February 11, 2023

Seattle City Council
PO Box 94728, Seattle, WA, 98124-4728
Council@seattle.gov

Dear Seattle City Council Members,

We are writing as co-chairs of the [Asian American Disinformation Table](#), a national table that coordinates research, strategies, communication, and policy recommendations around issues of domestic & transnational misinformation and disinformation impacting Asian Americans. We are an interfaith, inter-caste, multi-ethnic, multi-language coalition of over 15 local and national Asian American organizations, including the [National Council for Asian Pacific Americans](#) (NCAPA), [Asian Americans Advancing Justice](#) | AAJC, the [Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance](#), and [Equality Labs](#) as co-chairs.

We support individual member organizations working on issues against polarization & harmful narratives, sharing learnings, and coordinating with allies in and outside the U.S. Our first report, co-authored with academic scholars at the University of Washington-Seattle, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and University of Massachusetts-Amherst, [“Power, Platforms and Politics: A Landscape Report on Asian Americans & Disinformation”](#) is one of the first pan-Asian American reports that discusses what disinformation in our communities looks like and how we can develop strategies addressing information harms in our communities.

We are writing in response to the disinformation and harassment targeting our fellow Dalit-led organization Equality Labs given their advocacy in support of the new ordinance proposed by Kshama Sawant to add caste to the city's anti-discrimination policies.

Caste is a system of religiously codified oppression that affects over 1 billion people across the world. Practices of exclusion based on one's caste status limit access to resources like education and employment. [Caste-oppressed people](#) have some of the highest rates of discrimination in the U.S. among Asian Americans: 1 in 4 facing physical and verbal assault; 1 in 3 facing educational discrimination; and 2 in 3 facing workplace discrimination.

Our fellow co-chair organization, Equality Labs, and other Dalit and South Asian organizations including the Coalition for Seattle Indians, Ambedkar Association of North America, Ambedkar International Center, and Ambedkar King Study Circle are facing

casteist disinformation and reputation smears as retaliation for advocating with Councilperson Sawant to address the lived realities of caste discrimination.

Disinformation and targeted harassment from ethnonationalist groups are very common and unfortunate consequences for organizations and community leaders. These tactics seek to intimidate them into silence and undermine their public credibility through the spreading of lies and verbal harassment. Through research, education, and advocacy, organizations like Equality Labs have been at the forefront of addressing caste discrimination in the U.S. as well as advocating for gender, sexual, and religious minority communities in the South Asian diaspora. In doing this work, they face violence stemming from ancestral and multigenerational histories of caste apartheid as well as contemporary forms of discrimination, which include the spread of false and harmful information to delegitimize their expertise and experiences.

We know that disinformation is not just about lies, it is about power and exposes frictions, fault lines, and tensions within and across our various diasporic communities. As a coalition committed to issues of racial justice and equity, we see the necessity for caste reconciliation in our communities.

We write in support of Equality Labs as an organization that supports and represents caste-oppressed communities and strongly condemn the efforts of bad actors seeking to undermine the credibility of the organization.

Thank you,

Asian American Disinformation Table Co-chairs and members
Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance (APALA, AFL-CIO);
Asian Americans Advancing Justice (AAJC)
National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA)
Equality Labs
Xin Sheng Project
Dr. Rachel Kuo, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign