <https://web.archive.org/web/20091110042014/http://hindunet.org/archive/listmail-vhpgc-1>.

49 This argument was comprehensively made in two earlier reports on HAF. See Coalition Against Genocide, “Affiliations of Faith” and “Coalition Against Genocide,” “Joined at the Hip.”

The arguments made in these reports can also be corroborated by a range of other self-attested evidence, emerging from HAF’s own description of its strategy, including its repeated messaging that it needed to steer clear of “activism,” and that other groups were too closely “associated with Indian politics.” These arguments are made, for example, in Mat McDermott, “Letter to the Editor of India Abroad from Mihir Meghani, April 2006,” blog post, Hindu American Foundation, May 27, 2021, <https://www.hinduamerican.org/blog/letter-to-editor-india-abroad-mihir-meghani-april-2006>; Suhag Shukla, “Hindu American Political Advocacy,” *Swadharma* volume 3, p. 27, archived on Wayback Machine, accessed June 15, 2024, <https://web.archive.org/web/20110830083203/http://swadharma.org/public/SwadharmaV3.pdf#page=27>.

Another example emerged in a November 2023 HAF Gala, where Mihir Meghani and his co-founders were on the stage, sharing anecdotes about HAF’s founding. Meghani revealed that when these co-founders were at the table, he brought up the Ram Janmabhoomi campaign being waged at the time by the VHP as something he hoped HAF would advocate for. “Then, these guys reminded me: are we starting a Hindu-American group, or are we starting VHP of India?” Meghani said. Hidden in the subtext, of course, was not that a violent campaign to tear down a mosque and replace it with a temple was outside HAF’s sphere of interests – indeed, Meghani has celebrated the destruction of the mosque, and HAF has lauded the campaign – but that it needed to maintain a certain image as a mainstream domestic organization, leaving the task of militant activism to other organizations. See Hindu American Foundation, “2023 Hindu American Foundation (HAF) NorCal Gala CoFounders Talk,” November 14, 2023, video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bXLtDPI3B2E>.

50 Hindu American Foundation, “About,” accessed June 17, 2024, <https://www.hinduamerican.org/about>.

51 Mat McDermott, “Letter to the Editor of India Abroad from Mihir Meghani, April 2006,” blog post, Hindu American Foundation, May 27, 2021, <https://www.hinduamerican.org/blog/letter-to-editor-india-abroad-mihir-meghani-april-2006>.

52 Suhag Shukla, “Hindu American Political Advocacy,” *Swadharma* volume 3, p. 27, archived on Wayback Machine, accessed June 15, 2024, <https://web.archive.org/web/20110830083203/http://swadharma.org/public/SwadharmaV3.pdf#page=27>.

This sentiment has been repeated elsewhere by HAF’s senior leadership, including in a 2009 profile in *Hinduism Today*. Lavina Melwani, “Meet the Young Hindu American Foundation,” *Hinduism Today*, April 1, 2009, <https://www.hinduismtoday.com/magazine/april-may-june-2009/2009-04-meet-the-young-hindu-american-foundation/>.

53 This most infamously includes Meghani's essay, "Hindutva, the Great Nationalist Ideology," which was later reprinted as an ideological manifesto of the BJP. However, Meghani also published other essays with similar political themes. See Mihir Meghani, "Hindutva: The Great Nationalist Ideology," The Internet Archive, October 30, 1996, <https://web.archive.org/web/19961030090528/www.bjp.org/bjp/hvintro-mm.html> and Mihir Meghani, "Tribal Tribulations," *Hinduism Today*, April 1, 1998, <https://www.hinduismtoday.com/magazine/april-1998/1998-04-tribal-tribulations/>.

54 Kashmir Hindu Foundation (@kashmirhindufoundation), "Mihir Meghani, Board Member & Co-founder Hindu American Foundation, speaking at Kashmir Hindu Foundation. Great supporters of Kashmiri Hindu causes," Facebook, August 28, 2019, video, <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1485186484939414>.

55 Infinity Foundation Official, "Dismantling Merit: Origins of Marxism in America," YouTube Video, August 24, 2023, 1:08:53, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L4n5iy6wTb0>.

56 In a November 2023 interview with CNN-News18 in San Francisco, for example, HAF co-founder Mihir Meghani explained that "We set up the Hindu American Foundation to be a voice for Hindus in America, but also to be a voice for Bharat, our civilization, in the country which is the most powerful country in the world, which is the United States." "We needed to have a professional voice," Meghani added. "We can't be a professional voice for 1.4 billion Bharatiyas, for 1.4 billion Hindus, unless we professionalize it."

See Anand Narsimhan, "Hindu Americans Vs SB 403 | Hindu American Foundation's Co-Founder, Mihir Meghani Interview | News18," November 20, 2023, video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AmgECiARQLI>.

57 Pranay Somayajula, "The Hindu Right's Deniability Politics," *Protean Magazine*, May 19, 2022, <https://proteanmag.com/2022/05/19/the-hindu-rights-deniability-politics/>; Pratap Bhanu Mehta, "The Tactical Sangh," *The Indian Express*, September 14, 2019, <https://indianexpress.com/article/lifestyle/books/the-ominous-organisation-rss-a-g-noorani-5993684/>.

58 See Felix Pal, "The Shape of the Sangh: Rethinking Hindu Nationalist Organisational Ties," *Contemporary South Asia* 31, no. 1 (October 9, 2022): 133–43, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09584935.2022.2132219> and DR Goyal, *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh*. Radhakrishnan Prakashan Pvt. Limited, 2004.

59 This broader phenomenon is also described in Noorani, Abdul Gafoor Abdul Majeed. *The RSS and the BJP: A Division of Labour*. India: LeftWord Books, 2000.

60 Similar divisions of labor between violent and mainstream tactics are common in Far Right movements; however, the Sangh is perhaps unique in the extent to which such an approach has been made doctrinally central to the movement's self-conception. This is expressed, for example, is the Savarkarite idea of *sanghatan*, or organization, which invokes an imagined Hindu degeneracy caused by Hindu disunity that can only be resolved with disciplined order and unity." (HAF leader Mihir Meghani, in his 1996 ideological manifesto that was adopted by the BJP, invoked similar themes, writing repeatedly of the "deterioration" of an "enslaved" Hindu society that was being replaced by a "Hindu Jagriti," or awakening.) This concept of sangathan is deeply reflected in the Sangh's official doctrines and texts, which suggests that this unity can be built through a single organization, "The Sangh" or "The Organization," which must be an organicist, yet formal and intentional ordering of society, one that can eventually come to replace society itself.

See Felix Pal, "The Shape of the Sangh: Rethinking Hindu Nationalist Organisational Ties."

For details of Meghani's essay, see Meghani, "Hindutva: The Great Nationalist Ideology."

This article was formally adopted by BJP later on, with Mihir Meghani's attribution removed. Two academics also say that BJP's website starts from this article: Ran Hirschl and Ayelet Shachar (2018), "Competing Orders? The Challenge of Religion to Modern Constitutionalism," *University of Chicago Law Review*. Vol. 85: Iss 2, Article 6, 440, footnote

63, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26455913?seq=1>.

Prema Kurien's *A Place at the Multicultural Table* also outlines Mihir Meghani's authorship of the article.

At one point, Defense Minister of India Rajnath Singh's website also contained the same article: Rajnath Singh, "Party Philosophy," 2024, <https://www.rajnathsingh.in/party-philosophy/>.

61 Savera, "The Global VHP's Trail of Violence," <https://www.wearesavera.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/The-Global-VHPs-Trail-of-Violence-v2.pdf>.

62 CoHNA and HinduPACT are both organizations in the American Sangh. CoHNA, or Council of Hindus of North America, is a Hindutva advocacy group formed and led by former HSC (Hindu Students Council, the student wing of the VHP of America) leaders, and HinduPACT, or Hindu Policy and Action Collective, is the advocacy and lobbying wing of the VHP of America. See Jasa Macher, "Hindu Nationalist Influence in the United States, 2014–2021," *The Internet Archive*, May 2022, <https://web.archive.org/web/20230331060851/http://sacw.net/article14915.html>; Bridge Initiative Team, "Factsheet: Coalition of Hindus of North America," Bridge, July 27, 2023 <https://bridge.georgetown.edu/research/factsheet-coalition-of-hindus-of-north-america-cohna/>; The Campaign to Stop Funding Hate, "Unmistakably Sangh: The National HSC and It's Hindutva Agenda," *The Internet Archive*, 2014, <https://web.archive.org/web/20230515020854/http://www.sacw.net/DC/CommunalismCollection/ArticlesArchive/2008HSC-FINAL-REPORT.pdf>.

63 The Jaipur Dialogues USA, "Why NRI Hindus are Facing Violence and Hate? | Dr Aseem Shukla, Dr Bharat Barai," YouTube Video, August 28, 2022, 1:07:34, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xhbsrq6S04>.

64 Indian American Muslim Council, "How Hindu far-right groups crushed a pro-democracy resolution in Chicago city council," IAMC, October 4, 2023, <https://iamc.com/how-hindu-far-right-groups-crushed-a-pro-democracy-resolution-in-chicago-city-council/>.

65 Diya TV, "HinduACTion Virtual Gala Featuring GOP Presidential Candidate Vivek Ramaswamy | Diya TV," YouTube Video, May 21, 2023, 3:24:54, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EnhLI-76AOE>. Later in the same video, Renu Gupta offered examples of occasions during which the Hindu American Foundation and HinduACTion actively collaborated on advocacy efforts.

66 Past examples of such coalitions include the Alliance Against Genocide, the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, and the Interfaith Alliance.

See Suhag Shukla, "Hindu American Political Advocacy," *Swadharma* volume 3, p. 27, archived on Wayback Machine, accessed June 15, 2024, <https://web.archive.org/web/20110830083203/http://swadharma.org/public/SwadharmaV3.pdf#page=27>; The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, "The Coalition," The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, 2024, <https://civilrights.org/about/the-coalition/>.

However, the precise status of HAF in those coalitions at present is unknown, and the overt expulsion of HAF from the Alliance Against Genocide has been documented. See: Korada, "Details Revealed During Hindu American Foundation's SLAPP Lawsuit Against Counter Org's Previous Claims."

67 Hindu American Foundation, "HAF Legal Advocacy, 2004–Today," *Hindu American Foundation*, 2024, <https://www.hinduamerican.org/projects/legal-advocacy>.

68 See Suhag Shukla, "Hindu American Political Advocacy," *Swadharma* volume 3, p. 27, archived on Wayback Machine, accessed June 15, 2024, <https://web.archive.org/web/20110830083203/http://swadharma.org/public/SwadharmaV3.pdf#page=27>.

69 For example, HAF's own record of their legal advocacy for the separation of church and state shows that the number of legal cases in which they have been a party is far dwarfed by cases where they filed amicus briefs as part of a larger coalition of organizations. Hindu American Foundation, "HAF Legal Advocacy, 2004–Today."

Moreover, as the Drexel Law Review noted, “while many of HAF’s earlier amici curiae briefs have seemed to be intended to preserve religious freedom in broad and pluralistic terms, its more recent lawsuits appear designed instead to carve out space for Hindu exceptionalism and to enshrine Hindu vulnerability into U.S. law.” See Sundaram, “U.S. Hindu Nationalist Groups’ Litigious Assault on Academic Freedom,” p. 868.

70 The precise meaning of this term was articulated by HAF’s Suhag Shukla in her 2008 essay. “To the extent that HAF seeks to give Hindu Americans a professional, credible, and articulate voice and abstain from direct action, exclusivism, and confrontation, we may more accurately define our organizational philosophy as that of advocacy,” she wrote. Suhag Shukla, “Hindu American Political Advocacy,” *Swadharma* volume 3, p. 26, archived on Wayback Machine, accessed June 15, 2024, <https://web.archive.org/web/20110830083203/http://swadharma.org/public/SwadharmaV3.pdf#page=27>.

71 Suhag Shukla, “Hindu American Political Advocacy,” *Swadharma* volume 3, p. 26, archived on Wayback Machine, accessed June 15, 2024, <https://web.archive.org/web/20110830083203/http://swadharma.org/public/SwadharmaV3.pdf#page=27>.

72 This is self-attested to in his LinkedIn profile: “Ramesh Rao - Columbus, Georgia, United States | Professional Profile | LinkedIn,” n.d., <https://www.linkedin.com/in/rameshnrao/>.

73 Rao was named in a press release as the HSS’s West Coast “Sambhag Vyavastha Pramukh,” loosely translated to Divisional Head of Operations. In a Sewa International USA – which is run by HSS – pamphlet, Ramesh Rao was described as part of the national team along with other HSS leaders; in a HSS UK newsletter, Ramesh Rao was identified as a member of the Sewa media team. Rao was also named in the 2013 Coalition Against Genocide report as associated with IDRF, which itself is also closely tied to HSS. See: hssadminuser, “Seattle Region celebrates Vijaydashami Utsav,” *Hindu Swayamsevak Singh, USA*, September 1, 2017, <https://www.hssus.org/2017/09/01/seattle-region-celebrates-vijaydashami-utsav/>; Sewa Westchester NY, “Sewa Diwali Food Drive,” Sewa International - New Jersey & New York, October - November 2019, <https://www.sewaua.org/resources/Sewa%20USA%20Images/Chapters/North%20Jersey%20Chapter/Newsletter/PDFs/2019/Newsletter%20November%202019.pdf>; *Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh UK*, “Sangh Mail,” *Hindu Swayamsevak Singh UK*, October 29, 2017, <https://hssuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/SanghMail-for-October-2017.pdf>; Coalition Against Genocide, “Affiliations of Faith: Hindu American Foundation.”

74 Ramesh N. Rao, “A Left-Right Upper-Cut to the RSS,” *Hindu Vivek Kendra*, June 15, 2002, <http://www.hvk.org/2002/0702/43.html>.

75 Aseem Shukla, “The HRW Report on Gujarat: Another Assassination,” *The Times of India*, <https://www.vepachedu.org/narula-1.html>.

76 To a degree, the Hindu Far Right has increasingly attempted to define Hindu American civil rights in negative terms, invoked to frame the advance of civil rights to other communities as an attack on Hindu Americans. This approach, which borrows directly from the Christian Right, sees civil rights zero-sum rather than pluralistic, solidarity as superficial and contingent, and rights and freedoms as selective rather than universal. And it is representative of the broader trend where, even though Hindus do face the brunt of white supremacy, Hindu Far Right groups have moved to seek accommodation within that structure, aspiring to whiteness rather than joining in solidarity with its oppressed. See Feminist Critical Hindu Studies Collective, “Hindu fragility and the politics of mimicry in North America,” *The Immanent Frame*, November 2, 2022, <https://tif.ssrc.org/2022/11/02/hindu-fragility-and-the-politics-of-mimicry-in-north-america/>.

77 Hindu American Foundation, “HAF Welcomes Hindu Temple Reversal on Hosting Hindu Monk,” *Hindu American Foundation*, September 7, 2010, <https://web.archive.org/web/20110302194121/https://www.hafsite.org/media/pr/haf-welcomes-hindu-temple-reversal>; Bridge Initiative Team, “Factsheet: Sadhvi Rithambara,” *Bridge*, May 8, 2024, <https://bridge.georgetown.edu/research/factsheet-sadhvi-rithambara/>.

78 See Appendix H.

79 See Appendix H.

80 Hindu American Foundation, “Parliament of the World’s Religions Rejects Hindu Celebration of Swami Vivekananda: Hindu Trustees Resign,” *The Internet Archive*, September 23, 2013, https://web.archive.org/web/20131002003341/https://www.hafsite.org/Parliament_of_world_religions_reject_Hindu_celebration_Swami_vivekananda; Religious Leaders, “Coalition Letter to CPWR for Reversal Decision,” *The Internet Archive*, September 21, 2013, https://web.archive.org/web/20131002025507/http://www.hafsite.org/sites/default/files/Coalition_Letter_to_CPWR_for_Reversal_Decision.pdf; HPI, “Hindu American Foundation’s Statement on Council Decision,” *Hindu Press International*, September 26, 2013, <https://www.hinduismtoday.com/hpi/2013/09/26/hindu-american-foundation-s-statement-on-council-decision/>; Parliament of the World’s Religions, “The Council for a Parliament of the World’s Religions Refutes Allegations and Clarifies its Position,” *Parliament of the World’s Religions*, September 30, 2013, <https://parliamentofreligions.org/press-releases/the-council-for-a-parliament-of-the-worlds-religions-refutes-allegations-and-clarifies-its-position/>.

81 For example, HAF’s Press Release on the Rithambara controversy claimed that the “IMC [Indian Muslim Council] saw no conflict in hosting founders or supporters of terrorist outfits now banned in the United States and India, such as the Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) or the gory Maoist Naxalite movement. The Council regularly invites known Indian Communist and leftist radical leaders to speak at their annual conference, some of whom have been censured for their overt support for those violent Maoist terrorists active in Central India.” No evidence was offered to support these smears. Hindu American Foundation, “HAF Welcomes Hindu Temple Reversal on Hosting Hindu Monk.”

82 See, for example, Sunaina Maira, “Citizenship and Dissent: South Asian Muslim Youth in the U.S. After 9/11,” *South Asian Popular Culture*, 8(1): 31-45 (April 2010).

83 This is described in Vijay Prashad, *The Karma of Brown Folk*; Sunaina Maira, “‘Good’ and ‘Bad’ Muslim Citizens: Feminists, Terrorists, and U.S. Orientalisms,” *Feminist Studies* 35(3): 631-656; Daniel Martinez HoSang and Joseph E. Lowndes, *Producers, Parasites, Patriots: Race and the New Right-Wing Politics of Precarity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019).

84 Mat McDermott, “Hobson’s Choice: Is Denouncing Modi the Only Avenue for Acceptance for Hindu Americans?,” *American Kahani*, October 17, 2023, <https://americankahani.com/perspectives/hobbsons-choice-is-denouncing-modi-the-only-avenue-for-acceptance-for-hindu-americans/>.

See the following sections for more details.

85 As such, given HAF’s doublespeak, it is necessary to put what HAF says about itself in conversation with what it actually *does*.

86 See “Data,” *Armed Conflict Location and Event Data*, accessed August 14, 2024, <https://acleddata.com/dashboard/#/dashboard>; Raqib Hameed Naik, Aarushi Srivastava, and Abhyudaya Tyagi, “2023 Half-Yearly Report: Anti-Muslim Hate Speech Events in India,” *Hindutva Watch*, September 24, 2023, <https://hindutvawatch.org/hate-speech-events-india/> for trackers of violence; Thomas Hansen and Srirupa Roy, *Saffron Republic: Hindu Nationalism and State Power in India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022); Varshney, Ashutosh, “Modi Consolidates Power: Electoral Vibrancy, Mounting Liberal Deficits,” *Journal of Democracy* 30, no. 4 (2019): 63-77. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2019.0069> for academic analysis of anti-Muslim violence in India.

87 See, for example, USCIRF’s reports on India, which has been designated a Country of Particular Concern (CPC) by the organization since 2020. “India,” USCIRF, 2024, <https://www.uscifr.gov/countries/india>.

88 See Savera, “The Global VHP’s Trail of Violence,” p. 32.

89 PTI, “Indian-American supporters of Trump, Biden clash over leaders’ policies,” *Financial Express*, November 6, 2020, <https://www.financialexpress.com/world-news/indian-american-supporters-of-trump-biden-clash-over-leaders-policies/2122257/>; Ram Vishwanathan,

"How the American Sangh hopes to win the 2020 Elections," *The Caravan*, October 29, 2020, <https://caravanmagazine.in/politics/how-the-american-sangh-hopes-to-win-the-2020-elections>.

90 For example, Kansara traveled to Ahmedabad for the 2020 Namaste Trump rally, and was also pictured in Yerevan, Armenia, in a meeting with the RSS-affiliated Vivekananda International Foundation. He has also spoken at events hosted by HinduACTion, run by leaders of the VHP of America. See "Doğu Bilimler Enstitüsü ve Hindistan'ın Vivekananda Vakfı bilimsel işbirliğini derinleştiriyor," *Armenpress*, November 29, 2022, <https://armenpress.am/tr/article/1098399>; "Special to see Modi-Trump share stage again within 5 months: Indian-Americans in Ahmedabad for 'Namaste Trump,'" *Jharkhand Times*, February 23, 2020, <https://www.jharkhandtimes.in/news/special-to-see-modi-trump-share-stage-again-within-5-months-indian-americans-in-ahmedabad-for-namaste-trump20200223125246/>; HinduACTion, "Jay Kansara speaks at the Ramayana across Indo-Pacific and Beyond event on the Capitol Hill," YouTube Video, February 11, 2024, 3:27, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dCo25DHvj3E>.

91 This argument has been made multiple times by HAF leadership; see our section on caste as well on HAF's ties to the Far Right for full details. Nevertheless, even as HAF has moved further right, and alienated some civil rights spaces, it enjoys sporadic moments of platforming, such as in August 2023, when the HAF's Executive Director Suhag Shukla was invited to speak at the 60th Anniversary of the March on Washington, a landmark civil rights event. Even as Shukla enjoyed a notable public position at an event marking perhaps the most iconic moment in American civil rights history, HAF was deep in the midst of a campaign opposing what would have been a landmark civil rights bill, SB403. Hindu American Foundation, "HAF Executive Director speaks at 60th Anniversary Commemoration of the March on Washington," August 26, 2023, <https://www.hinduamerican.org/press/suhag-shukla-march-on-washington-anniversary-speech>.

92 "Testimonies of Practice of Caste in the USA," Ambedkar King Study Circle, USA, 2024, <https://akscusa.org/testimonies-of-practice-of-caste-in-the-usa/>; Maari Zwick-Maitreyi, Thenmozhi Soundararajan, and Natasha Dar, "Caste in the Student States, a Survey of Caste among South Asian Americans," Equality Labs, 2018, https://clerk.seattle.gov/~cfpics/cf_322573f.pdf.

93 Brian Osgood, "California State Legislature Passes Bill Banning Caste Basted Discrimination," *Al-Jazeera*, September 6, 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/9/6/california-state-legislature-passes-bill-banning-caste-based-discrimination/>; Lynn La, "California lawmakers send caste discrimination bill to Newsom," *CalMatters*, September 6, 2023, <https://calmatters.org/newsletters/whatmatters/2023/09/caste-discrimination-bill-2/>.

94 Hindu American Foundation (@HinduAmerican), "The advocacy campaign for #SB403 has entailed expenses of around \$300,000, including investments in software systems and the significant time devoted to the cause. Notably, this figure doesn't even encompass the countless hours and unwavering dedication of our staff and community members. HAF's Samir Kalra emphasizes the critical need for your support. Donate to @HinduAmerican's legal fund," X, October 12, 2023, <https://x.com/HinduAmerican/status/1712668706591900061>.

95 Fundraisers Ajay Bhutoria and Romesh Kapur and Americans4Hindus leader Romesh Japra took credit for the veto. See Sakshi Venkatraman, "South Asian Activists Call Calif. Governor's Vetoing of Caste Bill 'Heartbreaking,'" *NBC News*, October 9, 2023, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/south-asian-activists-call-calif-governors-vetoing-caste-bill-heartbre-rcna119487>; Raheem Hosseini, "He Lobbied Gavin Newsom to Veto Historic Caste Law. Who Is Ramesh Kapur?," *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 23, 2023, <https://www.sfchronicle.com/california/article/newsom-caste-law-veto-18434287.php>; Kimberly Kindy, "As Democrats Push to Ban Caste Discrimination, Some Indian Americans Object," *Washington Post*, November 22, 2023, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2023/11/22/indian-americans-caste-discrimination-newsom-veto/>.

96 Hindu American Foundation, "California, Don't Target South Asians! Stop SB-403 Now," archived in Wayback Machine, accessed June 15, 2024, <https://web.archive.org/web/20230920065316/https://www>.

[hinduamerican.org/say-no-to-sb403](https://www.hinduamerican.org/say-no-to-sb403).

97 Discrimination on the Basis of Ancestry, Senate Bill no. 403, 2023 Biennium, 2023 Regular Session (Calif. 2023), https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billPdf.xhtml?bill_id=202320240SB403&version=20230SB40393ENR.

98 Mitch Berbrier's 2000 paper on the use of "victim ideology" by White supremacists was among the first to comprehensively document and analyze the growing use of victimhood discourses within the White supremacist movement, especially those that aimed to succeed in mainstream politics. Berbrier outlined five inter-related victim themes: (1) that Whites are victims of discrimination, (2) that their rights are being abrogated, (3) that they are stigmatized if they express "pride," (4) that they are being psychologically affected through the loss of self-esteem, and (5) that the end product of all of this is the elimination of "the white race." All five remain accurate and useful categories, whether for the White supremacist movement itself, or when substituted for a variety of other supremacist movements that borrow from its language.

See Mitch Berbrier, "The Victim Ideology of White Supremacists and White Separatists in the United States," *Sociological Focus* 33, no. 2 (2000): 175–91, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20832074>.

99 Claims of so-called "discrimination against men" have been pushed by the Heritage Foundation, the Federalist Society, and others. See James Moore and Kursat Christoff Peko, "The Unfairer Sex," *Inside Higher Ed*, December 17, 2019, <https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2019/12/18/men-are-banding-together-class-action-lawsuits-against-discrimination-title-ix>.

100 See, for example, Katy Steinmetz, "Why LGBT Advocates Say Bathroom 'Predators' Argument is a Red Herring," *TIME*, May 2, 2016, <https://time.com/4314896/transgender-bathroom-bill-male-predators-argument/>; and similar efforts by the likes of the Family Research Council: Peter Sprigg, "The Top Ten Harms of Same-Sex 'Marriage,'" *The Family Research Council*, 2011, <https://downloads.frc.org/EF/EF1B30.pdf>.

101 "The discourse of Hindu fragility involves mimicry: many North American Hindu groups have modeled their rhetoric and strategies on supremacist logics, particularly those employed by North American white Christian conservatives," writes the Feminist Critical Hindu Studies Collective. See Feminist Critical Hindu Studies Collective, "Hindu fragility and the politics of mimicry in North America."

102 Religion News Service, "In Hindu Heritage Month, Hindu Americans Seek to Educate the Public—and Themselves," *Universal News Network*, October 5, 2023, <https://theunn.com/in-hindu-heritage-month-hindu-americans-seek-to-educate-the-public-and-themselves/>; Stop Hindudvesha, "International Conference on Understanding Hindudvesha in the Globalising World," accessed June 15, 2024, <https://hindudvesha.org/events/understanding-hindudvesha-in-the-globalizing-world/>; Richa Gautam, "Seattle Caste Ordinance: Divisive, Discriminatory, and Violation of First Amendment," *Hindu Vishwa* 3, no. 1 (2023): 35–6, <https://hinduvishwa.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Hindu-Vishwa-January-March-2023.pdf>.

103 Gautam's messaging is centered on the idea of "wokeness." See Search Results for 'from:richagotham "woke," ' X, accessed June 15, 2024, https://x.com/search?q=from%3Arichagotham%20%22woke%22&src=typed_query&f=top.

104 "CasteCon23 - San Francisco," Caste Con, 2023, <https://castecon.com/>.

105 Ramya Ramakrishnan, "HAF Attended CasteCon. This Is What We Learned," blog post, Hindu American Foundation, July 20, 2023, <https://www.hinduamerican.org/blog/castecon-what-we-learned>.

106 Socmed GHF, "CasteCon23 - Razib Khan," YouTube Video, August 10, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3kNd33QjTgc>; Ajay Shah, "CasteCon23: AjayShah HinduPact Speaks on the Caste Trope," Socmed GHF, August 9, 2023, video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GjFvpN8B7c0>; Sonia Paul, "How a Bill to Ban Caste Discrimination Morphed Into a Fight About Wokism," *Mother Jones*, August 14, 2023, <https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2023/08/sb-403-california-caste-discrimination-bill-cisco/>.

107 Ajay Shah, "CasteCon23: AjayShah HinduPact Speaks on the Caste Trope," Socmed GHF, August 9, 2023, video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GjFvpN8B7c0>.

108 Gerry Shih, Clara Ence Morse, and Pranshu Verma, "Covert Indian Operation Seeks to Discredit Modi's Critics in the U.S.," *Washington Post*, December 10, 2023, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/12/10/india-the-disinfo-lab-discredit-critics/>.

109 Anjalee Swami, "CasteCon 23 Smt Anjalee Swami Unpicks the Real Actors Behind SB403...", Socmed GHF, August 9, 2023, video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GD0QPcWkIFY>.

110 Hindu American Foundation (@HinduAmerican), Video in Xeeet saying "We @HinduAmerican encounter challenges on multiple fronts: (1) Progressive movement's anti-India, anti-Hindu faction. (2) Activists spotlighting minority religious communities in India. (3) Mainstream media endorsing biases, sometimes at the expense of facts. (Part 1/4)," X, November 28, 2023, <https://x.com/HinduAmerican/status/1729713204677222909>; Mat McDermott, "Hobson's Choice."

111 See, for example, Benjamin Wallace-Wells, "How a Conservative Activist Invented the Conflict over Critical Race Theory," *New Yorker*, June 18, 2021, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/annals-of-inquiry/how-a-conservative-activist-invented-the-conflict-over-critical-race-theory>.

112 This particular argument – in a somewhat convoluted form – was even made in a lawsuit filed by HAF in response to a California Department of Civil Rights lawsuit against Cisco for allowing an employee to be harassed by two managers on the basis of his lower-caste identity. HAF filed a motion in Santa Clara County Superior Court in January 2021 for injunctive relief in the case against Cisco, alleging that the case violated the religious freedom of Hindus and was attempting to define religious doctrine for Hindus. In its motion, HAF claimed to represent all Hindu-Americans. However, implicit in this argument, as S Karthikeyan of the Ambedkar King Study Circle wrote for the Caravan, was that "the group's understanding of who counts as a Hindu American comes with implicit qualifications. It is interesting that Iyer, in a declaration to the court, has denied being a practicing Hindu or Brahmin. John Doe, meanwhile, has described himself as a regular temple-goer. Yet the HAF has chosen to oppose the case in the name of all Hindu Americans, showing that it does not see John Doe in that category."

See "California's Case Against Cisco Systems Is Unconstitutional: Hindu American Foundation," Hindu American Foundation, January 14, 2021, <https://www.hinduamerican.org/press/california-cisco-case-violates-religious-freedom>; and S Karthikeyan, "The Hindu American Foundation's Warped Position on the Cisco Caste-discrimination Case," February 28, 2021, <https://caravanmagazine.in/caste/cisco-haf-hindu-american-dalit-diaspora>.

113 This is extensively detailed in our past reports. Particularly see Savera, "The Global VHP's Trail of Violence." This also further corroborated by recent academic analyses, who write that "Hindutva-aligned organizations such as the VHPA, HSS, and now HAF and CoHNA, have found common cause with conservative and right-wing groups focused on issues of religious freedom and free speech, particularly on college campuses." See Sundaram, "U.S. Hindu Nationalist Groups' Litigious Assault on Academic Freedom," 849.

114 This has most recently been documented in eloquent terms in Bhanwar Meghwanshi, *I Could Not be Hindu: The Story of a Dalit in RSS* (New Delhi: Navayana Publishing Pvt Ltd, 2019).

115 See Rupa Pillai, "Textbook Harassment: The Hindu Right's Conservative Agenda to Whitewash History," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* Volume 90 (4), December 2022: 801–804, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jaarel/lfad026>.

116 Consider also the language used by Suhag Shukla in a November 2023 HAF Gala: "Okay, well, we have all these problems – where are they coming from? I mean, you all know – you're working hard, you're raising your kids going to good schools, good students, you know, the most honorable citizens that a community would want. Why is all of a sudden the target on us?"

Note that the "target" Shukla describes is not racism or xenophobia from a white majority – which HAF leaders have explicitly deprioritized in recent videos and articles – but rather the attempt to institute protections against caste-based discrimination – which HAF has consistently used to raise the specter of a minority Hindu faculty and student base coming under attack.

See Hindu American Foundation, "2023 Hindu American Foundation (HAF) NorCal Gala CoFounders Talk," YouTube Video, November 14, 2023, 45:17, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bXLtDPI3B2E>.

This analysis has repeatedly been made by other scholars of the US Hindutva movement. See Dheepa Sundaram, "The neocolonial futurism of US Hindutva"; Feminist Critical Hindu Studies Collective, "Hinduphobia is a smokescreen for Hindu nationalists," *Religion News Service*, September 10, 2021, <https://religionnews.com/2021/09/10/hinduphobia-is-a-smokescreen-for-hindu-nationalists-dismantling-global-hindutva-conference/>; Feminist Critical Hindu Studies Collective, "Hindu Fragility and the Politics of Mimicry in North America"; Audrey Truschke, "Hindutva Appropriations of Indigeneity," *The Immanent Frame*, October 19, 2022, <https://tif.ssrc.org/2022/10/19/hindutva-appropriations-of-indigeneity/>.

117 See Equality Labs, "Civil Rights Leaders Celebrate SB403's Successful Assembly Vote," *Equality Labs*, August 28, 2024, <https://www.equalitylabs.org/media/2023/08/civil-rights-leaders-celebrate-sb403s-successful-assembly-vote/>; Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, AFL-CIO, "APALA Unconditionally Supports California SB-403 to End Caste Discrimination," *APALA*, April 6, 2023, <https://www.apalanet.org/press-releases/apala-unconditionally-supports-california-sb-403-to-end-caste-discrimination>; Alphabet Workers Union-CWA, "Statement from Alphabet Workers Union-CWA in support CA bill Sb 403 to ban caste discrimination," *Alphabet Workers Union*, March 22, 2023, <https://www.alphabetworkersunion.org/press/statement-from-alphabet-workers-union-cwa-in-support-of-ca-bill-sb-403-to-ban-caste-discrimination>.

118 Hindu American Foundation (@HinduAmerican), "#SB403 #FinalCount: -Of 62 Democrats: 55 voted Yes, 0 No, Abstain 12. Bonta, Carrillo, Irwin, Petrie-Norris & Wilson, who initially abstained, later changed their vote to Yes without explanation -Of 18 Republicans: 0 voted Yes, 3 No, Abstain 15 #WeWillRemember #VetoSB403," X, September 1, 2023, <https://x.com/HinduAmerican/status/1697692661577113792>.

119 See Savera, "The Global VHP's Trail of Violence," p. 32.

120 Fundraisers Ajay Bhutoria and Romesh Kapur and Americans4Hindus leader Romesh Japra took credit for the veto. See Sakshi Venkatraman, "South Asian Activists Call Calif. Governor's Vetoing of Caste Bill 'Heartbreaking,'" *NBC News*, October 9, 2023, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/south-asian-activists-call-calif-governors-vetoing-caste-bill-heartbre-rcna119487>; Raheem Hosseini, "He Lobbied Gavin Newsom to Veto Historic Caste Law. Who Is Romesh Kapur?," *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 23, 2023, <https://www.sfchronicle.com/california/article/newsom-caste-law-veto-18434287.php>; Kimberly Kindy, "As Democrats Push to Ban Caste Discrimination, Some Indian Americans Object," *Washington Post*, November 22, 2023, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2023/11/22/indian-americans-caste-discrimination-newsom-veto/>.

121 In fact, HAF was described at the time by a scholar as the "legal arm of the HEF," given that its primary role at the time involved the filing of lawsuits in support of HEF/HSS.

See, for example, Purnima Bose, "Hindutva Abroad: The California Textbook Controversy," *The Global South* 2, no. 1 (2008): 27, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40339280>.

122 HSS operated under the name Hindu Education Foundation, or HEF, in yet another example of the American Sangh seeking to operate under various fronts to achieve plausible deniability from far-right ties. However, HSS's tax returns from 2011–2022 state that the HSS is "doing business as" the Hindu Education Foundation. See, for example, ProPublica, "Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh U S A Inc.: Full Text of 'Full Filing' for Fiscal Year Ending Dec. 2018," pg. 1, <https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/521647017/201913199349321926/full>.

123 Michael Witzel, a scholar of Sanskrit at Harvard University, noted that HAF and HSS “flatly denied that there was this social stratification” of caste. See Aria Thaker, “The Latest Skirmish in California’s Textbook War Reveals the Mounting Influence of Hindutva in the United States,” *Caravan*, February 6, 2018, <https://caravanmagazine.in/vantage/californias-textbooks-war-reveals-mounting-influence-hindutva-united-states>.

124 A comprehensive list of proposed edits, and the Hindu supremacist positions undergirding them, is available here: Friends of South Asia, “Details of Proposed Textbook Edits: Controversial Changes to California History Textbooks,” n.d., <https://web.archive.org/web/20230505151541/http://www.friendsofsouthasia.org/textbook/TextbookEdits.html>. These changes were supported by HAF, which mobilized a petition in support of these changes. Hindu American Foundation, “Petition Letter to California State Board of Education,” Way Back Machine, accessed June 16, 2024, https://web.archive.org/web/20070731151832/http://www.hinduamericanfoundation.org/campaigns_education_california.php.

125 A blow-by-blow account of the struggle can be found at Friends of South Asia, “Speak Out Against the Hindutva Assault on California’s History Textbooks,” n.d., <https://web.archive.org/web/20230503230449/http://www.friendsofsouthasia.org/textbook/index.html> and is corroborated in Kamala Visweswaran et al., “The Hindutva View of History: Rewriting Textbooks in India and the United States,” *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs* 10, no. 2 (2009): 101–12.

126 HAF’s lawsuit alleged procedural violations of the textbook adoption process and demanded that the changes recommended by the Hindu supremacist coalition be adopted: Hindu American Foundation, “Law Firm Retained to Represent Hindus in California Textbook Efforts,” Hindu Press International, January 12, 2006, <https://www.hinduismtoday.com/hpi/2006/01/12/2006-01-12-law-firm-retained-to-represent-hindus-in-california-textbook-efforts/>.

The lawsuit was looked at unfavorably by the Court, which noted that “I am not convinced that Petitioner has carried their burden to show the likelihood that they would succeed on the merits.” See *Hindu American Foundation vs. California State Board of Education*, “April 21_ Official Court Transcript,” Friends of South Asia, 2006, https://web.archive.org/web/20230503061110/http://www.friendsofsouthasia.org/textbook/April%2021_Official%20Court%20Transcript.pdf.

The Court eventually rejected HAF’s request for the textbooks to be thrown out, but noted that procedural improvements in the processes were required. This allowed both sides to claim victory, with HAF portraying a technicality as a substantive victory—although independent sources like academic publications as well as Harvard Divinity School’s Religion and Public Life platform were unequivocal in noting that HAF lost. Inside Bay Area, “In Textbook Dispute, Both Sides Claim Victory,” Pluralism Project Archive, Harvard University, September 2, 2006, <https://hwpi.harvard.edu/pluralismarchive/news/textbook-dispute-both-sides-claim-victory>; Harvard Divinity School, “Religion in Public Life: Hindus in American Textbooks,” accessed June 16, 2024, <https://rpl.hds.harvard.edu/religion-context/case-studies/minority-america/hindus-american-textbooks>.

HAF’s opponents accused the organization of spreading falsified information about the outcome of the court proceedings to save face and force a settlement out of court: Friends of South Asia, “Court Transcript Exposes HAF’s Fraudulent Press Releases,” *FOSA*, April 30, 2006, https://web.archive.org/web/20230503230449/http://www.friendsofsouthasia.org/textbook/FOSACACPressRelease_043006.html.

In the end, HAF’s aggressive litigation indeed led to the SBE and HAF agreeing to an out-of-court settlement: Hindu American Foundation, “Hindu American Foundation Finalizes Lawsuit Terms with California State Board of Education,” Pluralism Project Archive, Harvard University, June 22, 2007, <https://hwpi.harvard.edu/pluralismarchive/news/hindu-american-foundation-finalizes-lawsuit-terms-california-state-board>.

127 Suhag A. Shukla to Dr. Thurston and Virginia Department of Education, delivered on June 26, 2008, <https://www.hinduamerican.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/HAF-Public-Comment-Submission.pdf>. “Either social structures should be discussed for all world civilizations in historical context (and when age-appropriate),” wrote HAF, “or not for any of them.”

128 HAF has often strategically mis-labeled any historical interpretation that asserts the existence of indigenous communities in India to be an endorsement of the “Aryan Invasion Theory.” While the concept of an Aryan “invasion” is indeed grounded in Orientalist history, Aryan “migration” is not, and modern-day scholarship is consistent in asserting that a migration of communities speaking Indo-Persian-European languages occurred. See Michael Witzel, “Linguistic Aspects of the Aryan Non-invasion Theory,” in Edwin Francis Bryant and Laurie L. Patton, eds., *The Indo-Aryan Controversy*, Routledge eBooks, 2004, 246–93, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203641880-15>.

129 Kamala Visweswaran et al., “The Hindutva View of History: Rewriting Textbooks in India and the United States,” *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs* 10, no. 2 (2009): 107, <https://dash.harvard.edu/bitstream/handle/1/9887609/GJIA%20--%20Visweswaran%20--%20PDF%20copy.pdf>.

130 Hindu American Foundation, “Hinduism: Not Cast in Caste,” December 10, 2010, accessed on Shree Lakshminarayan Mandir Lenasia, 15, <https://lakshminarayanlenasia.com/articles/Hinduism-Not-Cast-in-Caste-by-HAF.pdf>.

131 Hindu American Foundation, “Hinduism: Not Cast in Caste,” 18. The report, which can no longer be found on the HAF website, contained the following paragraph, which we quote not as a model—it remained primarily concerned with the image of Hinduism, rather than those most affected by caste—but simply because the arguments HAF claimed to reject in 2010 are the very arguments HAF and its far-right partners rely on and reproduce a decade later:

“The Hindu American Foundation (HAF) rejects explanations for the current situation that are occasionally proffered to gloss over caste-based discrimination: that India has laws in place that impose penalties on those who practice such discrimination, as well as laws that promote a robust system of caste-based affirmative action; that stratification of society existed, and continues to exist, in various forms in other countries besides India; that caste is likely a corrupted form of what was intended as a system of division of labor in ancient India and that this fact alleviates collective responsibility; that the much-maligned Manusmriti (one of the many ancient texts of Indian social law) was never the law of the land; and that caste-based discrimination exists even amongst Christian, Muslim and Sikh religious communities in India. While these arguments may have some validity to them, they cannot justify the apathy towards ongoing caste-based discrimination by Hindus.”

132 Hindu American Foundation (@HinduAmerican), Video in Xeeet saying “We @HinduAmerican encounter challenges on multiple fronts: (1) Progressive movement’s anti-India, anti-Hindu faction. (2) Activists spotlighting minority religious communities in India. (3) Mainstream media endorsing biases, sometimes at the expense of facts. (Part 1/4),” X, November 28, 2023, <https://x.com/HinduAmerican/status/172971320467722909>; Hindu American Foundation, “93: What Is Critical Caste Theory and Why It’s a ‘Dubious Discourse’ | Akshar from The Emissary,” September 28, 2023 in *That’s So Hindu*, podcast, <https://shows.acast.com/63c85c5e9ae24b0011601ab4/episodes/6512f06d4ac00b00115ca490>.

133 See, for example, Rajiv Malhotra, “Critique of Hindu American Foundation’s Report on ‘Caste,’” Jayasree Saranathan, *Blogspot*, December 20, 2010, <https://jayasreesaranathan.blogspot.com/2010/12/rajiv-malhotra-on-haf-caste-report.html>. Rajiv Malhotra maintains a strong relationship with the organization’s leaders, no doubt facilitated by HAF’s backtracking on this report.

134 Religion News Service, “Hindu Advocacy Group Updates Landmark Report on Caste-Based Discrimination in India,” in ISKCON News, July 23, 2011, <https://iskconnews.org/hindu-advocacy-group-updates-landmark-report-on-caste-based-discrimination-in-india/>; Hindu American Foundation, “Hinduism: Not Cast in Caste – Executive Summary,” accessed on Wayback Machine on June 16, 2024, <https://web.archive.org/web/20110302192546/http://www.hafsite.org/media/pr/not-cast-caste-big-picture-and-executive-summary>; Hindu American Foundation, “Hinduism: Not Cast in Caste – Report,” accessed on Wayback Machine on June 16, 2024, <https://web.archive.org/web/20110302195306/http://www.hafsite.org/media/pr/hinduism-not-caste-caste-full-report>.

135 See World Hindu News, "Hindu American Foundation Approves Texas Textbooks with New Corrections," December 15, 2014, <https://www.worldhindunews.com/hindu-american-foundation-approves-texas-textbooks-with-new-corrections/>; Emily Murdoch, "Hindu American Foundation Approves Texas Textbook with New Corrections," World Religion News, December 10, 2014, accessed on WayBack Machine, <https://web.archive.org/web/20201108110212/https://www.worldreligionnews.com/issues/hindu-american-foundation-approves-texas-textbooks-with-new-corrections/>; India West, "HAF Applauds New Depiction of Hinduism in Texas Textbooks," December 2, 2014, accessed on WayBack Machine, https://web.archive.org/web/20181119132503/https://www.indiawest.com/news/global_indian/haf-applauds-new-depiction-of-hinduism-in-texas-textbooks/article_865f9372-7a5e-11e4-af2b-ff7f823e92e4.html; and corroborated in HAF's own published list of edits to the textbooks, accessible here: Hindu American Foundation, "HAF Public Comments Submitted and Publisher Responses – Texas Proclamation 2015 – DISCOVERY EDUCATION," accessed on Wayback Machine on June 16, 2024, <https://web.archive.org/web/20150703062350/http://www.hafsite.org/sites/default/files/Factual-errors-publisher-response-Proclamation-2015-textbook-materials.pdf>.

136 The HSS was acting again as the HEF. See citations 121 and 137.

137 The Uberoi Foundation was long led by Ved Nanda, whose leadership of the HSS is well-documented, including from public sources of the HSS itself. See Hindu Swayamsevak Singh, "Congratulations to Dr. Ved Nanda ji! He has been...", January 25, 2018, <https://www.facebook.com/hssus/photos/congratulations-to-dr-ved-nanda/10154920958371394/>; IndiaTribune_U4ISPY, "HSS Sanghchalak Prof. Ved Nanda inspires Hindu Spirit," *India Tribune*, March 11, 2010, <https://indiatribune.com/hss-sanghchalak-prof-ved-nanda-inspires-hindu-spirit/> as well as Uberoi Foundation's IRS 990 disclosures from 2007-19. ProPublica, "Uberoi Foundation for Religious Studies," accessed August 19, 2024, <https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/266101307>.

138 HAF continued to describe HEF merely as a "community group" or as "an organization dedicated to enriching the understanding of Indian civilization and Hinduism in America," failing to mention that it was a front for the HSS. Hindu American Foundation, "Seeking Change in How Hinduism and Ancient India are Taught in California," accessed June 16, 2024, <https://www.hinduamerican.org/california-textbooks-overview/>; Hindu American Foundation, "Hindu Americans Win Historic Victory in California Textbooks," November 10, 2017, <https://www.hinduamerican.org/press/hindu-americans-win-historic-victory-california-textbooks>. A journalist reporting on the California textbooks controversy for *The Caravan* noted:

HAF seems keen to hide, or at least wash its hands clean of, the fact that HEF is closely linked with the HSS. [Note: This piece was published before there was widespread knowledge that the HEF and HSS were in fact one and the same.] When I asked Shukla, HAF's executive director, whether the organization had ever worked with the HSS, she said no—and that, at the most, the HSS might have signed one of HAF's many open letters. "We've worked with HEF," she added. Kalra, the senior director, described HEF as "a community-based group" that HAF had worked with "throughout the years." I then asked him who I should get in touch with from HEF, but he was not able to give me a single name. When I asked him whether the HSS was involved with HEF, he said, "I have no idea about that." Shukla and Kalra seem to be either woefully ill-informed about their close partners, or intent on remaining evasive about any connections that HAF might have with the Sangh. See Thaker, "The Latest Skirmish," <https://caravanmagazine.in/vantage/californias-textbooks-war-reveals-mounting-influence-hindutva-united-states>.

139 Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (@RSSOrg), "The leftist scholars' bid to undermine India's glorious identity was foiled by young Hindu activists and HEF in California, USA. Dr Vaidya," X, March 28, 2016, <https://x.com/RSSorg/status/714347539173015552>. Again, the RSS obfuscated the fact that the HEF was none other than its U.S. wing, and named HAF merely as "young Hindu activists."

140 Thaker, "The Latest Skirmish."

141 Antonio Planas, "New Florida Standards Teach Students that Some Black People Benefited from Slavery because It Taught Useful Skills,"

NBC News, July 20, 2023, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/new-florida-standards-teach-black-people-benefited-slavery-taught-useful-rcna95418>.

142 BAPS terms HAF a "partner organization" and often co-hosts Diwali events with it. See: BAPS, "Diwali Celebration at the US Capitol," *BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha*, November 15, 2023, <https://www.baps.org/News/2023/Diwali-Celebration-at-the-US-Capitol-24475.aspx>.

For other examples of the two organizations' ties, see: BAPS Swaminarayan Akshardham USA, "Mihir Meghani, Hindu American Foundation celebrates Akshardham as a beacon of Hindu wisdom & culture," Youtube Video, October 6, 2023, 1:46, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cIX5YPVsOLE>; Hindu American Foundation (@HinduAmerican), "Getting ready for #CapitolHillDiwali2018! @BAPS_PubAffairs @IndiasporaForum @USIBC and many others!" X, November 14, 2018, <https://twitter.com/HinduAmerican/status/1062844763274182656>; Hindu American Foundation (@HinduAmerican), "Amazing annakut prepared by @BAPS for #capitolhilldiwali2017," X, November 7, 2017, <https://twitter.com/HinduAmerican/status/928040446227558400>; Suhag Shukla, "Suhag Shukla's BAPS Women's Conference Keynote Speech," *Hindu American Foundation*, December 6, 2015, <https://www.hinduamerican.org/blog/baps-women-s-conference-keynote-speech>.

143 BAPS is a shortform for Bochasanwasi Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha. See *The Wire* Staff, "New Jersey's Akshardham Temple That Allegedly Flouted Labour, Wage Laws Opens," *The Wire*, October 22, 2023, <https://thewire.in/labour/new-jerseys-akshardham-temple-that-allegedly-flouted-labour-wage-laws-opens>; Annie Correal, "Hindu Sect Is Accused of Using Forced Labor to Build N.J. Temple," *New York Times*, May 11, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/11/nyregion/nj-hindu-temple-india-baps.html>.

144 Annie Correal, "Hindu Sect Is Accused of Using Forced Labor to Build N.J. Temple," *New York Times*, May 11, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/11/nyregion/nj-hindu-temple-india-baps.html>.

145 Suhag A. Shukla (@SuhagAShukla), "We knew that Hinduphobic discourse would come in the wake of the BAPS story. Just didn't think it would come this quickly. Yes, I spoke at a @BAPS temple women's event and @HinduAmerican co-sponsored a US Congress Diwali celeb with major multi-faith Indian orgs inc BAPS. 1/," <https://x.com/SuhagAShukla/status/1392323165905358848>.

146 Decatur Legal, "Radford Scott Attorney Dan Werner Files Class Action on Behalf of Workers Trafficked by Major New Jersey Temple," accessed June 16, 2024, <https://decaturlegal.com/new-jersey-labor-trafficking/>.

147 Suhag A. Shukla (@SuhagAShukla), "We knew that Hinduphobic discourse would come in the wake of the BAPS story. Just didn't think it would come this quickly. Yes, I spoke at a @BAPS temple women's event and @HinduAmerican co-sponsored a US Congress Diwali celeb with major multi-faith Indian orgs incl BAPS. 1/," X, May 11, 2021, <https://twitter.com/SuhagAShukla/status/1392323165905358848>; Mat McDermott, "What Happened at BAPS and Cisco Is a Timeless Warning about the Perils of Presuming Guilt," blog post, Hindu American Foundation, August 10, 2023, <https://www.hinduamerican.org/blog/baps-cisco-connections>.

148 If HAF had been arguing that some were guilty of presuming guilt too soon, the same could be said of its own efforts, alongside the broader Hindu far-right, to declare the case defeated – and, as has been its strategy, to mark the case instead as another reason for Hindus to be fearful.

HAF's rhetoric sought to discredit the lawsuit because some workers defected, though HAF neglected to mention they did so under the influence of an RSS-backed labor union, or that it was only a fraction of the workers who withdrew from the lawsuit.

See Hindu American Foundation (@HinduAmerican), "#JustIn: #Caste allegations against @bapsrbv #Akshardham temple were #coerced! Lawyer representing the largest stone carvers union in India with 6 million members submits affidavit stating that several artisans were offered inducements/misled to make false claims against @BAPS," X, July 15, 2023, <https://x.com/HinduAmerican/status/1680345734296608769>.

The union in question, the Bharatiya Pathar Gadhai evam Nirman Mazdoor Sangh, is a newly-floated wing of the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS), which self-attests to being run by the RSS and was founded by longtime RSS pracharak Dattopant Thengadi. The BMS website even links to that of the RSS.

See Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh, “BMS at a Glance,” accessed June 16, 2024, <https://www.bms.org.in/bms-at-a-glance/>; Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh, “BMS Inspiration,” accessed on June 16, 2024, <https://www.bms.org.in/our-inspiration/>.

HAF’s Communications Director argued that Hindus were unfairly portrayed as oppressors, while the RSS’s lies stretched to claiming BAPS had won the legal battle. See Mat McDermott, “What Happened at BAPS and Cisco Is a Timeless Warning about the Perils of Presuming Guilt,” blog post, Hindu American Foundation, August 10, 2023, <https://www.hinduamerican.org/blog/baps-cisco-connections>; and Organiser, “Swaminarayan Temple USA: BAPS Win Legal Battle, Labourers Withdraw US Lawsuit Regarding Discrimination,” July 18, 2023, <https://organiser.org/2023/07/18/184360/bharat/swaminarayan-temple-usa-baps-win-legal-battle-labourers-withdraw-us-lawsuit-regarding-discrimination/>.

149 Harmeet Kaur, “Colleges and Universities across the US Are Moving to Ban Caste Discrimination,” *CNN*, January 30, 2022, <https://www.cnn.com/2022/01/30/us/csu-caste-protections-universities-cec/index.html>; Matt McDermott, “HAF has ‘serious concerns’ about addition of caste to Seattle non-discrimination policy, City Council told,” Hindu American Foundation, February 15, 2023, <https://www.hinduamerican.org/press/serious-concerns-caste-seattle-city-council-told/>; Deepa Bharath, “Cisco still faces caste bias suit; engineers’ case dismissed,” *The Associated Press*, April 10, 2023, <https://apnews.com/article/cisco-caste-discrimination-lawsuit-california-a82cf1b775217bd3cabca24be89c3bf8>; Paresh Dave, “Insight: Caste in California: Tech giants confront ancient Indian hierarchy,” *Reuters*, August 15, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/business/sustainable-business/caste-california-tech-giants-confront-ancient-indian-hierarchy-2022-08-15/>; Pranay Dutta Roy, “Columbia University, Ambedkar’s Alma Mater, Declares Caste as Protected Category,” *The Quint*, May 1, 2023, <https://www.thequint.com/south-asians/columbia-university-declares-caste-protected-category-non-discrimination-policy-ambedkar-alma-mater>; Chris Marr, “California Caste Bill Reveals Broad Tensions Over Fighting Bias,” *Bloomberg Law*, September 28, 2023, <https://news.bloomberglaw.com/daily-labor-report/california-caste-bill-reveals-broad-tensions-over-fighting-bias>; Sonia Paul, “How a Bill to Ban Caste Discrimination Morphed Into a Fight About Wokism.”

150 See Hindu American Foundation, “HAF Letter to Cal State Board of Trustees,” January 20, 2022, <https://www.hinduamerican.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/HAF-Letter-Cal-State-Board-of-Trustees-2022-0120.pdf>; Praveen Sinha, Sunil Kumar, and Suhag Shukla, “How California State University Is Unjustly Targeting South Asians,” *Religion News Service*, February 3, 2022, <https://religionnews.com/2022/02/03/how-california-state-university-is-unjustly-targeting-south-asians/>; Hindu American Foundation, “California State University Amended Complaint,” filed February 28, 2023, <https://www.hinduamerican.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/CSU-Amended-Complaint.02282023.pdf>; Marisa Iati, “Cal State Banned Caste Discrimination. Two Hindu Professors Sued,” *Washington Post*, October 24, 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/religion/2022/10/24/hindu-caste-discrimination-lawsuit/>; Hindu American Foundation, “Professors at California State University Take Legal Action against School’s Unconstitutional Caste Policy,” October 18, 2022, <https://www.hinduamerican.org/press/csu-professors-legal-action-caste-policy>; Hindu American Foundation, “Inclusion of caste in Cal State non-discrimination policy will illegally single-out Indian and South Asians: Concerned faculty tell Board of Trustees,” January 21, 2022, <https://www.hinduamerican.org/press/cal-state-caste-policy-faculty-petition>.

151 Associated Press, “Cisco Still Faces Caste Bias Suit while Engineers’ Case Dismissed,” *CBS News*, updated on April 10, 2023, <https://www.cbsnews.com/sanfrancisco/news/cisco-still-faces-caste-bias-suit-dalit-engineers-case-dismissed/>.

152 See “Testimonies of Practice of Caste in the USA,” Ambedkar King Study Circle, May 11, 2023, <https://akscusa.org/testimonies-of-practice-of-caste-in-the-usa/> and Anahita Mukherji, “California’s Legal Ground in Battling Caste Discrimination Takes Centre Stage in Historic Cisco Case,” *Wire*, March 10, 2021, <https://thewire.in/caste/cisco-case-caste-discrimination-silicon-valley-ambedkar-organisations>. Note that Ambedkar King Study Circle (AKSC), one of the organizations that filed an amicus brief in the case, is a part of the Savera Coalition.

153 HAF Legal Team, “Why California’s Lawsuit against Cisco uniquely endangers Hindus and Indians,” Hindu American Foundation, January 9, 2021, <https://www.hinduamerican.org/blog/california-cisco-lawsuit-endangers-hindus>.

154 Hindu American Foundation, “California Civil Rights Department sued by HAF for unconstitutionally misrepresenting Hinduism,” September 22, 2022, <https://www.hinduamerican.org/press/california-department-civil-rights-sued-by-hindu-american-foundation>; *Hindu American Foundation Inc. v. Kevin Kish*, no. 2:22-cv-01656-DAD-JDP (U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Columbia, August 31, 2023), <https://www.courthousenews.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/hindu-american-foundation-vs-kish-order.pdf>.

155 “The notion that the department’s allegations in the state court complaint – a civil rights enforcement lawsuit seeking to stop and prevent caste-based discrimination – would somehow lead other Hindu Americans to make religious accommodation requests to discriminate against co-workers based on their perceived caste and that employers might then actually grant those requests due to their interpretation of the department’s allegations in the Santa Clara action is both highly speculative and seemingly implausible,” the judge noted. See Edvard Petterson, “Judge tosses Hindu American group civil rights case against California” *Courthouse News Service*, August 31, 2023, <https://www.courthousenews.com/judge-tosses-hindu-american-group-civil-rights-case-against-california/>; Kish, No. 2:22-cv-01656-DAD-JDP.

156 Petterson, “Judge tosses Hindu American group civil rights against California;” *Hindu American Foundation Inc. v. Kevin Kish*, Case No. 2-22-CV-01656-DAD-JDP, Eastern District of Columbia, September 21, 2023, <https://www.hinduamerican.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/21-HAF-Pls-First-Amended-Complaint.pdf>.

157 See, for example, Suhag A. Shukla, “Dismissal of CISCO Case Proves Engineers Were Targeted because They Were Indian,” *Print*, April 21, 2023, <https://theprint.in/opinion/dismissal-of-cisco-case-proves-engineers-were-targeted-because-they-were-hindu-brahmin/1532070/>; Hindu American Foundation, “Caste Discrimination Case against Indian-Origin Cisco Engineers Dismissed,” April 10, 2023, <https://www.hinduamerican.org/press/caste-discrimination-case-cisco-engineers-dismissed>.

158 See Hindu American Foundation, “2023 Hindu American Foundation (HAF) NorCal Gala CoFounders Talk,” November 14, 2023, video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bXLtDPI3B2E>; and Hindu American Foundation, “99: Wrongly Accused of Caste Discrimination by California, Sundar Iyer Tells Us What Really Happened,” December 8, 2023 in *That’s So Hindu*, podcast, <https://shows.acast.com/63c85c5e9ae24b0011601ab4/6570b885ffda8800126817ff>.

159 Hindu American Foundation, “HAF Files amended complaint against California Civil Rights Department for violating Constitutional rights of Hindus in the state,” Hindu American Foundation, September 25, 2023, <https://www.hinduamerican.org/press/california-civil-rights-department-hindu-american-foundation-amended-complaint>; Hindu American Foundation, “Our reputation is on the line and we will defend it,” last updated December 20, 2022, <https://www.hinduamerican.org/hindu-american-foundation-legal-action-fund>.

160 D. Darrell Hill, “Judge tosses challenge to Seattle law making ‘caste’ a protected class,” *Westlaw Today*, March 13, 2024, [https://today.westlaw.com/Document/12d80e6c6e15b11ee8921fbef1a541940/View/FullText.html?contextData=\(sc.Default\)&transitionType=Default&firstPage=true](https://today.westlaw.com/Document/12d80e6c6e15b11ee8921fbef1a541940/View/FullText.html?contextData=(sc.Default)&transitionType=Default&firstPage=true).

161 Nitasha Tiku and David DiMolfetta, “Tech Workers Claimed Caste Bias. Now California Could Make It Illegal,” *Washington Post*, March 22, 2023, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2023/03/22/tech->

workers-claimed-caste-bias-now-california-could-make-it-illegal/. HAF attacked the Seattle bill numerous times; for example, see Mat McDermott, "Seattle City Council Caste Resolution Singles Out Hindus for Additional Legal Scrutiny," Hindu American Foundation, February 21, 2023, <https://www.hinduamerican.org/press/seattle-caste-resolution-singles-out-hindus>.

162 Hindu American Foundation, "California, Don't Target South Asians! Stop SB-403 Now," archived in Wayback Machine, accessed June 15, 2024, <https://web.archive.org/web/20230920065316/https://www.hinduamerican.org/say-no-to-sb403>.

163 Since the beginning, supporters of the bill, including its sponsor, Sen. Wahab, were at pains to argue that the bill "has nothing to do with religion." "I am not legislating anyone's personal practice of their faith or what happens in their places of worship," Wahab told the *Washington Post*. "This is about ensuring caste discrimination does not further entrench itself in our workplaces and education system." See Nitasha Tiku and David DiMolfetta, Tech Workers Claimed Caste Bias. Now California Could Make It Illegal." The bill was even diluted by the Assembly Judiciary Committee to place caste as an explanatory category within "ancestry," rather than as a standalone category. See Sakshi Venkatraman, "California's caste bill moves forward – with one change," *NBC News*, July 7, 2023, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/californias-caste-bill-moves-forward-one-change-rcna92927>. HAF explicitly took credit for these amendments. See Hindu American Foundation, "Racist, anti-Indian language stripped from California caste bill SB-403 by Assembly Judiciary Committee," Hindu American Foundation, July 5, 2023, <https://www.hinduamerican.org/press/california-caste-bill-sb403-amended-judiciary-committee>; Hindu American Foundation, "SB403 Briefing Part 2: How Did We Get Here?," July 20, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wqiz3z02OAw>; Hindu American Foundation, "SB403 Briefing Part 3: What Did We Accomplish?," July 20, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dme5D0GADZ0>.

Read the full bill at: Discrimination on the Basis of Ancestry, Senate Bill no. 403, 2023 Biennium, 2023 Regular Session (Calif. 2023), https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billPdf.xhtml?bill_id=202320240SB403&version=20230SB40393ENR.

164 See Hindu American Foundation, "SB403 Briefing Part 2: How Did We Get Here?"; Hindu American Foundation, "SB403 Briefing Part 3: What Did We Accomplish?"; Sameea Kamal, "California Caste Discrimination Bill Stays Alive," *CalMatters*, October 7, 2023, <https://calmatters.org/politics/2023/07/caste-discrimination-california-2/>; Lynn La, "California Assembly Gets a New Speaker: Robert Rivas," *CalMatters*, June 30, 2023, <https://calmatters.org/newsletters/whatmatters/2023/06/robert-rivas-new-speaker/#wm-story-1>.

165 CasteCon, "Resources & Videos," accessed June 17, 2024, https://castecon.com/event_uwlg_ozxn/; David Frawley, "DrDavidFrawleyCConEditcomp," Socmed GHF, August 10, 2023, video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=43QzxpGn04g>; Ramya Ramakrishnan, "HAF Attended CasteCon. This Is What We Learned," blog post, Hindu American Foundation, July 20, 2023, <https://www.hinduamerican.org/blog/castecon-what-we-learned>; Ajay Shah, "CasteCon23: AjayShah HinduPact Speaks on the Caste Trope," Socmed GHF, August 9, 2023, video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GjFvpN8B7c0>; Anjalee Swami, "CasteCon 23 Smt Anjalee Swami Unpicks the Real Actors Behind SB403...," Socmed GHF, August 9, 2023, video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GDoQPcWkIFY>.

166 In September 2023, the term is the subject of a HAF podcast episode. Hindu American Foundation, "What Is Critical Caste Theory and Why It's a 'Dubious Discourse' | Akshar From the Emissary | That's so Hindu," September 28, 2023, <https://shows.acast.com/63c85c5e9ae24b0011601ab4/episodes/6512f06d4ac00b00115ca490>.

A month later, HAF's Mat McDermott invoked the term again, writing that "just under the thin veneer of the social justice language used by the majority of activists agitating for a caste category is a framework of anti-Hindu sentiment – one constructed with Critical Caste Theory." See Mat McDermott, "Hobson's Choice: Is Denouncing Modi the Only

Avenue for Acceptance for Hindu Americans?," *American Kahani*, October 17, 2023, <https://americankahani.com/perspectives/hobsons-choice-is-denouncing-modi-the-only-avenue-for-acceptance-for-hindu-americans/>.

HAF's Sheetal Shah also used the term a month later, in November, 2023, claiming that "under the veil of social justice, there's a good deal of anti-Hindu sentiment fed into by critical caste theory, a way of thinking that views Hinduism as irredeemable." (As she did so, the video moved over an image of the Guru Granth Sahib, a sacred scripture for Sikhs.) See Hindu American Foundation (@HinduAmerican), "We at @HinduAmerican encounter challenges on multiple fronts: 1) Progressive movement's anti-India, anti-Hindu faction. 2) Activists spotlighting minority religious communities in India. 3) Mainstream media endorsing biases, sometimes at the expense of facts," X, November 28, 2023, <https://twitter.com/HinduAmerican/status/172971320467722909>.

167 Raheem Hosseini, "He Lobbied Gavin Newsom to Veto Historic Caste Law. Who Is Ramesh Kapur?," *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 23, 2023, <https://www.sfchronicle.com/california/article/newsom-caste-law-veto-18434287.php>; Kimberly Kindy, "As Democrats Push to Ban Caste Discrimination, Some Indian Americans Object," *Washington Post*, November 22, 2023, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2023/11/22/indian-americans-caste-discrimination-newsom-veto/>.

168 Sangeetha Shankar, "Of Advocacy, Gratitude, and Giving Back-HAF on the Ground at Sacramento Capitol," blog post, Hindu American Foundation, November 28, 2023, <https://www.hinduamerican.org/blog/giving-thanks-sb403-veto>.

169 See Savera, "The Global VHP's Trail of Violence," p. 25.

170 HAF's articles and blog posts are replete with one-sided accounts of Hindu suffering and Muslim aggression. HAF has also repeatedly disseminated Hindu supremacist distortions of history that characterize Muslims as alien "invaders." One of HAF's interviewees for an article, for example, dismissed South Asia's long history of religious co-existence, and instead said, "We may have existed alongside each other, but there was only a truce because Muslims, who ruled for a long time, were able to convert Hindus quite easily." Syama Allard, "Partition's Bloody Legacy: A Conversation With Survivor Narendra Kalra," Hindu American Foundation, August 19, 2022, <https://www.hinduamerican.org/blog/partitions-bloody-legacy-a-conversation-with-narendra-kalra>.

Another remarked that "if you look at the 800 years of history from the first millennium, there are examples of oppression, but Hindus generally never fought back, they were always subservient" and laid the blame for the partition of the subcontinent on Muslims, stating: "to have only one group tolerant while others are not – that can't ever happen." Neither claim was fact-checked or contested, and is indeed broadly aligned with HAF's and the broader Hindu supremacist movement's distortion of history: Syama Allard, "Partition's Bloody Legacy: A Conversation with Bangladeshi Activist Dr. Sachi Dastidar," blog post, Hindu American Foundation, August 15, 2022, <https://www.hinduamerican.org/blog/partitions-bloody-legacy-a-conversation-with-bangladeshi-activist-dr-sachi-dastidar>.

Even in an article on the syncretic poet Kabir, one of hundreds of examples of coexistence and syncretism in India, HAF's Syama Allard made sure to drop a typically anti-Muslim line: "Muslim invaders had been waging war, taking over kingdoms in the subcontinent, and forcing their religion on the people, generally by threat of the sword. Because of this, many Hindus who converted, did so only in name, never actually giving up the beliefs of their prior faith." Syama Allard, "All about Kabir," blog post, Hindu American Foundation, February 16, 2022, <https://www.hinduamerican.org/blog/all-about-kabir>.

Finally, see a recent podcast hosted by HAF on their platform, titled "Hindu by Heart: Coerced into Islam, Seeking Freedom." In the podcast, HAF chose to interview a young Hindu man, "Keshav," who converted to Islam, had a change of heart, and converted back to Hinduism. As the title suggests, HAF used this young man's particular story to subtly advance a narrative of Islam as a predatory, coercive religion aiming to feed on unsuspecting or misguided youth. See Mat McDermott, "Hindu by Heart: Coerced Into Islam, Seeking Freedom Podcast

Transcript," Hindu American Foundation, November 8, 2023, <https://www.hinduamerican.org/blog/hindu-by-heart-coerced-into-islam-podcast-transcript>.

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See Ram Vishwanathan, "Saffron, Red and Blue," *Caravan*, October 29, 2020, <https://caravanmagazine.in/politics/how-the-american-sangh-hopes-to-win-the-2020-elections>.

Similar evidence is presented in Zahir Janmohamed, "Their Master's Voice in Washington."

Moreover, HAF co-founder Meghani has led HAF delegations to meet Indian Consular Officials at the Indian Embassy, and HAF interns have even been placed with the Embassy for the period of their internships. We point this out not to imply that American nonprofits should never advocate for international causes, but rather to highlight the misleading ways in which HAF has used claims of supposed independence to obfuscate the ties that shape a significant portion of its work. Similarly, while such examples have often raised questions about potential violations by HAF of the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA), we do

not consider it under the purview of an educational report to make any such judgment, which is best left to the relevant legal authorities.

Kali Luthra, "HAF Summer Interns Meet Dr Tara Kartha at USIP - Hindu American Foundation," Hindu American Foundation, September 21, 2020, <https://www.hinduamerican.org/blog/hindu-american-foundation-intern-balance-between-religion-profession-dr-tara-kartha-kali-luthra/>; Consulate General of India, San Francisco, California, "Events/ Photo Gallery," July 21, 2022, https://www.cgisf.gov.in/event_detail/?eventid=273.

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In its opposition to the Communalism Prevention Bill, HAF closely echoed the rhetoric of Hindu supremacist leaders from the BJP, RSS, and VHP. See "Communal Violence Bill: Bhagwat Criticises NAC," *The New Indian Express*, May 16, 2012, <https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2011/oct/06/communal-violence-bill-bhagwat-criticises-nac-297728.html>; *The Economic Times*, "VHP Opposes Communal Violence Bill, Threatens Nation-wide Stir," December 5, 2013, [https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/vhp-opposes-communal-violence-bill-threatens-nation-wide-stir/articleshow/26915720.cms?from=mdr](https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/vhp-opposes-communal-violence-bill-threatens-nation-wide-stir/articleshow/26915720.cms?from=mdr;); Arun Jaitley, "A Bill that damns the majority," in "Communal Face of Congress Exposed," *Mookerjee Smruti Nyas*, September 2011, p. 7, <https://www.bjp.org/files/books-monographs/communal-violence-bill-booklet-part-2.pdf#page=7>.

223 The Indian government has not permitted USCIRF to visit the country, and Modi government spokespeople have repeatedly responded to USCIRF reports by attacking the organization. See Sanjeev Miglani, "U.S. panel on religious freedom urges targeted sanctions on India," *Reuters*, April 29, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/india-usa-religion-idINKCN22BOS4>.

Similarly, HAF has accused USCIRF of being infiltrated by a Pakistani intelligence agent and therefore lacking credibility, rather than addressing the substance of the organization's claims. See PTI, "Hindu American Foundation Slams USCIRF Over anti-India Report," *The Times of India*, February 14, 2017, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/nri/us-canada-news/hindu-american-foundation-slams-uscirf-over-anti-india-report/articleshow/57144633.cms>.

224 In September 2014, when Modi visited the United States and addressed a massive rally at New York City's Madison Square Garden, HAF's cofounder and board member Aseem Shukla was one of the lead organizers of the event, for which HAF was listed as a "Welcome Partner." See Aseem Shukla, "Modi-mania in New York's Madison Square Garden: A Postcard From Behind the Scenes," *Firstpost*, September 30, 2014, <https://www.firstpost.com/world/modi-mania-in-new-yorks-madison-square-garden-a-postcard-from-behind-the-scenes-1736759.html>; WSJ Staff, "As It Happened: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Madison Square Garden," *The Wall Street Journal*, September 28, 2019, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/BL-IRTB-26713;PMVisit.Org>, "Community Reception for Honorable Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi at Madison Square Garden, New York City," n.d., <https://web.archive.org/web/20140925082126/http://www.pmvisit.org/partners>.

225 In September 2019, when Modi addressed a crowd of more than 50,000 at the "Howdy Modi" rally in Houston, Texas, HAF board member Rishi Bhutada was the official spokesperson for the event, and as in 2014, the rally's souvenir publication listed HAF among many "Welcome Partners." The same publication lists the names of five senior HAF leaders as volunteers, Organizing Committee members, or Working Committee members for the event: Executive Director Suhag Shukla, board members Rishi Bhutada and Rajiv Pandit, and National Leadership Council members Arvind Chandrakantan and Priya Pandit.

See PTI, “‘Howdy Modi!’ Will Be a Sneak Peak Into the Contributions of Indian-Americans to the US: Organisers,” *The Economic Times*, September 18, 2019, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/howdy-modi-will-be-a-sneak-peak-into-the-contributions-of-indian-americans-to-the-us-organisers/articleshow/71186552.cms?from=mdr;Issuu>. “Woven - Indian Voices | American Dreams,” September 20, 2019, https://issuu.com/envisioncustompublications/docs/woven_issuu/92.

226 HAF has repeatedly expressed support for the Indian government’s policies in Kashmir. In a FAQ page on its website, HAF closely echoes Modi’s talking points about the move, claiming that the revocation of autonomy will in fact benefit Kashmiris by granting them “equal protection under the law and all the rights afforded other Indian citizens.” On the same page, HAF brushes aside the severity of India’s crackdown in the aftermath of Article 370 being revoked, downplaying the communications blackout as “a measure routinely taken by many governments to ensure safety and security” while defending the mass detention of Kashmiri political leaders as “preventative measures to ensure peace, law, and order.” See Hindu American Foundation, “FAQs About Kashmir and Articles 370/35A,” May 14, 2020, <https://www.hinduamerican.org/issues/kashmir-struggle/faq-article-370>.

227 The CAA has been widely criticized by human rights organizations, European parliamentarians, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the U.S. State Department. See Human Rights Watch, “India: Citizenship Bill Discriminates Against Muslims,” October 28, 2020, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/12/11/india-citizenship-bill-discriminates-against-muslims>; Amnesty International UK, “India: New Citizenship Amendment Bill ‘reeks of fear-mongering and bigotry,’” December 12, 2019, <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/india-new-citizenship-amendment-bill-reeks-fear-mongering-and-bigotry>; Amnesty International UK, “India: New Citizenship Amendment Bill ‘reeks of fear-mongering and bigotry,’” December 12, 2019, <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/india-new-citizenship-amendment-bill-reeks-fear-mongering-and-bigotry>; Von Wiese Martin Horwood Shaffaq Mohammed, Chris Davies Catherine Bearder, Phil Bennion, Petras Auštrevičius, Katalin Cseh, Barbara Ann Gibson, Irina, “MOTION FOR a RESOLUTION on India’s Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 | B9-0082/2020 | European Parliament,” European Union, 2020 - Source: European Parliament, January 22, 2020, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/B-9-2020-0082_EN.htm; UN News, “New Citizenship Law in India ‘Fundamentally Discriminatory’: UN Human Rights Office,” December 18, 2019, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/12/1053511>; Nayanima Basu, “US Report Cites Cow Vigilantism, CAA, Article 370 to Note Religious ‘Discrimination’ in India,” *ThePrint*, June 11, 2020, <https://theprint.in/diplomacy/us-report-cites-cow-vigilantism-caa-article-370-to-note-religious-discrimination-in-india/439575/>.

228 HAF has repeatedly celebrated the CAA, diverging from the positions of all major human rights groups. See Hindu American Foundation, “India’s Citizenship Amendment Act: A First Step Opportunity to Better Address Human Rights in South Asia,” August 7, 2020, <https://www.hinduamerican.org/press/india-citizenship-amendment-bill>; Hindu American Foundation, “Hindu American Foundation (HAF) Written Statement for the Record,” March 6, 2020, https://www.hinduamerican.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/HAF-Statement-for-the-Record_USCIRF-Hearing-on-Citizenship.pdf-Laws_3.6.20.pdf.

229 See Appendix H for full details.

230 See Appendix H for full details.

231 Hindu American Foundation, “Why the Democratic Party Is Bleeding Indian American Support,” Medium, September 24, 2020, <https://hinduamerican.medium.com/why-the-democratic-party-is-bleeding-indian-american-support-93667dcb785>.

232 Hindu American Foundation, “Why the Democratic Party Is Bleeding Indian American Support.”

233 See Usha Kumar, “Vivek Ramaswamy Represents the Convergence of White Supremacy and Hindu Supremacy—and He May Well Be Trump’s Running Mate,” *Religion Dispatches*, December 12, 2023, <https://religiondispatches.org/vivek-ramaswamy-represents-the-convergence-of-white-supremacy-and-hindu-supremacy-and-he-may-well-be-trumps-running-mate/>.

religiondispatches.org/vivek-ramaswamy-represents-the-convergence-of-white-supremacy-and-hindu-supremacy-and-he-may-well-be-trumps-running-mate/.

234 See Ram Vishwanathan, “Saffron, Red and Blue,” *Caravan*, October 29, 2020, <https://caravanmagazine.in/politics/how-the-american-sangh-hopes-to-win-the-2020-elections>.

235 For example, in 2020, HAF joined a coalition that opposed the introduction of ethnic studies in California, with HAF leader Easan Katir arguing that “the curriculum marginalizes the Indian community.” Notably, the movement against ethnic studies also saw significant participation from pro-Israel groups, including the AJC and the ADL. See CBS News, “Statewide Ethnic Studies Proposal Slammed by Critics,” August 15, 2019, <https://www.cbsnews.com/sacramento/news/ethnic-studies-curriculum-california-schools/>; AJC, “Diverse Coalition Urges Department of Education to Rewrite Ethnic Studies Curriculum,” August 19, 2019, <https://www.ajc.org/news/diverse-coalition-urges-department-of-education-to-rewrite-ethnic-studies-curriculum>; Gabi Kirk, “Attacks From Pro-Israel Groups Threaten California’s Ethnic Studies Curriculum,” *Jewish Currents*, May 7, 2020, <https://jewishcurrents.org/attacks-from-pro-israel-groups-threaten-californias-ethnic-studies-curriculum>.

236 These include a SLAPP lawsuit against political opponents – including fellow Hindu-American groups, an incident that lays bare HAF’s hollow lip-service to Hindu-American representation – as well as a Title VI complaint against the University of Pennsylvania for co-hosting an anti-Hindutva conference. See Sunita Viswanath, “Unsealed: Suhag Shukla’s Deposition in Hindu American Foundation’s Failed Defamation Case Against Us,” American Kahani, June 30, 2024, <https://americankahani.com/perspectives/unsealed-suhag-shuklas-deposition-in-hindu-american-foundations-failed-defamation-case-against-us/>; “HAF Sues HfHR, IAMC, FIACONA Leaders, Prof Audrey Truschke for Defamation,” Hindu American Foundation, May 7, 2021, <https://www.hinduamerican.org/press/haf-defamation-lawsuit-iamc-hfhr-truschke>; “HAF Asks Office of Civil Rights to Investigate Univ. Of Pennsylvania’s Role in Hinduphobic Conference,” Hindu American Foundation, October 6, 2021, <https://www.hinduamerican.org/press/university-pennsylvania-dismantling-global-hindutva-complaint>; “Details Revealed During Hindu American Foundation’s SLAPP Lawsuit Counter Org’s Previous Claims,” *The Wire*, June 24, 2024, https://thewire.in/world/details-revealed-during-hindu-american-foundations-slapp-lawsuit-counter-orgs-previous-claims/?mid_related_new.

HAF’s antipathy to academic freedom and protest on college campuses has also been visible in its support for pro-Israel groups’ attacks on college campus activism since October 7, 2023. See Hindu American Foundation (@HinduAmerican), “In episode 103 of That’s so Hindu- HAF’s Managing Director, Samir Kalra speaks with Carly Gammill, Director of the StandWithUs Center for Combating Antisemitism, about the marked increase in antisemitism expressed on US college campuses following the Hamas attack on Israel on October 7th, and what can be done about this situation,” X, March 18, 2024, <https://x.com/HinduAmerican/status/1769709754840977719>; Hindu American Foundation (@HinduAmerican), “We are grateful that @usedgov listened to our reporting of an uptick of school and campus hostility Hindu American students are facing. In this guidance, @usedgov categorically lists Hindus among those for whom schools have a legal obligation to protect from discrimination under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1967. Our thanks to Assistant Secretary @CatherineLhamon for the advance notice and for her leadership on this critical issue,” X, March 15, 2024, <https://x.com/HinduAmerican/status/1768765493630963937>; Hindu American Foundation (@HinduAmerican), “College life awaits, and we’re here to guide you! Join us on 2/25 for a dive into the challenges Hindu American students may face. Don’t miss out - register now!” X, February 15, 2024, <https://x.com/HinduAmerican/status/1758266332548682050>; Hindu American Foundation (@HinduAmerican), “HAF’s @Sangi_shankar21 joined U.S. Congressional candidate @rishikumar1 along with @Stanford Hindu students at the Jewish student solidarity tent on White Plaza on the 1st night of #Hanukkah. They spoke to 60+ students about Hindu-Jewish solidarity in the face of the Hamas terror attack & how our religious traditions offer deep philosophical insights to face such tragedies. #Antisemitism & #Hinduphobia were highlighted. We broke bread together... and samosas and chaat were shared! HAF calls on

@Stanford to meet the Jewish students' demand to condemn Hamas & combat rampant #antisemitism on campus," X, December 8, 2023, <https://x.com/HinduAmerican/status/1733202621387718952>; Hindu American Foundation (@HinduAmerican), "HAF is confirming that the House @EdWorkforceCmte is investigating @RutgersU's @RUCSRR regarding unfettered antisemitism on campus. @RUCSRR frequently hosts events featuring close associate, Audrey Truschke, who has targeted & maligned Hinduism & the Hindu American community on campus and beyond," X, April 3, 2024, <https://x.com/HinduAmerican/status/177517503791788388>.

237 See Hindu American Foundation (@HinduAmerican), "In episode 103 of That's so Hindu- HAF's Managing Director, Samir Kalra speaks with Carly Gammill, Director of the StandWithUs Center for Combating Antisemitism, about the marked increase in antisemitism expressed on US college campuses following the Hamas attack on Israel on October 7th, and what can be done about this situation," X, March 18, 2024, <https://x.com/HinduAmerican/status/1769709754840977719>; Suhag A. Shukla, (@SuhagAShukla), "I have only one question for Hindu parents sending off their children to college in the US: are they intellectually & emotionally prepared to challenge their activist teachers who think an anti-Hindu screed makes for an idyllic morning. Not sure? Please watch our primer," X, March 21, 2024, <https://x.com/SuhagAShukla/status/1770836171544821903>; Suhag A. Shukla, (@SuhagAShukla), "My son is a graduating college senior in college studying for finals. This is unnecessary, but thankful that this is the extent of encampment nonsense on his campus. Free expression, yes; impinging on the rights of others, no," X, April 27, 2024, <https://x.com/SuhagAShukla/status/1784385966603743494>; Suhag A. Shukla, (@SuhagAShukla), "Here in #Montreal on the gorgeous @mcgill campus for this important, suddenly very relevant conference. My talk will unpack the genealogy, definitions & manifestations of #Hinduphobia—including its iterations on college campuses intersecting with #antisemitism," X, October 26, 2023, <https://x.com/SuhagAShukla/status/1717574554703348158>; Hindu American Foundation (@HinduAmerican), "HAF is confirming that the House @EdWorkforceCmte is investigating @RutgersU's @RUCSRR regarding unfettered antisemitism on campus. @RUCSRR frequently hosts events featuring close associate, Audrey Truschke, who has targeted & maligned Hinduism & the Hindu American community on campus and beyond," X, April 3, 2024, <https://x.com/HinduAmerican/status/177517503791788388>; Hindu American Foundation (@HinduAmerican), "Have a college bound kid? Ever hear of the '180'? Your child may confront colonial-era tropes & missionary rhetoric about Hinduism & India. If they push back, their viewpoints may be sidelined as 'subjective.' What to do or say? We've got a resource!" X, August 9, 2023, <https://x.com/HinduAmerican/status/1689244983088291840>; Hindu American Foundation (@HinduAmerican), "Suhag Shukla, representing the Hindu American Foundation, highlighted the prevalence of anti-Hindu bias, particularly on college campuses. Shukla also raised concerns about institutionalised discrimination, citing California's SB403 as an example," X, March 14, 2024, <https://x.com/HinduAmerican/status/1768301858643226988>; Suhag A. Shukla, (@SuhagAShukla), "Campus Left and the dismantling of the US academic institutions: A relook amid Israel-Hamas war. Thought provoking piece by @avatans," X, November 8, 2023, <https://x.com/SuhagAShukla/status/1722252088883954165>; Suhag A. Shukla, (@SuhagAShukla), "The idea that caste discrimination is pervasive in the US is a manufactured narrative by a few activists, woke Indians, and useful non-Indian idiots who have never seen a social justice cause they could say no to," A classic @razibkhan analysis!" X, February 23, 2023, <https://x.com/SuhagAShukla/status/1628835905246048258>.

238 See, for example, HAF's growing ties to an organization like JILV, described on page 18.

239 Of course, HAF has for long been comfortable associating with the Right; back in 2014, one of its volunteers, Vanila Singh, even ran for Congressional office on a pro-Modi Republican ticket, supported by the Republican Hindu Council's Shalabh Kumar. We quote Shukla, as such, to show a subtly different point: that HAF's desire to appear progressive has itself been reversed. See Carla Marinucci, "Indian PAC founder behind new candidate for Honda seat," *SFGate*, January 27, 2014, <https://www.sfgate.com/politics/article/indian-pac-founder-behind-new-candidate-for-honda-5180333.php>.

240 Mat McDermott, "Hobson's Choice: Is Denouncing Modi the Only Avenue for Acceptance for Hindu Americans?," *American Kahani*, October 17, 2023, <https://americankahani.com/perspectives/hobsons-choice-is-denouncing-modi-the-only-avenue-for-acceptance-for-hindu-americans/>.

241 See Mat McDermott, "Hobson's Choice."

The third challenge HAF identified was what McDermott described as a biased media.

242 Hindu American Foundation (@HinduAmerican), Video in X saying "We @HinduAmerican encounter challenges on multiple fronts: (1) Progressive movement's anti-India, anti-Hindu faction. (2) Activists spotlighting minority religious communities in India. (3) Mainstream media endorsing biases, sometimes at the expense of facts. (Part 1/4)," X, November 28, 2023, <https://x.com/HinduAmerican/status/172971320467722909>.

243 In the words of Dheepa Sundaram in the *Drexel Law Review*, Hindutva groups like HAF have advanced "strategic conflation of Hinduism and Hindutva to suggest criticism of the latter constitutes impugning the former." See Dheepa Sundaram, "An Academic Conference, A Bomb Threat, and A Title VI Complaint: U.S. Hindu Nationalist Groups' Litigious Assault on Academic Freedom," *Drexel Law Review* 16, No. 4 (2024): 840. Also see Aparna Gopalan, "The Hindu Nationalists Using the Pro-Israel Playbook," *Jewish Currents*, accessed June 15, 2024, <https://jewishcurrents.org/the-hindu-nationalists-using-the-pro-israel-playbook>.

244 Hindu American PAC, "About," <https://www.hinduamericanpac.com/about>.

245 Open Secrets, "Hindu American PAC PAC Contributions to Federal Candidates," <https://www.opensecrets.org/political-action-committees-pacs/hindu-american-pac/C00536615/candidate-recipients/2022>.

246 Steven Gardiner, "End Times Antisemitism." Political Research Associates, July 9, 2020, <https://politicalresearch.org/2020/07/09/end-times-antisemitism>; Bruce Wilson, "Nationally Prominent Mega-Pastor Hagee Claims Hitler Was a 'Half-Breed Jew,'" *HuffPost* (blog), December 7, 2017, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/nationally-prominent-evan_b_249279; Mother Jones, "He Claimed God Sent Hitler to Create Israel. Now He's Speaking at the pro-Israel Rally. What?," November 14, 2023, <https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2023/11/john-hagee-hitler-israel-rally-christian-zionist/>.

247 Such language has increasingly become popular among Hindu supremacists in the US, including the Hindutva ideologue Rajiv Malhotra. For example, in 2021, Malhotra hosted a conversation titled "Is Critical Race Theory Breaking America?" with Peter Boghossian, a US philosophy professor mostly known for his "hoax articles" and resignation from Portland State University because, in his view, universities have become "social justice factories." See Infinity Foundation Official, "Is Critical Race Theory Breaking America? | Rajiv Malhotra & Peter Boghossian," October 11, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=clb477m25Lg>.

248 David Brog, "Towards a Jewish-Hindu Alliance," *Jewish Journal*, January 26, 2023, <https://jewishjournal.com/commentary/opinion/355409/towards-a-jewish-hindu-alliance/>.

249 Mihir Meghani and David Brog, "Hindus and Jews on the American Dream," interview with David Suissa and Shanni Suissa, *L'Dor V'Dor With Shanni and David*, podcast audio, March 17, 2023, <https://jewishjournal.com/podcasts/357204/hindus-and-jews-on-the-american-dream/>.

250 Jaweed Kaleem, "Muslims Join Conservative Christians in Fight Over LGBTQ Rights - Los Angeles Times," *Los Angeles Times*, September 26, 2023, <https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2023-09-25/lgbtq-muslims-evangelical-republican-christians>; Ani Zonneveld, "Some Muslims Are Attacking LGBTQ Rights. They Don't Speak for All of Us," *Religion News Service*, June 16, 2023, <https://religionnews.com/2023/06/16/some-muslims-are-attacking-lgbtq-rights-they-dont-speak-for-all-of-us/>.

251 Meghani and Brog, "Hindus and Jews on the American Dream."

252 "Statewide Ethnic Studies Proposal Slammed by Critics," *CBS News*, August 14, 2019, <https://www.cbsnews.com/sacramento/news/ethnic-studies-curriculum-california-schools/>.

253 Suhag A. Shukla (@SuhagAShukla), "In 2020 when Cali passed a law requiring ethnic studies for all students to graduate high school, @HinduAmerican was part of a coalition that expressed trepidation. We knew that though the curriculum presented as a more inclusive approach to teaching the histories & contributions of diverse communities, it was actually a veil for something nefarious. The Ethnic Studies Council letter in the wake of the October 7th terrorist attacks on Israel shows exactly what we were opposing. @LiberatedESC," X, November 2, 2023, <https://x.com/SuhagAShukla/status/1720262856523022635?s=20>.

254 Raqib Hameed Naik, "Hindu Right-Wing Groups in US Got \$833,000 of Federal COVID Fund," *Al Jazeera*, April 2, 2021, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/4/2/hindu-right-wing-groups-in-us-got-833000-of-federal-covid-fund>; "Call for US Probe into Hindu Right-Wing Groups Getting COVID Fund," *Al Jazeera*, April 8, 2021, updated on April 27, 2021, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/4/8/call-for-us-probe-into-hindu-right-wing-groups-getting-covid-fund>.

255 Hindu American Foundation, "Hindus for Human Rights & Indian American Muslim Council Leaders, Rutgers Professor Audrey Truschke Sued for Defamation and Conspiracy against HAF," May 7, 2021, <https://www.hinduamerican.org/press/haf-defamation-lawsuit-iamc-hfhr-truschke>.

256 Dennis Hetzel and Brandi M. Snow, "SLAPP Suits," First Amendment Center at Middle Tennessee State University, September 11, 2023, <https://firstamendment.mtsu.edu/article/slapp-suits/>.

The law firm employed by HAF, Harder LLP, is known for filing retaliatory and spurious lawsuits against media outlets, and its other noteworthy clients include Harvey Weinstein, disgraced former Fox News CEO Roger Ailes, and several members of the Trump family. See: Katelyn Polantz, Sara Murray, and Ellie Kaufman, "Trump campaign's biggest legal costs are to firm that sues and threatens media," *CNN*, February 28, 2020, <https://www.cnn.com/2020/02/28/politics/charles-harder-trump-lawsuits/index.html>.

HAF has made no secret of its intentions—as evidenced by the fact that it held events celebrating the lawsuit with titles such as "How to Sue Your Haters." Indeed, HAF has continued to explicitly fundraise on the basis of these lawsuits, using them to whip up their donor constituencies and out-compete other Hindu supremacist groups for funding. For example, in HAF's 2023 Northern California fundraiser, HAF's leaders noted that the 3 lawsuits they had filed around the question of caste needed to be supported by half a million dollars in funding. See: "2023 Hindu American Foundation (HAF) NorCal Gala CoFounders Talk," Hindu American Foundation, November 14, 2023, YouTube video, 00:45:17, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bXltDPI3B2E>; Hindu American Foundation, "HAF Year End Event: The Power of Law," accessed August 23, 2024, <https://www.hinduamerican.org/events/year-end-event-2021>.

257 See Sundaram, "U.S. Hindu Nationalist Groups' Litigious Assault on Academic Freedom," 844.

258 Manan Ahmed Asif, Sriharsha Devulapalli, and Juan Francisco Saldarriaga, "Targeted Harassment of Academics by Hindutva: A Twitter Analysis of the India-US Connection," *Indian Muslims Today*, May 3, 2022, <https://dgh-tweet-study.github.io/>; Gerry Shih, "Inside the vast digital campaign by Hindu nationalists to inflame India," *The Washington Post*, September 26, 2023, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/09/26/hindu-nationalist-social-media-hate-campaign>.

259 Raju Rajagopal, "The gains of Dismantling Global Hindutva conference will help reclaim Hinduism," *The Print*, September 18, 2021, <https://theprint.in/opinion/the-gains-of-dismantling-global-hindutva-conference-will-help-reclaim-hinduism/735312/>.

260 Hindu American Foundation, "Title VI Complaint University of Pennsylvania," October 6, 2021, <https://www.hinduamerican.org/>

[wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Title-VI-Complaint.University-of-Pennsylvania.100621.pdf](https://www.hinduamerican.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Title-VI-Complaint.University-of-Pennsylvania.100621.pdf). Also see Priyanka Deo (@priyankadeo) and Hindu American Foundation (@hinduamerican), "A pro-Palestinian protest at the University of Pennsylvania turned contentious as speakers criticized pro-Israel counter-protesters following recent hostilities between Israel and Hamas..." Instagram, October 25, 2023, <https://www.instagram.com/p/Cy2PbPDOQA4/>.

However, Sundaram argues that the litigious responses of Hindutva groups must instead be seen in the context of "the lengthy history of these groups' campaigns against academics with whom they disagree, their assaults on critiques of casteism and Islamophobia, and their attempts to rewrite, and in some cases efface, historical understandings of Hinduism and Hindutva." See Sundaram, "U.S. Hindu Nationalist Groups' Litigious Assault on Academic Freedom," 841.

261 Often, these claims conflate a form of ideological safety with the physical safety of Hindu students. Sundaram notes that "In a bit of circular logic, Suhag Shukla, executive director of HAF, pointed to her own group's organized effort to disrupt this routine academic event as 'proof' for such an outlandish claim of harm," and that "Hindu Right groups offered no evidence for their claims that students had become targets, a sharp contrast to the many violent threats received and documented by conference organizers and participants." See Dheepa Sundaram, "Hindutva 2.0: How a Conference on Hindu Nationalism Launches a Change in Strategy for North American Hindutva Organizations," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 90 (4), December 2022: 809–814, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jaarel/lfad028>.

262 "Shifting Perspectives presented by the Hindu American Foundation," Hindu American Foundation, July 22, 2022, YouTube video, 00:12:38, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fa1pS2lyU9I>; Hindu American Foundation, "Shifting Perspectives," accessed August 23, 2024, <https://www.hinduamerican.org/events/shifting-perspectives>; Hindu American Foundation, "How Hindu parents can talk to their college-aged children about contentious issues," accessed August 23, 2024, <https://www.hinduamerican.org/faqs-parents-children-hinduism>.

263 Jewish Institute for Liberal Values, "About Us," accessed June 15, 2024, <https://jilv.org/about/>.

Among JILV's primary goals is the creation of a "strong counter-movement" against "the imposition of the Critical Social Justice ideology." JILV's FAQ page about "Critical Social Justice" (CSJ) is full of right-wing talking points about "wokeness" and "leftist identity politics," claiming that CSJ "disables criticism," "squashes intellectual curiosity," and "corrupts mainstream media outlets." JILV's board includes so-called "equity feminist" Christina Hoff Sommers, who has denied the existence of the gender wage gap and repeatedly collaborated with the alt-right and virulently misogynistic Men's Rights Activism (MRA) movement, as well as conservative pundit Bret Stephens, who has called antisemitism "the disease of the Arab mind."

(See Alex Amend, "Christina Hoff Sommers can't take a single line of criticism," *Hatewatch*, March 8, 2018, <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2018/03/08/christina-hoff-sommers-cant-take-single-line-criticism>; Bret Stephens, "The Meaning of an Olympic Snub," *The Wall Street Journal*, August 15, 2016, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-meaning-of-an-olympic-snob-1471303698>.)

Placed within the broader frame of far-right mobilizations against progressive movements, JILV's "Critical Social Justice" and HAF's "Critical Caste Theory" can be understood as Zionist and Hindu supremacist extensions of a broader far-right coalition against anti-racist pedagogy and organizing. Researchers and organizers in these movements must remain attuned to these expanding coalitions and the threat they pose.

264 Hindu American Foundation (@HinduAmerican), "Powerful words from @jilvorg's @76brandy76, who recently returned from a visit to #Israel with @SuhagAShukla, discussing the intersections of #Antisemitism, #Hinduphobia & anti-black racism," X, June 14, 2023, <https://x.com/HinduAmerican/status/1669073496750661634>; Sharaka (@sharakango), "Excited to welcome a multi-ethnic coalition for the Abraham Accords to Israel, w @jilvorg. Leaders from the Asian-American, African-American, Latino-American, Hindu-American, Muslim-American & Jewish American communities coming together."

Thanks @EranLerman for setting the stage," X, May 14, 2023, <https://x.com/sharakango/status/1657857551466102785?s=20>.

265 <https://indiapost.com/americans-for-hindus-a4h-group-organized-the-first-ever-hindu-american-political-engagement-summit-at-capitol-hill/>

266 Meghani and Brog, "Hindus and Jews on the American Dream."

267 Open Secrets, "Hindu American PAC PAC Contributions to Federal Candidates," accessed June 15, 2024, <https://www.opensecrets.org/political-action-committees-pacs/hindu-american-pac/C00536615/candidate-recipients/2022>; HAPAC, "About the PAC," accessed June 15, 2024, <https://www.hinduamericanpac.com/about>.

268 Sam Westrop and Clifford Smith, interview with Samir Kalra, *That's So Hindu*, podcast audio, June 11, 2020, <https://www.hinduamerican.org/blog/thats-so-hindu-episode-20-middle-east-forum-sam-westrop-clifford-smith>; Sam Westrop, "Why Hindus Should Be Paying Attention to Hamas' Funding Sources. Sam Westrop Explains," interview with Samir Kalra, *That's So Hindu*, podcast audio, December 21, 2023, <https://shows.acast.com/63c85c5e9ae24b0011601ab4/episodes/65721eb32442fa001240e943>.

269 See video of webinar in Marilyn Stern, "Samir Kalra on Islamists and Hinduphobia in America," Middle East Forum, November 5, 2020, <https://www.meforum.org/61743/kalra-on-islamists-and-hinduphobia-in-america>.

270 The description of one such episode, for example, is: "how Hamas raises money through charitable organizations in the West, and the connections with funding for Islamist groups in India and South Asia more broadly."

See Sam Westrop, "Why Hindus Should Be Paying Attention to Hamas' Funding Sources. Sam Westrop Explains."

Similar claims were made in Kalra's August 2020 appearance in which he claimed, without evidence, that a number of Muslim American groups, including the Indian American Muslim Council, are "Jamaat-e-Islami" groups. See Stern, "Samir Kalra on Islamists and Hinduphobia in America."

271 Israel Studies scholar Dov Waxman has called SWU, whose funders have also supported prominent Islamophobic organizations, a part of the "right-wing lobby" that "believes that [military force] should be applied ruthlessly and devastatingly when necessary" and which "tends to regard the Palestinians not as potential partners for peace, but as implacable foes of Israel." StandWithUs has led numerous smear campaigns against scholars, activists, and organizations that have been critical of Israel, especially on college campuses, including a recent high-profile case in which SWU accused an Arab-American professor at George Washington University of antisemitism—charges of which she was later cleared, with the university's investigation finding that SWU had "taken out of context and misrepresented" the professor's words and had "advocated for an expansive view of the definition of antisemitism, which, if accepted in the university environment, could infringe on free speech principles and academic freedom." See Eli Clifton, "Pro-Israel Group's Money Trail Veers Hard Right," *Inter Press Service*, October 21, 2009, <http://www.ipsnews.net/2009/10/politics-us-pro-israel-group39s-money-trail-veers-hard-right/>; Dov Waxman, "The Israel Lobbies: A Survey of the Pro-Israel Community in the United States," *Israel Studies Forum* 25, no. 1 (2010): 5–28; George Washington University Office of the President, "Summary of Findings of Independent Investigation by Crowell & Moring LLP," March 27, 2023, <https://president.gwu.edu/summary-findings-independent-investigation-crowell-moring-llp>.

272 Notably, the event was also cosponsored by both the VHP-A and its policy wing, HinduPACT: StandWithUs, "Hindu American Foundation and StandWithUs Event Brings Together Hindu and Jewish Communities," April 16, 2021, <https://www.standwithus.com/post/hindu-american-foundation-and-standwithus-event-brings-together-hindu-and-jewish-communities>.

273 StandWithUs, "Press Conference against UNHRC at UN October 27, 2022," October 27, 2022, <https://www.standwithus.com/post/press->

[conference-against-unhrc](https://www.standwithus.com/post/press-conference-against-unhrc).

274 The pamphlet conflates Hindus with the country of India in the same manner as it conflates Jews with the state of Israel. See: Shine A Light, "Shine A Light on Antisemitism & Hinduphobia: What Hindus and Jews Can Learn From Each Other (Session Two: From Online Hate to Real World Consequences)," archived via WayBack Machine, accessed August 25, 2024, <https://web.archive.org/web/20231202031837/https://shinealight.com/events/shine-a-light-on-antisemitism-hinduphobia-what-hindus-and-jews-can-learn-from-each-other-session-two-from-online-hate-to-real-world-consequences/>; Hindu American Foundation and StandWithUs, "Ten Things Jews and Hindus Have in Common," June 2022, https://www.hinduamerican.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Ten-Things_Jews-and-Hindus.pdf.

275 See, for example, a range of pro-Israel protests it participated in alongside other Zionist groups: Ananya Udaygiri, Kaushik Sampath, Cayden Gu and Kaushikee Nayudu, "Pro-Israel protesters rally against pro-Palestine encampment," *The Stanford Daily*, May 12, 2024, <https://stanforddaily.com/2024/05/12/pro-israel-protesters-rally-against-pro-palestine-encampment/>; Sangeetha Shankar (@Sangi_shankar21), "Participated on behalf of @HinduAmerican in the March 3rd Hindu-Jewish Unity March in SF with 10k community members. A powerful experience expressing strong Hindu solidarity against anti-semitism. Michigan Congressman @ShriThanedar spoke alongside many local leaders," X, March 11, 2024, https://twitter.com/Sangi_shankar21/status/1767335691485348108; Hindu American Foundation (@HinduAmerican), "HAF's @Sangi_shankar21 joined U.S. Congressional candidate @rishikumar1 along with @Stanford Hindu students at the Jewish student solidarity tent on White Plaza on the 1st night of #Hanukkah..." X, December 8, 2023, <https://x.com/HinduAmerican/status/1733202621387718952>; Hindu American Foundation (@HinduAmerican), "Standing together against antisemitism! Join HAF's Pawan Deshpande and The Bay Area in solidarity with the Jewish Community on March 3rd, 2024, from 1:30-4:30 PM in San Francisco at Embarcadero Plaza. Visit [#UnityMarchSF #BayAreaUnites #HinduAmerican](https://unitymarch.pulse.ly/7arupym99b)," X, February 21, 2024, <https://x.com/HinduAmerican/status/1760258086277701718>.

These included events and campaigns with Christian Zionist Groups, such as the Israel Christian Nexus and Eagles' Wings Ministries. See: Center for Combating Antisemitism, "Join the Campaign! Together Against Antisemitism," accessed August 25, 2024, <https://www.standuptohatred.com/>;

Rakesh Krishnan Simha (@ByRakeshSimha), "Jews, Christians and Hindus are coming to support Israel at Huntington Beach, California, on December 3. It is being co-organized by the Hindu American Foundation. Don't miss the opportunity to attend if you are in the area. Contact @HinduAmerican for more information," X, November 28, 2023, <https://x.com/ByRakeshSimha/status/1729407456017776652>.

276 Such as in Suhag Shukla (@SuhagAShukla), "A reminder that antisemitism and Hinduphobia emanate from the same deep recesses of hatred. If they look for it, @EdWorkforceCmte will find that the same centers mired in antisemitic programming also platform Hinduphobia," X, April 4, 2024, <https://x.com/SuhagAShukla/status/1775915642593460694>; and Hindu American Foundation (@HinduAmerican), "In episode 103 of That's so Hindu- HAF's Managing Director, Samir Kalra speaks with Carly Gammill, Director of the StandWithUs Center for Combating Antisemitism, about the marked increase in antisemitism expressed on US college campuses following the Hamas attack on Israel on October 7th, and what can be done about this situation. #hindu #hinduamerican #thatssohindu #Antisemitism," X, March 18, 2024, <https://x.com/HinduAmerican/status/1769709754840977719>.

277 Hindu American Foundation (@HinduAmerican), "HAF is confirming that the House @EdWorkforceCmte is investigating @RutgersU's @RUCSRR regarding unfettered antisemitism on campus. @RUCSRR frequently hosts events featuring close associate, Audrey Trusckie, who has targeted & maligned Hinduism & the Hindu American community on campus and beyond," X, April 3, 2024, <https://x.com/HinduAmerican/status/1775715703791788388/>.

278 The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace reported in 2020 that “While 29 percent of Indian American citizens classify themselves as moderate, a larger share of the remaining respondents place themselves on the ideological left: 11 percent identify as extremely liberal, 23 percent identify as liberal, and 13 percent identify as slightly liberal. The proportion of respondents situated on the right end of the ideological spectrum is much smaller: 4 percent identify as extremely conservative, 13 percent identify as conservative, and an additional 6 percent identify as slightly conservative.” See:

Sumitra Badrinathan, Devesh Kapur, and Milan Vaishnav, “How Will Indian Americans Vote? Results From the 2020 Indian American Attitudes Survey,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, October 14, 2020, <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2020/10/how-will-indian-americans-vote-results-from-the-2020-indian-american-attitudes-survey?lang=en>; “Staying the Course: Poll Finds Indian Americans Most Likely to Favor the Democrats in Midterm Elections,” *American Kahani*, July 27, 2022, <https://socialinnovation.ucr.edu/news/2022/07/27/staying-course-poll-finds-indian-americans-most-likely-favor-democrats-midterm>; and James Doubek and Noel King, “Despite Trump-Modi Friendship, Survey Says Indian Americans Back Biden,” *NPR*, October 27, 2020, <https://www.npr.org/2020/10/27/927828785/despite-trump-modi-friendship-survey-says-indian-americans-back-biden/>.

279 The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace showed that Modi’s approval rating was below 50% in 2020 (arguably the year where his popularity was at its peak). Hindu supremacist policies were also highly contested, with between 45% and 69% opposing the regime on questions related to the CAA/NRC, the use of repressive sedition laws, and police force on peaceful protesters. The survey also showed that support for Modi is unsurprisingly much lower among non-Hindus (Christians, Muslims, Sikhs, Buddhists, atheists, etc.), which represent 46% of the diaspora, and that a large percentage of Hindus also oppose Hindu supremacy. See: Sumitra Badrinathan, Devesh Kapur, and Milan Vaishnav, “How Do Indian Americans View India? Results From the 2020 Indian American Attitudes Survey,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, February 9, 2021, <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2021/02/how-do-indian-americans-view-india-results-from-the-2020-indian-american-attitudes-survey?lang=en/>.

Surveys conducted among adults in France, the UK, and the USA in 2024 also showed that large majorities in these countries disapproved of Modi and were concerned about the rise of Hindutva. See Irfan Nooruddin and Ritumbra Manuvie, “The Modi Mirage? Illusions and Reality of India’s Global Standing and Reputation,” accessed August 24, 2024, <https://modimirage.shorthandstories.com/>. Also see Platform for Indian Democracy, “Survey Reveals 52% of Indians in the UK Have a Negative View of PM Modi,” accessed August 25, 2024, <https://www.democracyforindia.org/news-from-home/survey-reveals-52-of-indians-in-the-uk-have-a-negative-view-of-pm-modi> for a survey specific to the UK that again showed that a “majority of respondents, especially women, reject Hindutva principles.”

280 The participation of RSS leader Ram Madhav and BJP leader Swapna Dasgupta at the 2024 National Conservatism Conference is only the most recent example of this. See National Conservatism, “Confirmed Speakers,” accessed August 25, 2024, <https://nationalconservatism.org/natcon-4-2024/confirmed-speakers/>.

281 Similar arguments have also been made in the case of other large diasporas, such as the Chinese American community, within which far right movements have also been ascendant. See Rong Xiaoping, “The Rise of the Chinese-American Right,” *National Review*, July 17, 2019, <https://www.nationalreview.com/2019/07/chinese-american-right-new-generations-immigrants>; Alex T. Tom, “Understanding the Chinese American Right,” *Lausan Collective*, October 27, 2020, <https://lausancollective.com/2020/understanding-the-chinese-american-right/>.

As we have demonstrated, a surface-level understanding of the Indian-American community will allow a group like HAF to continue to conflate Indianness with Hinduness, and Hindutva with a narrow, upper-caste, exclusionary ideology, and attempt to silence and crush all those who disagree. By contrast, the Savera coalition that has authored this report not only represents the true majority of the Indian American community, including Hindus, Muslims, Dalits, and secular organizations, but also

includes Black, Jewish, Asian and other partners who are committed to standing together in the fight against all forms of supremacy.

282 Matt McDermott, “HAF’s Wikipedia page lies about us. Here’s why and what it should say instead,” Hindu American Foundation, February 9, 2023, <https://www.hinduamerican.org/blog/our-wikipedia-page-lies>.

283 Campaign to Stop Funding Hate, “Unmistakably Sangh.”

Multiple independent research and journalistic sources have demonstrated Meghani’s ties to the HSC and VHP-A, to the extent that they are not disputed by Meghani or HAF. See: Hindu American Foundation, “If Wikipedia was accurate about our work, this is what it’d say...,” accessed August 25, 2024, <https://www.hinduamerican.org/wikipedia>; Mihir Meghani, “Mihir Meghani,” VHPA Videos, September 24, 2020, YouTube video, 00:06:18, <https://youtu.be/XS-prMmIRTA?si=jBzOD0RmshDhmql>; Rhea Rao, “No Hindu Left Behind is a Tall Order, Even in America,” *CUNY Academic Works*, December 16, 2016, https://academicworks.cuny.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1161&context=gj_etds; McDermott, “HAF’s Wikipedia Page Lies”; and Mihir Meghani (@mihirmeghani), “Friends, I can’t begin to tell you how challenging it was to be a proud and public Hindu in college at the University of Michigan back in 1990. Luckily, I found friends in the Hindu Students Council. Back then thought, there was no group like the Hindu American Foundation (HAF) to tell me what my rights were as a student...,” LinkedIn, February 23, 2024, https://www.linkedin.com/posts/mihirmeghani_friends-i-cant-begin-to-tell-you-how-challenging-activity-7166932601943912448-IL7m/.

284 Coalition Against Genocide, “Affiliations of Faith: Joined at the Hip,” 4.

The report outlines that Meghani emailed a report of the event to the VHP-A Governing Council detailing his interactions with other Sangh-affiliated groups, where he writes: “In December 1995, I attended the Vishwa Sangh Shibir 1995 in Baroda, Gujarat, Bharat (India), organized by Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). En route, RSS arranged a meeting with a delegation of 30 Khasi Hindus from Meghalaya that were touring the state of Maharashtra as part of RSS’s Bharat Mera Ghar (India is My Home) project.”

285 Dharendra K. Jha, “Shridhar Damle: Modi gave idea for RSS book; Promotions deliberately focused on white-skinned Andersen,” *Caravan*, September 7, 2018, <https://caravanmagazine.in/literature/shridhar-damle-modi-gave-idea-for-rss-book-promotions-deliberately-focused-on-white-skinned-andersen>.

286 Walter Andersen and Sridhar Dhamle, “How the RSS operates in foreign countries in general and the USA in particular,” *Scroll*, August 9, 2018, <https://scroll.in/article/889509/how-the-rss-operates-in-foreign-countries-in-general-and-the-usa-in-particular>. Damle has been a long-time *Sanghchalak* of the Chicago branch of the HSS. See: Ishita Bhatia, “Foreign nationals NRIs reach Meerut to attend mega RSS event,” *Times of India*, February 25, 2018, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/meerut/foreign-nationals-nris-reach-meerut-to-attend-mega-rss-event/articleshow/63070204.cms>; and Jha, “Sridhar Dhamle: Modi gave idea for RSS book.”

287 Andersen and Dhamle, “How the RSS operates.”

288 Meghani authored a piece about his time there in 1998: Mihir Meghani, “Tribal Tribulations,” *Hinduism Today*, April 1, 1998, <https://www.hinduismtoday.com/magazine/april-1998/1998-04-tribal-tribulations/>. The piece also points to the extent of time spent with the RSS by Meghani – he dates his first visit there, organized by the RSS, in 1995, and notes that he left in 1996. The original draft of this piece that he shared on the VHPA listserv (<https://web.archive.org/web/20091110042014/http://hindunet.org/archive/listmail-vhpgc-l>) says that he arranged his stay in Meghalaya through two RSS *pracharak*s.

289 Mihir Meghani, “Hindutva: The Great Nationalist Ideology,” BJP.org, archived via WayBack Machine, accessed August 25, 2024, <https://web.archive.org/web/19961030090528/www.bjp.org/bjp/htvintro-mm.html/>.

290 Meghani, “Hindutva.”

291 Meghani, “Hindutva.”

Meghani continued: "It is up to the Muslims whether they will be included in the new nationalistic spirit of Bharat. It is up to the government and the Muslim leadership whether they wish to increase Hindu furor or work with the Hindu leadership."

292 See Prema Kurien, *A Place at the Multicultural Table: The Development of an American Hinduism* (New Jersey, Rutgers University Press, 2007), 145.

293 Coalition Against Genocide, "Affiliations of Faith: Joined at the Hip."

Meghani has himself affirmed his past membership in the VHP-A's Governing Council, and repeatedly expressed how central an influence the VHP-A and the broader Hindu supremacist project has been for him personally. In a September 2020 video addressed to and published by the VHP-A, for example, Meghani extolled the influence the VHP-A had on him, explaining that "my exposure to Hinduism came from VHP-A... [and] it was from VHP-A that I learned about the evils of predatory proselytization and pseudo-secularism," and the extent to which its decades-long impact on him meant that "the cause" had become central to his own life. "Working for Hindu advocacy is an integral part of my life, not just when I'm awake in the day, but it's a part of my whole day, it's a part of my dreams, my aspirations, my hopes, my regrets, struggles." See Meghani, "Mihir Meghani."

294 It is no coincidence, moreover, that Rajiv Pandit, Rishi Bhutada, and Suhag Shukla, who have all been long-time influential figures at HAF, came from the HSC as well. See Coalition Against Genocide, "Affiliations of Faith: Joined at the Hip"; Coalition Against Genocide, "Affiliations of Faith: Hindu American Foundation"; and Campaign to Stop Funding Hate, "Unmistakably Sangh."

Shukla has admitted her ties to the HSC. See: Suhag Shukla, "Interview with Suhag Shukla Esq., Executive Director of Hindu American Foundation," interview with Mukunda Raghavan, Meru Media, September 21, 2019, YouTube video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1NiQwsgX6_l.

295 See Coalition Against Genocide, "Affiliations of Faith: Hindu American Foundation"; and Coalition Against Genocide, "Affiliations of Faith: Joined at the Hip." The full archive of emails is available online at VHP Governing Council, Listmail Archive, HinduNet, archived on WayBack Machine, accessed June 20, 2024, <https://web.archive.org/web/20091110042014/http://hindunet.org/archive/listmail-vhpgc-l>.

296 The extent of these ties in HAF's early days are evident, for example, in the fact that in 2003, the same year HAF was founded, two of HAF's earliest leaders and staffers—Nagendra Rao and HSS leader Ramesh Rao—were listed as co-authors of a defense of the fundraising wing of the Sangh, the India Development and Relief Fund (IDRF), after a 2002 report published the previous year traced the flow of millions of dollars from the innocuously-named IDRF to RSS-affiliated organizations in India. (Meghani as well as a fourth figure, Ashok Chowgule, were thanked in the acknowledgments; the latter is now the Working President [External] of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad [VHP] in India.) See <https://web.archive.org/web/20040813201841/http://letindiadevelop.org/thereport/authors.html>; and LinkedIn, "Experience | Nagendra Rao," accessed August 25, 2024, <https://www.linkedin.com/in/nagendrasrao/details/experience/>.

Moreover, two other individuals – Nagendra Rao and Sanjay Garg – have also been listed in other documents as HAF co-founders, and both also have strong ties to Sangh organizations and to Hindu Supremacist ideology.

Garg has worked with the Infinity Foundation and WAVES (World Association for Vedic Studies), both institutions with strong ties to the American Sangh and the global Hindu supremacist movement. See SvAbhinava, "Sanjay Garg," accessed August 25, 2024, <https://www.svabhinava.org/HinduCivilization/SanjayGarg/index.ph>.

Rao, meanwhile, regularly posts pro-RSS content on Facebook – including a post that could not be more explicit, titled: "GLORY TO THE RASHTRIYA SWAYAMSEVAK SANGH (RSS) AND THE SANGH PARIVAR." See Nagednra S. Rao (Nagendra.S.Rao), "GLORY TO THE RASHTRIYA SWAYAMSEVAK SANGH (RSS) AND THE SANGH PARIVAR It is the only pan

Indian unswerving Sanatana Dharma organization with political clout that Hindus have. It will never let Hinduism down...," Facebook, May 13, 2016, <https://archive.ph/wY6uM>.

However, HAF's acknowledgment of their roles has been inconsistent, and their influence in the organization appears to have been limited. For example, Garg and Rao are mentioned in McDermott, "HAF's Wikipedia Page Lies," but not on HAF's main About page: Hindu American Foundation, "About the Hindu American Foundation," accessed August 25, 2024, <https://www.hinduamerican.org/about>.

Finally, although Meghani has tried to downplay his role in HAF, the leading role that he played in establishing the organization, after having conceived of the idea for the organization in VHP-A circles, has been corroborated by other members of HAF leadership. In September 2019, for example, HAF cofounder and Executive Director Suhag Shukla described the organization's founding: "Aseem [Suhag Shukla's husband] got a call from Mihir, saying 'Hey listen, I'm trying to pull together like-minded people because I feel there's a void that needs to be met, and that is having an organization that ultimately will be built into an institution that serves the needs of not only Hindus here at home, and not just in India, but globally.'"

See Suhag Shukla, "Interview with Suhag Shukla Esq., Executive Director of Hindu American Foundation."

Meghani's key role at HAF is also visible in the large amounts he donates to the organization and his role in the broader fundraiser effort. At HAF's Bay Area fundraisers, for example, Meghani has been known to announce hefty six-figure donations to HAF, or make public commitments to donate 25% of his annual income to HAF every year in the hope of encouraging others to follow suit. See Indo American News, "Hindu American Foundation's Annual Gala 2018," April 12, 2018, <https://www.indoamerican-news.com/hindu-american-foundations-annual-gala-2018/>; "Rousing Speeches at HAF's 8th Fundraiser," *IndiaPost*, archived via WayBack Machine, <https://web.archive.org/web/20121115211841/https://indiapost.com/rousing-speeches-at-hafs-8th-fundraiser/>.

In fact, in a November 2023 statement where Meghani pledged to take his total giving to \$4 million, Meghani noted that HAF hopes to reach a budget of \$5 million next year, and \$20 million by the end of the decade. See Appendix D for more details.

297 Hindu American Foundation, "South Asia Citizens Web."

298 Hindu American Foundation, "The Coalition Against Genocide: A Nexus of Hinduphobia Unveiled," March 7, 2013, https://www.hinduamerican.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Coalition_Against_Genocide_A_Nexus_of_HinduphobiaUnveiled.pdf.

299 Priya Pandit (@priyaspanidit), "Just finished an incredible dialogue with @rammadhav_. Under the current leadership, India's global standing has soared—whether through diplomacy, innovation, or trade. Yet India's truest wealth lies in its civilizational values & religious freedom—a fact now recognized globally," X, September 22, 2023, <https://x.com/priyaspanidit/status/1705406396794101916>; Hindu American Foundation, "Advisory Committee."

300 Rohini Swamy, "Out of Favour in the BJP, Ram Madhav Makes a Comeback in RSS," *ThePrint*, March 20, 2021, <https://theprint.in/politics/out-of-favour-in-the-bjp-ram-madhav-makes-a-comeback-in-rss/625412/>.

301 Mihir Meghani (@mihirmeghani), "Dr. David Frawley – thanks for sharing this information about the work of the world's largest volunteer social service organization, the RSS, during #COVID19," Facebook, May 24, 2020, <https://archive.ph/TsGoX>.

302 Mihir Meghani, "Mihir Meghani," VHPA Videos, September 24, 2020, YouTube video, 00:06:18, <https://youtu.be/XS-prMmlRTA?si=jBzODORmshDhnmqL>.

303 Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America, "VHPA Membership Form," Aplos, accessed June 20, 2024, <https://app.aplos.com/aws/give/VHPA/membership>.

304 McDermott, "Letter to the Editor of India Abroad."

305 For more on these leaders and their supremacist affiliations, see Savera's previous reports on the VHP-A: Savera, "Reports."

306 Meghani, "Hindutva."

307 Kashmir Hindu Foundation (@kashmirhindufoundation), "Mihir Meghani, Board Member & Co-founder Hindu American Foundation, speaking at Kashmir Hindu Foundation. Great supporters of Kashmiri Hindu causes," Facebook, August 28, 2019, Facebook video, <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1485186484939414>.

308 Mihir Meghani, "Dismantling Merit: Origins of Marxism in America," Infinity Foundation Official, August 24, 2023, YouTube video, 1:08:58, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L4n5iy6wTb0>.

309 See Savera, "The Global VHP's Trail of Violence," 44.

310 HinduACTion, "HinduACTion Virtual Gala featuring GOP Presidential Candidate Vivek Ramaswamy | Diya TV," Diya TV, May 21, 2023, YouTube video, 3:24:54, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EnhLI-76AOE>.

311 Meghani has attested not only to donating to the VHP-A, but also to Sangh-affiliated groups like IDRF. See: Mihir Meghani, "Letter to the editor," *IndiaWest*, April 4, 2003, archived on WayBack Machine, https://web.archive.org/web/20110728121714/http://www.letindiadevelop.org/LettersToEditors/4_IndiaWest_April42003.shtml.

312 Mihir Meghani, "Exclusive Interview | Dr. Mihir Meghani Advocates for Strong Hindu-American Voice in the US," *India Abroad*, November 26, 2023, YouTube video, 00:08:40, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_XeC_Rn5Q8Y.

313 HAF claims: "HAF co-founder and board member Dr. Mihir Meghani has no affiliation or formal ties to Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh USA, contrary to a categorical statement in the Initiative's 'factsheet.' Dr. Meghani is neither a member of Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh USA, nor is that organization one that offers membership."

See: "HAF Responds to Bridge Initiative Accusations of Islamophobia," Hindu American Foundation, June 29, 2021, <https://www.hinduamerican.org/press/bridge-initiative-georgetown-response-letter>; Mat McDermott, "HAF's Wikipedia Page Lies."

314 Hindu American Foundation, "Lies about HAF in Oxford Research Encyclopedias Remain Uncorrected Eight Months after Publishers Were Informed," July 18, 2023, <https://www.hinduamerican.org/press/lies-about-hindu-american-foundation-oxford-research-encyclopedia>.

315 Ramesh Rao et al., "A Factual Response to the Hate Attack on the India Development and Relief Fund (IDRF)" (Friends of India, July 23, 2004), archived on Wayback Machine, accessed August 16, 2024, <https://web.archive.org/web/20040723213627/http://www.letindiadevelop.org/thereport/authors.html>.

316 Meghani asked for HSS support "so that we have a better set of data" to make claims about bullying faced by Hindu children. The "earlier data," Meghani wrote to the HSS, "was very useful to the work of HAF & HEF [the education wing of the HSS] in the CA textbook fight over the past few years." See Sivaji Turimella, "Fwd: [Nj-vibhag-team] Fwd: [HSS_Pravasikaryakarta] Fwd: Request for HSS: forward the bullying survey," Sarvagana Shakha, Google Group, February 12, 2018, https://groups.google.com/g/sarvagana-shakha/c/r_r_EmojVgXA/m/v0wIAQBUCwAJ.

317 Mihir Meghani, "Dismantling Merit." *Guru Dakshina* is a Sanskrit word denoting a tradition of repaying one's teacher or guru after a period of study or the completion of formal education, but in the RSS and HSS the "guru" is in fact the Saffron Flag, and the concept is used in the RSS and HSS "to arrange finance for the functioning of the organisation." See: "Guru Purnima 2022: Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and Significance of Gurudakshina," *Organiser*, July 13, 2022, <https://organiser.org/2022/07/13/89134/culture/guru-purnima-2022-rashtriya-swayamsevak-sangh-and-significance-of-gurudakshina/>.

318 Hindu American Foundation, "2023 Hindu American Foundation (HAF) NorCal Gala." Meghani has similarly reached out to the HSS and other Sangh Parivar groups for support in a variety of other campaigns. For example, emails forwarded to a public Google Groups page show Meghani reaching out to other Sangh groups for support on HAF's campaign targeting the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), as well as in their efforts to oppose a Seattle City Council Resolution criticizing India's discriminatory Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA). See Pranav Joshi, "Fwd: [HSS_Pravasikaryakarta] Fwd: Call Your Representative: Terrorist Sympathizer Authors US Government Report on India," Hindu Yuva SJSU, Google Group, July 17, 2017, <https://groups.google.com/g/hinduyuvajsu/c/skVP-TIX00/m/r6mloZyBBQAJ>; Ramesh Kolli, "Fw: Extremely Urgent: Join Seattle CAA Community Coalition Letter," West Chase Volleyball, Google Groups, January 31, 2020, <https://groups.google.com/g/westchasevolleyball/c/iPutOu9Gfdo/m/nxYRRgu1EWaj>.

319 The leadership positions held by Bhutada include Vice President; Vice President of Public Relations; Outreach Director of the Hindu Students Council Texas Chapter; and the HSC Southwest Regional Coordinator. See: Coalition Against Genocide, "Affiliations of Faith: Joined at the Hip."

E-mails sent by Rishi Bhutada's uncle Vijay Pallod on Rishi's behalf to the VHP-A's governing council list-serv in 1998 also demonstrate that Bhutada, like Meghani, took the same path through the HSS and VHP-A into HAF, as previous reports have demonstrated. See Vijay Pallod (pallod@aol.com) to VHP Governing Council (vhp-gc-l@hindunet.org), "Media Opinion from High School Student Rishi Bhutada," <https://web.archive.org/web/20091110042014/http://hindunet.org/archive/listmail-vhp-gc-l>.

In the emails, Bhutada, like Meghani, entreated the VHP-A to build a more sophisticated operation in the United States, and develop strategies to counteract negative public opinion by developing more PR-savvy ways of operating.

320 Hindu American Foundation, "South Asia Citizens Web."

321 See Yatindra Bhatnagar, "VHP Camp in Houston Energizes the Youth," *India Herald*, n.d., accessed June 20, 2024, <https://india-herald.com/vhp-camp-in-houston-energizes-the-youth-p2335-1.htm>; Kalyani Giri, "Another Successful Hindu Heritage Camp," *India Herald*, n.d., accessed June 20, 2024, <https://india-herald.com/another-successful-hindu-heritage-camp-p779-1.htm>; "VHP Camp Counselors 2010," *India Herald*, n.d., accessed June 20, 2024, <https://india-herald.com/vhp-camp-counselors-p2293-1.htm>.

322 Vasooda Kumar, "Vishwa Dharma Ki Jai," Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America, n.d., archived on Wayback Machine, <https://web.archive.org/web/20110813031258/https://camps.vhp-america.org/vishwa-dharma-ki-jai/>.

For examples of the term's use by the RSS and HSS, see: Deepak Ram, "RSS Prarthna - Namaste Sada Vatsale नमस्ते सदा वत्सले (संघ प्रार्थना) | RSS Prayer | Deepak Ram," Ambey Bhakti, February 5, 2020, YouTube video, 00:03:29, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o6chr6QHd38>; Manu Shah, "A Tribute to Jagdish Chandra Sharda," *Indo American News*, January 4, 2018, <https://www.indoamerican-news.com/a-tribute-to-jagdish-chandra-sharda/>; and Balagokulam, "Prarthana," Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh USA, accessed June 20, 2024, <http://www.balagokulam.org/teach/prarthana/prarthana.pdf>.

323 Giri, "Another Successful Hindu Heritage Camp."

324 Sharad Amin, "Genesis of Houston's Hindu youth camp," *India Herald*, July 22, 2009, p. 11.

325 Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America, "Family Camps," Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America, n.d., archived on Wayback Machine, <https://web.archive.org/web/20240419025153/https://camps.vhp-america.org/>. See also: Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America, "Vivekananda Family Camp," accessed June 20, 2024, <https://vhpfamilycamp.com/>; and Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America, DC Chapter, "Camp," accessed June 20, 2024, <https://dc.vhp-america.org/camp/> for similar camps run by the VHPA in other cities.

326 Giri, "Another Successful Hindu Heritage Camp."

327 See Star Pipe Products, "Contact Us," accessed August 16, 2024, <https://www.starpipeproducts.com/contactus.asp>; and Hindu Heritage Youth Camp – Houston (@HHYCHouston), "Namaste! Good news everybody!!! HHYC is bringing back their annual lock-in for the winter holidays. The overnight lock-in will be a chance to reunite with all your camp friends and make many more! We'll be meeting up at Keshav Smruti and then moving over to Laserzone where we'll have various activities to do, including Laser Tag and a few discussion sessions on Hinduism. Who: All High Schoolers (9th grade and up) When: Jan 5th – Jan 6th Drop-Off: Keshav Smruti by 9:30 PM (4018 Westhollow Pkwy, Houston, TX 77082) Pick-Up: LaserZone by 7 AM (4125 Hwy 6, Sugar Land, TX 77478) Sign up: hinducamp.com If you have any questions please email us at info@hinducamp.com. Spots are limited so be sure to sign up!", Facebook, December 12, 2017, <https://www.facebook.com/HHYCHouston/photos/a.868733713162898/1509824595720470/?type=3&l>.

328 Bhutada was earlier named a Vice President, but his title has since been updated. See ProPublica, "Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh U S A Inc," accessed August 16, 2024, <https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/521647017>; Haider Kazim, "Ramesh Bhutada: Seeking Higher Goals Through Business Skills," *Indo American News*, September 6, 2018, <https://www.indoamerican-news.com/ramesh-bhutada-seeking-higher-goals-through-business-skills/>; Seshadri Kumar, "Ramesh Bhutada: Pioneer places Philanthropy over Bottom Line," *India Herald*, n.d., <https://india-herald.com/ramesh-bhutada-pioneer-places-philanthropy-over-bottom-line-p1992-1.htm>; and Ram Vishwanathan, "Saffron, Red and Blue: How the American Sangh hopes to win the 2020 US elections," *Caravan*, October 29, 2020, <https://caravanmagazine.in/politics/how-the-american-sangh-hopes-to-win-the-2020-elections>.

329 See Pieter Friedrich, "All in the Family: The American Sangh's affair with Tulsi Gabbard," *Caravan*, August 1, 2019, <https://caravanmagazine.in/politics/american-sangh-affair-tulsi-gabbard/>.

330 Jawahar Malhotra, "An Outsized Birthday Celebration Portrays Jugal Malani's Love of People!," *Indo American News*, April 14, 2023, <https://www.indoamerican-news.com/an-outsized-birthday-celebration-portrays-jugal-malanis-love-of-people/>.

331 Friedrich, "All in the Family."

332 "US lawmakers, Indian-Americans congratulate Modi," *Economic Times*, May 17, 2014, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/us-lawmakers-indian-americans-congratulate-modi/articleshow/35244990.cms?from=mdr>; Haider Kazim, "Community Expects a Larger Role for NRIs in Modi Government Indo-Americans See Exit Polls as Beginning of a New Era in India," *Indo American News*, May 15, 2014, <https://www.indoamerican-news.com/community-expects-a-larger-role-for-nris-in-modi-government-indo-americans-see-exit-polls-as-beginning-of-a-new-era-in-india/>.

333 Hindu American Foundation, "Advisory Committee."

334 Friedrich, "All in the Family"; Yelp, "Vhp of America," accessed August 16, 2024, <https://www.yelp.com/biz/vhp-of-america-houston>; ProPublica, "Subhash & Saroj Charitable Foundation: Full text of "Full Filing" for fiscal year ending Dec. 2021," accessed August 16, 2024, <https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/202034851/202240899349100624/full>.

335 Amit Misra, "HSS Continues Call for Help for Victims of Katrina," *Hinduism Today*, September 6, 2005, <https://www.hinduismtoday.com/hpi/2005/09/06/2005-09-06-hss-continues-call-for-help-for-victims-of-katrina/>; Yelp, "Vhp of America"; Sewa International, "Family Services Workshop – Recent Trends in Teen Drug Use," accessed June 21, 2024, <https://sewaua.org/event-3619198>; Vivekananda Kendra Kanyakumari, "Talk on the Family: Problems and Pitfalls," blog post, September 5, 2012, <https://blog.vrmvk.org/2012/09/talk-on-family-problems-and-potentials.html>; Raju Rajagopal, "Parliament of World's Religions: RSS-Linked Nivedita Bhide Dropped from the Speaker's List," *The Wire*, September 10, 2023, <https://thewire.in/religion/parliament-of-worlds-religions-rss-linked-nivedita-bhide-dropped-from-the-speakers-list>;

Vivekananda Yoga Anusandhana Samsthana, "Affiliated Centers—International," archived on WayBack Machine, accessed June 21, 2024, <https://web.archive.org/web/20220426205253/https://vyasa.org/index.php/affiliated-centers/international>; Hindu Heritage Youth Camp – Houston (@HHYCHouston), "Namaste! Good news everybody!!!"

336 Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh, "Outreach Programs," accessed August 16, 2024, <https://www.hssus.org/outreach-programs/>; Google Maps, "Keshav Smruti," accessed August 16, 2024, <https://maps.app.goo.gl/16Z2QLdhkKrQMAhc6>.

337 Seshadri Kumar, "HGH Recognizes 2019 Hindu Youth Award Recipients," *India Herald*, November 25, 2019, <https://india-herald.com/hgh-recognizes-hindu-youth-award-recipients-p7279-1.htm>.

338 Pieter Friedrich, "Money Trail: Diaspora Diplomacy's Financial Whitewashing of Hindutva," *The Polis Project*, September 27, 2020, <https://www.thepolisproject.com/read/money-trail-diaspora-diplomacys-financial-whitewashing-of-hindutva/>; Rashmee Kumar, "The Network of Hindu Nationalists Behind Modi's "Diaspora Diplomacy" in the U.S.," *The Intercept*, September 25, 2019, <https://theintercept.com/2019/09/25/howdy-modi-trump-hindu-nationalism/>.

339 Rishi Bhutada, "Rishi Bhutada – Board of Directors, Hindu American Foundation," Biyani Photo & Cinema, March 7, 2020, Vimeo video, 00:01:09, <https://vimeo.com/396195125>.

340 ProPublica, "Aggarwal & Gupta Family Foundation Inc," accessed June 20, 2024, https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/display_990/593623323/2008_10_EO%2F59-3623323_990_200711.

341 The other foundation is the Puran Devi Aggarwal Family Foundation Inc, headquartered at the same address and run by an overlapping set of directors. See ProPublica, "Puran Devi Aggarwal Family Foundation Inc," accessed August 16, 2024, <https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/204670236>.

342 For example, a 2015 article described Aggarwal as among "the most generous and valuable benefactors of Ekal." This record goes back to the early 2000s, when Aggarwal donated \$365,000 to the RSS-run Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation, and was invited to India to meet major political leaders as a guest of honor. This is further corroborated in Aggarwal's foundations own IRS filings, which show millions of dollars donated to the Sangh across two decades.

See "Ekal Movement Marches Ahead with Progress," *India Herald*, September 15, 2006, india-herald.com/ekal-movement-marches-ahead-with-progress-p1054-1.htm; "Ekal Vidyalaya Turns Vivekananda's Words into Actions," *India Herald*, October 7, 2005, india-herald.com/ekal-vidyalaya-turns-vivekanandas-words-into-action-p815-1.htm; "Ekal Foundation Reports Higher Donations," *India Herald*, April 20, 2011, india-herald.com/ekal-foundation-reports-higher-donations-p2565-1.htm; ProPublica, "Puran Devi Aggarwal Family Foundation Inc," accessed June 20, 2024, <https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/204670236>; ProPublica, "Aggarwal & Gupta Family Foundation Inc," accessed June 20, 2024, <https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/593623323>; Stop Hindutva in America, "Hindu American Foundation," accessed August 19, 2024, <https://www.stophindutvainamerica.com/hindutva-network/hindu-american-foundation/>.

343 Rahul Chandra, "'Organize Hindu Temples & Deploy Learned Priests' – An Interview with Braham Rattan Aggarwal, President – Hindu University of America," *World Hindu News*, April 16, 2014, <https://www.worldhindunews.com/organize-hindu-temples-deploy-learned-priests-an-interview-with-braham-rattan-aggarwal-president-hindu-university-of-america/>.

Also see: "Florida Hindus join in celebration of Christmas," *India Herald*, n.d., india-herald.com/florida-hindus-join-in-celebration-of-christmas-p346-1.htm.

344 All this information is sourced from publicly available IRS 990 records and newspaper articles. See, for some examples: ProPublica, "Aggarwal & Gupta Family Foundation Inc"; "Ekal Vidyalaya Turns Vivekananda's Words into Actions"; "Ekal Foundation Reports Higher Donations."

345 Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America, "VHPA History and Milestones," accessed June 20, 2024, <https://www.vhp-america.org/about-vhpa/vhpa-history-and-milestones/>; Gaurang Vaishnav, "I Have Miles to Go before I Sleep," *Hindu Vishwa* 47, no. 2 (April-June 2017), 5, <https://www.vhp-america.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Hindu-Vishwa-Apr-June-2017-Inside-Pages.pdf#page=5>.

346 For evidence of Ekal Vidyalaya's affiliation to the RSS, see: "RSS Inspired Ekal Vidyalayas, a People's Education Movement in One-Teacher Schools, Inches Closer to 100000 Mark," *Organiser*, June 4, 2019, <https://www.organiser.org/Encyc/2019/6/4/RSS-Inspired-Ekal-Vidyalayas-inches-closer-to-one-lakh-mark.html>; and Snigdendhu Bhattacharya, "How One-Teacher Ekal Schools Helped the Spread of Hindutva in Rural West Bengal," *Caravan*, October 10, 2020, <https://caravanmagazine.in/politics/ekal-vidyalaya-abhiyan-rss-fits-vhp-hindutva-west-bengal-trinamool-bjp>.

347 Vatsalyagram, "Our Founders," accessed June 20, 2024, <https://vatsalyagram.org/our-founders/>; Alisha Rahaman Sarkar, "New Jersey Church Cancels Event with 'Divisive' Hindu Supremacist After Backlash," *The Independent*, September 12, 2022, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/new-jersey-church-rithambara-babri-masjid-b2165102.html>.

348 For example, Aggarwal has hosted former VHP Working President S. Vedantam at his home in Florida, and later even traveled to Chennai to felicitate Vedantam when he became the International Working President of the VHP. Aggarwal also has close relationships with Baba Ramdev, and sits on the board of his foundation, Patanjali Yogpeeth USA, along with other major Sangh members like Ramesh Bhutada and Jugal Malani. In 2017, Aggarwal traveled to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and, like other figures covered in this report, even went to India to receive training from the central RSS at the Vishwa Sangh Shibir in Ahmedabad in 2005-06. Aggarwal has also been associated with campaigns to support the election campaigns of Narendra Modi.

See "Florida Tornado couldn't deter the spirit of Indian Americans in supporting GIBV hosted 'Vote for India' Narendra Modi as PM Program," *World Hindu News*, April 4, 2014, <https://www.worldhindunews.com/florida-tornado-couldnt-deter-the-spirit-of-indian-americans-in-supporting-gibv-hosted-vote-for-india-narendra-modi-as-pm-program/>; Comment by Vedantam S (profile ID 100009489516947), "Dear Aggarwalji, Sweet and pleasant memories of my meeting you at your house, staying with you enjoying your hospitality at Florida, your support to our Ekal Vidyalaya. Your participation at Chennai in the programme felicitation on my becoming the Int'l working president of VHP and so on. Dear Aggarwal ji You are simply great. I am now, 87 young and bless you a long healthy prosperous life. With best wishes and regards Vedantam," on Braham Aggarwal (braham.aggarwal), profile picture update April 21, 2017, Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/braham.aggarwal/posts/10208004500260614:0>; Hindu University of America, "Mr. Braham Aggarwal," accessed June 20, 2024, <https://www.hua.edu/people/mr-braham-r-aggarwal/>; ProPublica, "Pyp Yog Foundation Inc Nfp," accessed June 20, 2024, <https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/260718985>; Ambika Khanna, "Swami Ramdev's Yog Science Camp in Dallas," *India Herald*, n.d., india-herald.com/swami-ramdevs-yog-science-camp-in-dallas-p2303-1.htm; Manu Shah, "Swami Ramdev Hailed as the Architect of the 2014 Election," *Indo American News*, June 5, 2014, <https://www.indoamerican-news.com/swami-ramdev-hailed-as-the-architect-of-the-2014-election/>; "Houstonians Meet Prime Minister Modi," *India Herald*, February 5, 2017, india-herald.com/houstonians-meet-prime-minister-modi-p5533-1.htm; "510 Overseas Hindus Attend Camp for Sevaks," *India Herald*, n.d., india-herald.com/overseas-hindus-attend-camp-for-sevaks-p889-1.htm. As mentioned previously, in order to attend the event, HSS workers must complete three Sangh Shiksha Varg training camps within the US.

349 VHP America (@VHPANews), "As part of #HinduHeritageMonth2023 we are honoring 12 distinguished #Hindus with #AmericanHinduLifetimeContributionAward," X, September 27, 2023, <https://x.com/VHPANews/status/1707207727645102104>.

350 For example, in her years as Director of VWEF, Shukla sat alongside the likes of Abhinav Dwivedi, a high-ranking VHP-A and HSS member, and Chandresh Saraiya, the former president of Ekal Vidyalaya USA,

who himself became a HAF donor later. (For evidence connecting Dwivedi and Saraiya to the American Sangh, see Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh USA, "Over 1700 Hindus come together in Tampa for Hindu Sangam," accessed August 19, 2024, <https://www.hssus.org/2017/08/29/over-1700-hindus-come-together-tampa-hindu-sangam/>; Yogesh Rathi, "Hindu-American Youth Gather for Annual HSS Camp," *Atlanta Dunia*, January 10, 2005, <https://www.atlantadunia.com/dunia/News/n146.htm>; <https://www.vhp-america.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/hindu-vishwa-jul-sep-2021-small.pdf>, <https://www.ekal.org/us/newsletter/newsletter-oct-2007>).

During her time on the VWEF board, Shukla oversaw the transfer of VWEF funds to multiple Sangh organizations: \$45,700 was transferred to the RSS's service wing in India, Sewa Bharti Bhopal, between 2006-2008; \$10,500 to the HSS in 2008; and \$10,000 to VHP-A in 2006.

See VWEF's filings from 2006-2008. ProPublica, "Aggarwal & Gupta Family Foundation Inc," https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/display_990/593623323/2007_11_EO%2F59-3623323_990_200611, https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/display_990/593623323/2008_10_EO%2F59-3623323_990_200711, https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/display_990/593623323/2009_11_EO%2F59-3623323_990_200811.

351 In 2005, for example, HAF had cumulatively raised \$186,131.

See VWEF's filings from 2008, and HAF's from 2005-08. ProPublica, "Hindu American Foundation," accessed June 20, 2024, <https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/680551525>; ProPublica, "Aggarwal & Gupta Family Foundation Inc."

352 See HAF's 2008 filing, ProPublica, "Hindu American Foundation." These growing relationships coincided with HAF's growing involvement in the California textbooks case, where, as we detail later in this report, it worked closely with the HSS to rewrite Indian history in line with Hindu supremacist fictions.

See: Itika Sharma Punit, "Hindu Groups in California Oppose the Proposed Revisions to School Textbooks," *Quartz*, April 25, 2016, <https://qz.com/india/666103/hindu-groups-in-california-oppose-the-proposed-revisions-to-school-textbooks/>; Thaker, "The Latest Skirmish;" Bose, "Hindutva Abroad."

In 2006, HAF cited its lawsuit against the California Board of Education in its fundraising pleas, and instituted a "HAF Legal Defense and Education Fund Drive" as well. The use of expensive lawsuits to appeal to donors and increase fundraising has since been a regular part of HAF's strategy. See Hindu American Foundation, "Hindu American Foundation Updates Community on Progress in California Textbook Issue," February 4, 2006, archived on WayBack Machine, accessed June 20, 2024, https://web.archive.org/web/20081010172944/http://www.hafsite.org/media_press_release_california_update.htm.

353 See Part VII of the VWEF's IRS 990 forms for those years. ProPublica, "Aggarwal & Gupta Family Foundation Inc."

354 See Part IV, Schedule A, of VWEF's IRS 990 forms. ProPublica, "Aggarwal & Gupta Family Foundation Inc."

Again, this evidence runs counter to the way HAF leaders have attempted to brush off their ties to VWEF. According to HAF, Shukla and Joshi "limited their interactions exclusively to the management of the Hindu University of America, an institution of unique importance to the Hindu American community" — omitting to mention that the HUA was a project of the VHP-A, as well as the deep financial links, in the hundreds of thousands of dollars, between HAF and VWEF.

355 For example, in Chicago, Bharat and Panna Barai, VHP-A leaders and close associates of PM Modi himself, have hosted fundraisers for HAF. Sunthar Visuvalingam & Elizabeth Chalier, "HAF Hosted Fundraising Event in Chicago," *India Post*, February 21, 2020, <https://www.indiapost.com/haf-hosted-fundraising-event-in-chicago/>; Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America, *Hindu Vishwa* 47, no. 2 (April-June 2017), <https://hinduvishwa.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Hindu-Vishwa-Apr-June-2017-Inside-Pages.pdf>; Nirav Patel and Madhu Patel, "Community Celebrates Dr Barai's 75th Birthday," *India Post*, May 12, 2022, <https://indiapost.com/community-celebrates-dr-barais-75th-birthday/?amp>.

356 The Bhutada Family Foundation is run by Ramesh Bhutada, his wife Kiran Bhutada, and his son Rishi Bhutada, who come from a family with deep ties to the Sangh. Rishi Bhutada, like Meghani, has long been an influential figure at HAF, occupying a place on its board of directors for over a decade. His father, Ramesh Bhutada, is a prominent figure in the American Sangh and the joint president of the HSS. See Kazim, "Ramesh Bhutada: Seeking Higher Goals": and Kumar, "Ramesh Bhutada: Pioneer Places Philanthropy."

The elder Bhutada has actively campaigned for Modi and the BJP, while the younger Bhutada was the official spokesperson for Modi's 2019 visit to Houston. See: Press Trust of India, "US Lawmakers, Indian-Americans Congratulate Modi," *Economic Times*, May 17, 2014, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/us-lawmakers-indian-americans-congratulate-modi/articleshow/35244990.cms?from=mdr>; and Lisa Gray, "With 'Howdy Modi!' Houston's Indian Community Says Hello to the World," *Houston Chronicle*, September 18, 2019, <https://www.houstonchronicle.com/life/article/With-Howdy-Modi-Houston-s-Indian-14447775.php>.

357 This figure is based on calculations from publicly available data. See ProPublica, "Bhutada Family Foundation," accessed June 21, 2024, <https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/202051596>.

358 In May 2024, Ramesh Bhutada announced a further \$1 million commitment to HAF at their Houston fundraiser. See Press Trust of India, "Indian-American Philanthropist Donates \$1 Million to Hindu American Foundation," *Deccan Herald*, May 9, 2024, https://www.deccanherald.com/world/indian-american-philanthropist-donates-1-million-to-hindu-american-foundation-3014936#google_vignette.

359 ProPublica, "Bhutada Family Foundation."

360 See Part VII of HGF's IRS 990 forms. ProPublica, "Hindus of Greater Houston Inc," ProPublica, accessed June 21, 2024, <https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/943424274>.

361 See Jawahar Malhotra, "Lobbying Persuasively, for an Accurate Portrayal of Hinduism and Its Just Role in American Society," *Indo American News*, November 20, 2014, <https://www.indoamerican-news.com/lobbying-persuasively-for-an-accurate-portrayal-of-hinduism-and-its-just-role-in-american-society/>.

362 See Raqib Hameed and Naikdivya Trivedi, "Sangh Parivar's U.S. Funds Trail," *Frontline*, July 4, 2021, <https://frontline.thehindu.com/the-nation/sangh-parivars-us-funds-trail/article35117629.ece>; ProPublica, "Subhash & Saroj Charitable Foundation," accessed June 21, 2024, <https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/202034851>.

363 See the Uberoi Foundation's IRS 990 disclosures from 2013–19: ProPublica, "Uberoi Foundation for Religious Studies." Ved Nanda's leadership of the HSS is well documented, including from public sources of the HSS itself. See: Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh (@hssus), "Congratulations to Dr. Ved Nanda ji! He has been conferred Padma Bhushan award by the Government of India. Ma. Nanda ji is Sanghchalak (President) of the Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh, America. He is a professor of International Law at the University of Denver, Colorado. He is Past President of the World Jurist Association and now its Honorary President, former honorary Vice President of the American Society of International Law and now its counselor, and a member of the advisory council of the United States Institute of Human Rights. In 2006 Professor Nanda was honored with a \$1 million founding gift from DU alumni Doug and Mary Scrivner to launch the Ved Nanda Center for International and Comparative Law. The Center began its programming in 2007, hosting programs for the lawyers, students, and community participants as well as promoting scholarship in the field of international law. (Related News: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/.../arti.../62653257.cms>)," Facebook, January 25, 2018, <https://www.facebook.com/hssus/photos/congratulations-to-dr-ved-nanda/10154920958371394/>; and "HSS Sanghchalak Prof. Ved Nanda Inspires Hindu Spirit," *India Tribune*, March 11, 2010, <https://indiatribune.com/hss-sanghchalak-prof-ved-nanda-inspires-hindu-spirit/>.

364 See the Agarwal Family Foundation's IRS 990 disclosures:

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