March 17, 2021

To the Rutgers community,

We write, as faculty of South Asian origin at Rutgers, with colleagues at other universities co-signing, to add our voices to that of Rutgers administrators in unreserved support of our colleague Dr. Audrey Truschke. We are encouraged by their defense of the principle of academic freedom and the practice of critical inquiry, which are essential to the work that we do both as scholars and teachers and should be guarded against political pressure. We also echo their call for the threats against Dr. Truschke and her family and the attacks that have targeted her on the basis of race and gender, often viciously and hatefully, to stop.

As scholars from a wide range of faith backgrounds, including Hinduism, we understand in deep and personal ways what it means to occupy the position of minority in the United States. Many of us are also immigrants or the children of immigrants as well as racialized minorities. We will fight staunchly for safe spaces for all of our students to express their faiths and identities. It is part of our calling. It is also part of our calling to examine critically the social and political forces shaping our globe and to provide students with the analytical tools to do the same, as they see fit.

The two missions are reconcilable: students can be safe and supported in their identities and intellectually challenged at the same time. We insist that a critical examination of Hindutva, a political ideology, is not the same thing as Hinduphobia. Dr. Truschke’s critique of the former rests on its majoritarian expression in India, in ways that threaten the safety, security, and equality of Muslims and other minorities. Her public scholarship resists the use of history and religious texts to accomplish those ends. This pursuit points to a desire to uphold the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion. We have every confidence in Dr. Truschke’s respect for Hindus and Hinduism and its compatibility with a critique of Hindu nationalism as a social and political enterprise.

We applaud Rutgers leadership in their defense of Dr. Truschke and their commitment to diversity and offer our solidarity in their steadfast support of both.

Sincerely,

Gaiutra Bahadur, Asst. Professor, Dept. of Arts, Culture & Media, Rutgers-Newark
Manu Samriti Chander, Associate Professor of English, Rutgers-Newark
Sadia Abbas, Associate Professor, Dept. English, Rutgers University-Newark
Akil Kumarasamy, Asst. Professor of Creative Writing, MFA Program, Rutgers-Newark
Johan Mathew, Associate Professor, Dept. of History, Rutgers University-New Brunswick
Karishma Desai, Assistant Professor, Graduate School of Education, Rutgers-New Brunswick
Mukti Lakhi Mangharam, Associate Professor of English, Rutgers University-New Brunswick
Anand Sarwate, Associate Professor, Dept. of Electrical and Computer Engineering, Rutgers-NB
Jasbir Puar, Professor, Chair, Women’s and Gender Studies, Rutgers-New Brunswick
Anjali Nerlekar, Associate Professor, South Asian Literature, Chair of AMESALL, Rutgers-NB
Preetha Mani, Assistant Professor, Department of African, Middle Eastern, and South Asian Languages & Literatures, Rutgers-New Brunswick
Deepa Kumar, Professor of Journalism and Media Studies, Rutgers University-New Brunswick
Sarada Balagopalan, Associate Professor, Dept. of Childhood Studies, Rutgers University-Camden

In solidarity:
Rajmohan Gandhi, Research Professor, College of Education, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Partha Chatterjee, Professor of Anthropology and Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies, Columbia University
Sheldon Pollock, Arvind Raghunathan Professor of South Asian Studies, Columbia University
Akeel Bilgrami, Sidney Morgenbesser Professor of Philosophy, Columbia University
John Stratton Hawley, Clare Tow Professor of Religion, Barnard College
Gyan Prakash, Dayton-Stockton Professor of History, Princeton University
David Lelyveld, Professor (Retired), History, William Paterson University
David Ludden, Professor of History, New York University
Dina Siddiqi, Clinical Associate Professor, Liberal Studies, New York University
Romila Thapar, Professor of History, Emerita, Jawaharlal Nehru University, India
Siddhartha Deb, Associate Professor of Literary Studies, Eugene Lang College of Liberal Arts, The New School for Social Research
Amitava Kumar, Professor of English on the Helen D. Lockwood Chair, Vassar College
Suketu Mehta, Associate Professor of Journalism, New York University
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Sunil Amrith, Renu and Anand Dhawan Professor of History, Yale University
Maya Jasanoff, X.D. and Nancy Yang Professor and Coolidge Professor of History, Harvard University
Yogita Goyal, Professor, African American Studies/English, UCLA
Sana Aiyar, Associate Professor of History, MIT
Rohit De, Associate Professor of History, Yale University
Zahid R. Chaudhary, Associate Professor of English, Princeton University
Sangeeta Kamat, Professor, College of Education, UMASS Amherst
Biju Mathew, Professor, Rider University, NJ
Purnima Dhavan, Associate Professor, Dept. of History, University of Washington
Supriya Gandhi, Assistant Professor of Religious Studies, Yale University

Letter in Support of Professor Audrey Truschke 2
Chinnaiah Jangam, Associate Professor of History, Carleton University, Canada
Rajeev Kinra, Associate Professor of History and Comparative Literature, Northwestern University
Dheepa Sundaram, Assistant Professor of Religious Studies, University of Denver
Ajay Rao, Associate Professor, Director of South Asian Civilizations, University of Toronto
Vinayak Chaturvedi, Associate Professor of History, University of California at Irvine
Dohra Ahmad, Professor of English, St. John’s University
Bhakti Shringarpure, Associate Professor of English, University of Connecticut (Storrs)
Ashwini Tambe, Professor and Interim Chair, Harriet Tubman Department of Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies, University of Maryland
Angana Chatterji, Co-chair, Initiative on Political Conflict, Gender and People’s Rights, University of California, Berkeley
Marina Budhos, Professor, Dept. of English, William Paterson University
Rupal Oza, Associate Professor, Dept. of Women and Gender Studies, Hunter College
Manan Desai, Associate Professor, Department of American Culture and Asian/Pacific Islander American Studies, University of Michigan
Raza Rumi, Director, Park Center for Independent Media, Ithaca College
Divya Cherian, Assistant Professor, Department of History, Princeton University
Rupa Pillai, Senior Lecturer, Asian American Studies, University of Pennsylvania
Raza Mir, Professor of Management, Cotsakos College of Business, William Paterson University
Prasad Tadepalli, Professor of Computer Science, Oregon State University
V.V. Ganeshananthan, Assistant Professor of English, University of Minnesota
Inderpal Grewal, Professor Emeritus of Women’s, Gender and Sexuality Studies, and of American Studies, Yale University
Monisha Bajaj, Professor, International and Multicultural Education, University of San Francisco
Sharmila Sen, Editorial Director, Harvard University Press
Sumita Chakraborty, Zell Visiting Professor in Poetry, University of Michigan
Sangeeta Ray, Professor of English and Comparative Literature, University of Maryland
Neilesh Bose, Associate Professor and Canada Research Chair, Department of History, University of Victoria, Victoria, BC, Canada
Roopika Risam, Associate Professor of Secondary and Higher Education and English, Salem State University
Nilanjana Bhattacharjya, Principal Lecturer and Honors Faculty Fellow, The Honors College at Arizona State University and Vice-President of Communications, ASU Faculty Women of Color Caucus
Neha Vora, Associate Professor of Anthropology, Lafayette College
Ambereen Dadabhoy, Associate Professor of Literature, Harvey Mudd College
Sruti Bala, Associate Professor, Theatre Studies, University of Amsterdam
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Tejaswini Ganti, Associate Professor, Dept of Anthropology, New York University
Jinee Lokaneeta, Professor and Chair, Political Science and International Relations Department, Drew University
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Natasha Raheja, Assistant Professor, Dept. of Anthropology, Cornell University