

**Fourth International Conference on the Unfinished Legacy of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar
Reconfiguring Solidarities around Caste and Race
University of Massachusetts, Amherst
May 4-6, 2018**

CALL FOR PAPERS

The current historical moment is marked by a deep contradiction - the incredible success of wealth generating and power concentrating processes that depend on the unimaginable immiserating and marginalization of large swathes of humanity. Consequently, assertions of wealth, power, and oppressions, are met with incessant demands for equity, justice, and end to all forms of oppression the world over. If the arc of our moral universe is to "bend towards justice," then it demands a constant relearning and reimagining of our connections, divergences, and convergence. Here, comparative possibilities of 'caste' in India and 'race' in the USA have generated much by way of historical imaginations, political solidarities, comparative strategies, and critical scholarship that have furthered our notions of justice, persistent inequities, and possibilities of liberation.

This comparative framework of race and caste has also pointed to the complexity of navigating between the two. Recognizing the history of efforts in establishing this comparative framework in both theory and praxis - starting with the publication of *Gulamgiri* in 1870 by Jotiba Phule, the emergence of the "Caste School of race relations" in the 1930s/40s, the formation of the Dalit Panthers in the 1970s, and the many struggles around the Durban World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance in 2001 - this conference seeks to initiate a new conversation that both simultaneously acknowledges the incommensurabilities and yet the new possibilities of active solidarities.

Here two broad organizing categories - experience and capitalism - aid us towards new conversations. We will need to start with the category of comparative *experiences* and build towards the divergences and convergences that mark the *structural* / macro-scale of the social, political, economic and the cultural. Experience as a category offers itself as a crucial cauldron from which to think and build rich conversations *through differences*. While experiential domains bring out the individual's (or personal) complex worlds of suffering, quest for dignity, and defiance, they also point to the broader contexts of the social (or public) and the structural (or systemic). Thus, the individual's experience of suffering indignities frequently ruptures the veneer of 'civil(ized)' society in the form of public spectacles of hate, injustice, brutality. Attending to the mutual constitution of both experiential and structural could produce historically and geographically grounded forms of appreciation and solidarity.

For this conference, we have chosen the following themes to focus on:

THEME 1: Suicides and depression among Dalits and African American youth

This is a particularly intense and *intimate* form of experience of caste/race that appears to be on the rise in higher education contexts in the US and South Asia. We are interested in cross-disciplinary research that helps us make connections between mental health issues and broader structures of oppression and marginalization.

THEME 2: Lynchings, public humiliations, 'atrocities,' police brutality against Dalits, Adivasis, Muslims and African Americans

This is another experience that has now gained public attention due to becoming spectacularized via social media in both the USA and South Asia. Such acts have become quotidian and have produced collective gasps of the social conscience in both contexts.

THEME 3: Racial / Casteized Capitalism

Experiences of caste and race occur within accelerated form of rapacious and universalist capitalism. These are shaped fundamentally by particular forms of 'racism' in the US and 'casteism' in India, which require gendered relations and patriarchic forms of control. To help us move toward bringing together such experiences (intimate and public), we need to unpack the category of capitalism so that we are able to see how universalist objectives of accumulation and social reproduction are realized only through particular practices and processes operating through caste, race and gender.

We invite papers on any of the above three themes. The aim of the conference is to build a space for participants to have a generative conversation. It will therefore be oriented towards more sustained discussions rather than mere presentation of papers. We encourage advanced graduate students and junior faculty, especially from South Asia to participate.

Deadline for Submission

Abstracts of no more than 200 words must be submitted by **March 15, 2018**. To submit an abstract please email us at CasteRaceConf2018@gmail.com.

Conference will begin on the evening of Friday May 4 and conclude on the afternoon of Sunday May 6. Further details on the program and keynote speakers are forthcoming.