

*(Letter from Daughters of First-Generation Indian Americans in Minnesota - June 12, 2020)*

Dear India Association of Minnesota,

First, we'd like to thank IAM for showing their support on social media platforms thus far. The released statements and vigil for George Floyd have all served as impactful ways for South Asians to support our Black community. We strongly believe in the Black Lives Matter movement, and hope to continue to stand in solidarity by using every voice at our disposal to combat racial injustice.

IAM events have been a huge part of our identity growing up as Indian Americans in the United States. Therefore, we have chosen this platform to express our thoughts because not only is it established and well-respected, but we know from experience that this community is dedicated to doing the right thing.

As daughters of first-generation Indian Americans in Minnesota, we understand the importance of a strong community and more importantly, the power to spark change behind each and every voice. We acknowledge that we do not understand the immigrant experience and the hardships it entails. However, it is also crucial to address that this is not about us. The privileges that our immigrant parents have given us include the ability to speak up against injustice, and sometimes injustice can be found in our very own community. Together we must learn and understand how the "model minority" myth hurts not just our own people, but other minority groups around us. We must stop throwing out statistics to defend the police and justify crime rates, and eliminate the toxic notion of "All Lives Matter" from our community. For example, some people in the Desi community have used the phrase "All Lives Matter," which we cannot condone because simply put, all lives cannot matter until Black lives matter to all members of society. We need to fight for transparency, fight for a fair justice system, and fight for our right to demand change.

Right now, our community must take concrete actions to combat both internalized racism and racism in society so we can be better allies to BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) communities. It is imperative that we educate ourselves on the history of racism and the civil rights movements in this country. Additionally, we must understand how the South Asian community has benefitted from these movements, and how structural racism is present in society today. As Minnesotans, doing research and learning about local history, movements, and policies is also a crucial part of this learning. Did you know, for example, that I-94 was built over homes, businesses, and community spaces in Rondo, a vibrant Black community?

Taking time to research the history of gentrification, divestment from harmful institutions such as the police, and segregation can help us understand the systems, policies, and inequalities we see today. In addition to studying the historical context of present inequalities, we must turn inwards to combat our conscious and unconscious biases. There are many resources available; some of which we have attached to this email. We encourage members of our community to utilize these resources and not be afraid to start conversations and ask questions. Have you ever referred to South Asians as "model minorities," or upheld colorist standards of beauty? Not only is this harmful to members of our own community but it

also perpetuates anti-Black racism. As a community, we need to start acknowledging these seemingly harmless incidents and have conversations about how we can combat the anti-Blackness within our households and interactions. Steps to take can be as simple as watching movies and reading books by Black creators to calling out anti-Black comments and microaggressions when we witness them. We are all learning and growing together, and in order to keep moving forward, we must make the dismantling of anti-Blackness a priority.

Another way to participate in this movement is to continue to attend protests and support protestors. We applaud IAM for hosting a vigil, and we understand that with the ongoing pandemic it is not feasible for everyone to attend protests. However, we can sign petitions and spread helpful information and resources. As a relatively affluent community, we tend to have the financial means to make significant donations. An impactful way to help protestors and the movement is through donating to bail funds, Black Lives Matter, other Black organizations, and supporting local Black-owned businesses. Additionally, contributing to donations of medical supplies, food, hygiene products, infant formula, and other needs is something we can do to support these communities that have been disproportionately affected by recent events. A lot of this work is being done within the Black community, but we can act to support and amplify their efforts.

We also urge the South Asian community, and right now specifically IAM, to reach out to Black organizations and support their current efforts to practice allyship and pave the way for future collaboration. We call upon the South Asian community to sign petitions, write to their school boards, and educate themselves about African-American history and past and present civil rights movements.

While we have outlined some steps that individuals and organizations can take in the short term to begin combatting the persistent anti-Black racism and inequity that has harmed the Black community, IAM, as an organization, has the power to enact long term systemic change. We ask that they take these critical first steps (outlined below) towards racial justice.

1. The Minneapolis City Council voted this past week to commit to disbanding the MPD and move toward forming community-oriented, non-violent public safety groups. IAM should be proactive in taking this step since the legislative process will be a lengthy affair. We believe that for our community to truly express their allyship with the Black Lives Matter movement, IAM should cut ties with the police.
  - We do not expect this to be easy, particularly given many Indians' legitimate concerns for their safety at large events. However, instead of police, we recommend a community-led, volunteer-based patrol, following the lead of the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis Institute of Arts, First Avenue, Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board, and Minneapolis Public Schools to cut ties with the MPD.
2. IAM should develop partnerships with other South Asian organizations in Minnesota to tackle the anti-Blackness in our community. We have all benefited from the Black-led Civil Rights movement, and we should now band together to strengthen our allyship.

3. IAM should host a yearly bias training open to all members of the South Asian community, focusing on allyship and Diversity & Inclusion. IAM should work to hire a consultant from the Black community to facilitate this training.
4. IAM should expand its social media engagement to act as an opportunity to educate South Asians during this time. It would be helpful to include topics that relate to our complicity within systemic racism.

Since its founding, IAM has become widely known as the largest Indian community-building organization in Minnesota, enabling its members to engage in culture, create connections, and give back through charity. The Association was founded in 1973, a mere five years after The Civil Rights Act was signed. We, as South Asians, were legally able to enter this country largely due to Black America's civil rights work. Now, it is imperative for the South Asian community to do as much as we can to stand in solidarity with that very same Black community.

We can begin accomplishing this goal using the three pillars of IAM, **culture, connection, and charity**, through engagement with and education on Black history, connection with the Black community in Minnesota, and donation to causes that support the movement and its goals.

Attached to this statement is a compilation of links to help our community begin the necessary work on allyship. We encourage the South Asian community in Minnesota to be as proactive as possible by participating in conversations and discussions regarding this statement and digging into any questions or reactions that it may have elicited. We are all on the path of learning and improving, and invite anyone to propose new ideas on how to better advocate for, learn about, and partake in this movement.

In Solidarity,

Aditi Kulkarni  
Bhavana Suvarna  
Mahima Gupta  
Meera Viruru  
Neerja Thakkar  
Neeti Kulkarni  
Nidhi Jariwala  
Nitya Thakkar  
Suparna Malia

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### **Articles and short videos**

#### ***Especially relevant to the South Asian community***

- An article about how South Asian history and Black history are tied together and have resulted in the current inequalities today.

[https://www.huffpost.com/entry/indians-debt-to-black-ame\\_b\\_9418972](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/indians-debt-to-black-ame_b_9418972)

- A community developed resource that provides steps in educating yourself and other South Asians about BLM. <https://saforblm.weebly.com/>
- An article explaining how the Civil Rights Movement paved the way for Indians in American today. <https://thewire.in/rights/indian-americans-black-lives-matter>
- Hasan Minhaj's very informative perspective on recent protests and the South Asian community's response. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i\\_FE78X-qdY&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i_FE78X-qdY&feature=youtu.be)

### ***On protests and the police***

- An article that explains why people are looting right now, and how their actions may be justified. <https://thenewinquiry.com/in-defense-of-looting/>
- A very basic primer of the police abolition movement and what it could mean for our society. <http://bostonreview.net/law-justice/derecka-purnell-what-does-police-abolition-mean>
- An important reminder that the road to racial justice neither starts nor ends with police brutality. <https://www.newyorker.com/news/our-columnists/how-do-we-change-america>
- A critical look at the Minneapolis Police Department and its role, policies, and conduct over the past 150 years. This report aims to examine the department's current impacts and explore alternatives to policing. This report can be downloaded as a PDF or as an audiobook! <https://www.mpd150.com/report/overview/>

### **Books and movies**

- A video explaining systemic racism in an easy and approachable way. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YrHIQIO\\_bdQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YrHIQIO_bdQ)
- From NPR's "Code Switch:" An interview with Alex S. Vitale, author of "The End of Policing" (free e-book linked below). <https://n.pr/2MO7hSs>  
A free e-book available that covers the history of modern policing and offers an explanation for why policing alternatives might work better than just reform. <https://www.versobooks.com/books/2426-the-end-of-policing>
- An Oscar-nominated documentary about the history of racial inequality and the justice system in the United States. 13th (available on Netflix or at this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=krfcq5pF8u8>)
- This book serves as a recount of the rise of mass incarceration in this country and the complicit role all citizens, regardless of race, played in allowing systemic racism to sweep over this country and infiltrate institutions. [The New Jim Crow](#): Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness by Michelle Alexander