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THE RISE OF ANTI-INDIAN RACISM IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND:

WHITE SUPREMACY, NEOLIBERAL MULTICULTURALISM, HINDUTVA AND PATHWAYS TO SOLIDARITY

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ABOUT CARE

The Centre for Culture-Centred Approach to Research and Evaluation (CARE) at Massey University, Aotearoa New Zealand, is a global hub for communication research that uses participatory and culture-centred methodologies to develop community-driven communication solutions to health and wellbeing. Through experiments in methods of radical democracy anchored in community ownership and community voice, the Centre collaborates with communities, community organisers, community researchers, advocates and activists to imagine and develop sustainable practices for prevention, health care organising, food and agriculture, worker organising, migrant and refugee rights, indigenous rights, rights of the poor and economic transformation.

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THE RISE OF ANTI-INDIAN RACISM IN AOTEAROA NZ:

WHITE SUPREMACY, NEOLIBERAL MULTI-CULTURALISM, HINDUTVA AND PATHWAYS TO SOLIDARITY

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ABSTRACT

Anti-Indian racism in Aotearoa New Zealand has escalated sharply, manifesting in hate graffiti targeting Indian communities, public disruptions of Sikh religious processions, desecration of Hindu, Sikh, and Buddhist symbols, and surging online vitriol. This white paper, drawing on the culture-centred approach (CCA; Dutta, 2008, 2021, 2023), situates the rise of anti-Indian hate within the overlapping architectures of white supremacy, neoliberal multiculturalism, Hindutva nationalism, and settler colonial politics in Aotearoa. The CCA's triadic framework of culture, structure, and agency illuminates how anti-Indian racism is not an isolated phenomenon but emerges at the intersection of multiple forces: a white supremacist infrastructure that has historically targeted Māori and communities of colour; a neoliberal multicultural framework that reduces Indian culture to a monolithic, essentialised commodity while foreclosing diverse expressions of agency; the transnational reach of Hindutva that mobilises upper caste cultural practices and model minority performances within diaspora politics; and a political mainstream that has increasingly normalised anti-Indian sentiment alongside anti-Māori racism.

Critically, this paper examines how segments of the Indian diaspora—particularly those aligned with upper caste Hindutva politics—have themselves enacted anti-Māori racism, supporting white supremacist policy proposals such as the Treaty Principles Bill, reproducing casteist frames of deservedness, and imposing culturally essentialist practices in public spaces without genuine engagement with the cultural context of Aotearoa. The paper argues that meaningful responses must be anchored in Te Tiriti o Waitangi, the building of solidarity across communities of colour, the creation of culture-centred community-led dialogue spaces, the addressing of white supremacy in politics, and robust regulation of digital platforms that amplify hate.

INTRODUCTION

In April 2026, the words "Kill All Indian" were spray-painted in red on the footpath outside Papatoetoe Central School in Auckland, a primary school where over 60 percent of students are of Indian descent (RNZ, 2026a; NZ Herald, 2026). Days later, an identical message appeared inside a public toilet in Royal Oak (RNZ, 2026b). Police classified both incidents as hate-motivated crimes. These acts of violence did not emerge in a vacuum. They followed a sustained period of escalating anti-Indian hostility: in December 2025, approximately 50 members of True Patriots of NZ, a group linked to Brian Tamaki's Destiny Church, blocked a Sikh Nagar Kirtan procession in Manurewa, carrying banners reading "This is New Zealand not India" (NZ Herald, 2025a; RNZ, 2026c). In January 2026, a similar disruption targeted a Sikh procession in Tauranga (RNZ, 2026c). In June 2025, Tamaki led a march down Auckland's Queen Street during which Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, and Islamic flags were ritually torn, stomped, and burned as followers chanted "no assimilation, no immigration" (NZ Herald, 2025b; RNZ, 2025a).

Race Relations Commissioner Melissa Derby has acknowledged increasing anti-migrant rhetoric directed at the Indian community (RNZ, 2026b). Deputy Prime Minister David Seymour warned publicly that misinformation around the India free trade agreement was generating anti-Indian sentiment, particularly in South Auckland (Awaaz, 2026). This paper argues that the intensifying targeting of Indians in Aotearoa cannot be understood apart from the broader architectures of white supremacy, settler colonialism, neoliberal multiculturalism, Hindutva nationalism, and digital platform governance that together produce the conditions for racialised violence.

Drawing on the culture-centred approach (CCA), this white paper develops a structural analysis that moves beyond treating anti-Indian racism as episodic hate crime. The CCA's theorisation of the interplay among culture, structure, and agency (Dutta, 2008, 2021) enables examination of how multiple formations of power converge to produce anti-Indian hate while simultaneously examining the complicity of segments of the Indian diaspora in reproducing anti-Māori racism and settler colonial logics. This dual analytical move is essential: addressing anti-Indian racism requires confronting the ways in which dominant formations within the Indian diaspora have themselves been mobilised within white supremacist projects.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: THE CULTURE-CENTRED APPROACH

The culture-centred approach (CCA) provides the theoretical architecture for this analysis. Developed by Dutta (2008, 2021), the CCA examines how culture, structure, and agency interact dynamically in processes of marginalisation and resistance. Culture encompasses the meanings, values, and norms that shape everyday life; structure refers to the material distributions of power and resources that enable or constrain participation; agency denotes the capacity to act, resist, and transform. In the context of racism, the CCA reveals how cultural norms of whiteness become embedded in institutional structures, constraining the agency of racialised communities while producing communicative inequality—the systematic erasure of subaltern voices from the spaces where decisions are made (Dutta, 2021).

Dutta's (2023) theorisation of southern strategies of anti-racism extends this framework by centering subaltern communities in the Global South as sites of knowledge production and resistance, challenging the dominance of Western frameworks in understanding racism and its remedies. This is particularly relevant for understanding the Indian diaspora in Aotearoa, where diverse communities from multiple linguistic, caste, religious, and regional backgrounds are flattened into a monolithic "Indian" category by neoliberal multicultural governance. The CCA's emphasis on co-creating knowledge with marginalised communities, rather than speaking for them, provides the ethical foundation for this paper's call for community-led dialogues anchored in Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

CARE's work on hate speech regulation (Dutta, Jayan, Rahman, Elers, & Whittfield, 2021) further informs this analysis by documenting how digital platforms facilitate the circulation and amplification of racist speech, while regulatory frameworks remain inadequate to protect racialised communities. The communicative infrastructure of hate—spanning social media algorithms, far-right influencer networks, and mainstream political discourse—constitutes a structural condition that must be addressed alongside the cultural and agentic dimensions of anti-Indian racism.

WHITE SUPREMACY IN AOTEAROA: THE STRUCTURAL CONTEXT

Anti-Indian racism in Aotearoa must be situated within the longstanding architecture of white supremacy that has structured the settler colonial state since its founding. As the CARE White Paper on White Supremacist Networks and Anti-Māori Hate (CARE, 2025) documents, the far-right discursive ecosystem in Aotearoa has expanded significantly, organising around opposition to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, co-governance, and Indigenous

rights. The Treaty Principles Bill, introduced by ACT in November 2024, mobilised this ecosystem, producing the largest protest march in New Zealand history as approximately 50,000 people joined the Hīkoi mō te Tiriti (Rata, Brayne, & Barber, 2023; CARE, 2025).

This white supremacist infrastructure operates through what the Disinformation Project (2023) identifies as interlocking strategies: anti-Māori racism shrouded in the language of equality, far-right conspiracy theories imported from international networks, and digital radicalisation pathways that connect local actors to global white nationalist movements. Brian Tamaki's Destiny Church and its affiliates—True Patriots of NZ, Freedoms NZ—exemplify this convergence. Tamaki attended Tommy Robinson's "Unite the Kingdom" rally in London in September 2025, described as the largest far-right mobilisation in British history (WSWS, 2025). His movement blends Christian nationalism with anti-immigration activism, targeting Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Muslim, and Rainbow communities simultaneously.

The June 2025 Queen Street march was a watershed moment: Hindu, Sikh, and Buddhist flags were ritually destroyed alongside Islamic and Palestinian flags, while followers performed haka—an appropriation of Māori cultural practice condemned by Indigenous leaders. Eru Kapa-Kingi of Toitū Te Tiriti stated: "This action was not rooted in our tikanga. Haka should not be misused to disrespect and attack others" (NRI Affairs, 2025). The Federation of Islamic Associations, Combined Sikh Association, and NZ Buddhist Council jointly called on the government to implement a sustained strategy for social cohesion, comparing the unrest to levels seen before the March 15, 2019 terror attack (NZ Herald, 2025c; RNZ, 2025a).

The anti-Indian graffiti discovered in Papatoetoe and Royal Oak in April 2026 represents the most recent and explicitly violent manifestation of this escalating trajectory. Community leader Narendra Bhana warned that the message was "not simply an act of vandalism" but rather "a message of hate that, if ignored or minimised, risks normalising something far more harmful" (RNZ, 2026b). The targeting of a primary school—a space of childhood and learning—underscores the depth of structural violence embedded in anti-Indian racism.

NEOLIBERAL MULTICULTURALISM AND THE ESSENTIALISATION OF INDIAN CULTURE

The rise of anti-Indian racism must also be understood within the framework of neoliberal multiculturalism, which simultaneously celebrates and contains cultural difference. Neoliberal multiculturalism treats Indian culture as a monolithic essence—a singular, commodifiable identity expressed through food festivals, Diwali celebrations, and cultural performances—without creating space for the diverse, contested, and often contradictory expressions of agency within Indian communities (Dutta, 2023). This essentialisation serves dual functions: it renders Indians legible to the settler state as model minorities contributing economic value, while obscuring the profound internal diversity of communities spanning multiple languages, religions, castes, regions, and political orientations.

The whiteness of neoliberal multiculturalism operates precisely through this flattening. When "Indian culture" is reduced to a curated performance—vegetarian Diwali celebrations, Bollywood spectacles, IT professional stereotypes—the structural conditions of Indian lives in Aotearoa are rendered invisible. The precarity of migrant workers, the caste discrimination experienced within Indian communities, the diverse religious practices spanning Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, Christianity, Buddhism, and atheism, the linguistic plurality of hundreds of languages—all are erased in the service of a manageable multicultural category that can be celebrated at festivals and invoked in diversity statistics.

This essentialisation creates a double bind. Indians are rendered visible enough to be targeted by white supremacist movements as threatening "invaders" transforming the racial character of neighbourhoods, while simultaneously being invisible enough that the structural conditions producing their marginalisation remain

unaddressed. The neoliberal multicultural framework provides no infrastructure for addressing the material realities of racism—housing discrimination, workplace exploitation, educational barriers—because its entire logic rests on celebrating cultural difference as an end in itself, divorced from the structural redistribution of power and resources that genuine justice requires (Dutta, 2021).

THE RISE OF HINDUTVA AND ANTI-MĀORI RACISM IN THE INDIAN DIASPORA

Hindutva as Transnational Formation

The transnational reach of Hindutva—Hindu nationalist ideology centred on upper caste cultural supremacy—constitutes a critical dimension of the political landscape shaping Indian communities in Aotearoa. Hindutva organisations operate globally through networks of cultural associations, religious institutions, and political advocacy bodies that reproduce a homogeneous vision of Indian identity rooted in Brahmanical Hinduism while marginalising Muslim, Dalit, Adivasi, Sikh, Christian, and secular Indian identities. In Aotearoa, Hindutva-aligned politics manifest through the dominance of upper caste cultural practices in public spaces, the model minority performance that aligns with white supremacist meritocratic logics, and critically, the enactment of anti-Māori racism.

Anti-Māori Racism and the Treaty Principles Bill

As Dutta (2025) argues, "the widespread appeal among Indians of the white supremacist campaign that communicatively inverts the concept of equality to target policies seeking to uphold Te Tiriti" reflects deep structural complicity between diaspora Hindutva politics and settler colonial logics. The racist construction that "Māori are leeching off the system" and "Māori undeservedly get too many benefits from the system" mobilises casteist frames of deservedness and merit that are central to upper caste Indian identity formations. Indian-origin politicians appearing to directly target Te Tiriti and Māori rights enact a form of anti-Māori racism that serves the white supremacist project while positioning Indians as complicit settlers within the colonial structure.

The participation of sections of the Indian diaspora in campaigns such as Hobson's Pledge's "We Belong Aotearoa," which targeted co-governance, exemplifies this dynamic. Deeply casteist ideas of merit shape the constructions of the model minority in the Indian diaspora and mobilise organising against historically disenfranchised minorities—in Aotearoa, primarily Māori and Pasifika communities (Dutta, 2025). With Indians constituting the third largest ethnic community in Aotearoa, and with increased migration likely following free trade agreement discussions with India, the uncritical reproduction of Hindutva-aligned politics within the diaspora poses a direct threat to the Te Tiriti framework that underpins the democratic fabric of the nation.

Cultural Essentialism in Public Spaces

Hindutva-aligned upper caste cultural practices in public spaces in Aotearoa often operate as a form of cultural essentialism that is not engaged with the cultural context of the nation in genuine dialogue. The imposition of vegetarianism as a dominant frame for Diwali celebrations, for example, reflects upper caste Brahmanical norms that do not represent the diversity of Indian communities—many of whom are not vegetarian, not Hindu, or hold different relationships to food and ritual. These performances reproduce a culturally essentialist vision of Indian identity that erases Dalit, Adivasi, Muslim, Christian, and secular Indian voices while serving the Hindutva project of cultural homogenisation.

The model minority performance among upper caste Indians further entrenches this dynamic. By performing compliance with neoliberal meritocratic norms—emphasising educational achievement, professional success, and economic contribution—upper caste Indians position themselves within the settler colonial hierarchy as deserving migrants, in implicit contrast to Māori and Pasifika communities constructed as welfare-dependent.

This model minority logic, far from being a neutral cultural practice, actively reproduces the white supremacist racial hierarchy that structures Aotearoa, aligning upper caste Indian interests with settler colonial power at the expense of Indigenous sovereignty.

Organisational Diffusion: The Hindutva Network Model in Aotearoa

Felix Pal's (2024) groundbreaking research on organisational diffusion provides a critical framework for understanding how Hindutva operates in Aotearoa. Drawing on the first comprehensive dataset of 2,831 constitutive organisations within the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) network globally, Pal identifies a far-right strategy of covert civil society expansion that has largely evaded scholarly attention focused on electoral politics. The organisational diffusion model produces three effects: segmented representation, where different organisations target different community segments; reputational control, where the proliferation of seemingly independent bodies obscures the centrality of Hindutva ideology; and leadership accommodation, where diverse local leaders are absorbed into the network without requiring explicit ideological commitment (Pal, 2024).

In Aotearoa, this diffusion model is clearly operative. As documented in CARE's White Paper on Cultural Hindutva and Islamophobia (Dutta, 2021b) and the subsequent CARE White Paper on Hindutva Organizations in Aotearoa (Dutta, Shingade, & Sharma, 2023), a network of cultural, religious, and service-provision organisations linked to the broader Sangh Parivar ecosystem operates across the country. These organisations present themselves as cultural or community bodies—organising festivals, language classes, and community events—while functioning as vectors for Hindutva ideology and as conduits for transnational funding flows. Pal (2024) emphasises that service provision organisations overwhelmingly outnumber explicitly religious or violent organisations within the Sangh network, precisely because the normalization of Hindutva depends on its embedding within everyday community life rather than overt ideological mobilisation.

The reaction to CARE's research on Hindutva in Aotearoa itself illustrates the diffusion model's mechanisms of reputational control. When the Cultural Hindutva and Islamophobia white paper was published in 2021, Hindutva-aligned organisations—including the Hindu Council of New Zealand and Hindu Youth New Zealand—mounted a coordinated campaign to suppress the research, demanding its removal, inundating Massey University with complaints, and directing online abuse including death threats at CARE researchers (NZ Herald, 2022). This response, which sought to conflate scholarly critique of Hindutva with hatred of Hinduism, exemplifies the strategy Pal describes: the network's capacity to mobilise rapid, multi-organisational responses to perceived threats while maintaining the appearance of independent community organisations defending a religious community. The Aotearoa Alliance of Progressive Indians (AAPI), a coalition of progressive Hindu and Indian New Zealanders, publicly supported CARE's research, affirming the distinction between Hinduism as a diverse faith tradition and Hindutva as a supremacist political ideology (AAPI, 2021).

Pal's (2024) further observation that diaspora organisations function as vectors for large amounts of funding flowing back to the Indian Sangh in the guise of charitable donations is particularly relevant to understanding the transnational political economy of Hindutva in Aotearoa. The main role of diaspora organising, as Pal documents, is the remittance of funding back to the Indian Sangh—meaning that cultural and community organisations in Aotearoa serve not only local ideological functions but also material functions within the global Hindutva infrastructure.

Hindutva, Environmental Harm and the Need for National Dialogue

An underexamined dimension of Hindutva's impact in Aotearoa concerns the environmental consequences of religious rituals transplanted without adequate engagement with the ecological context of the land. Ganesh Chaturthi immersion practices, in which idols made of plaster of Paris, chemical paints containing heavy metals, and non-biodegradable decorative materials are submerged in waterways, pose significant threats to

water quality and aquatic ecosystems. Research from India documents that idol immersion increases heavy metal concentrations, reduces dissolved oxygen, elevates biochemical oxygen demand, and introduces toxic pollutants including lead, cadmium, and chromium into water bodies (Lokhande, 2019; Warsi et al., 2024). The Delhi Pollution Control Committee has prohibited idol immersion in the Yamuna River due to environmental damage, imposing fines on violators. Similarly, Chhath Puja practices involving offerings and ritual bathing in rivers carry documented environmental impacts including increased pollution loads and waste accumulation.

In Aotearoa, where freshwater ecosystems are already under significant pressure and where waterways hold profound cultural and spiritual significance for Māori as taonga, the uncritical transplantation of these practices without environmental adaptation or dialogue with tangata whenua represents a failure of cultural engagement. Beyond ritual practices, the acquisition of land for large-scale temple construction—driven by Hindutva-aligned organisations seeking to establish monumental presences in the diaspora—raises questions about environmental impact, community consultation, and alignment with local planning frameworks. These are not arguments against religious practice; rather, they call for practices to be situated within the ecological and cultural context of Aotearoa through genuine dialogue.

What is required is a national dialogue across local government bodies, environmental agencies, and diverse community groups—including diverse Indian communities themselves—about how religious practices can be adapted to honour both spiritual traditions and the environmental obligations that come with living in Aotearoa. Such dialogues must be anchored in Te Tiriti obligations regarding the protection of waterways and natural resources, and must engage the full diversity of Indian communities rather than allowing Hindutva-aligned organisations to speak on behalf of all Indians. This is an opportunity for culture-centred engagement that models the kind of respectful, context-responsive practice this paper advocates.

State Funding of Hindutva-Aligned Organisations

A critical structural question concerns the ongoing funding of Hindutva-aligned organisations through the Ministry for Ethnic Communities and other state agencies. Despite CARE's documentation of the Hindutva network's activities in Aotearoa (Dutta, 2021b; Dutta, Shingade, & Sharma, 2023), and despite the broader scholarly literature on organisational diffusion within the Sangh Parivar (Pal, 2024), organisations with documented connections to Hindutva continue to receive public funding for cultural events, community programmes, and ethnic community engagement. This funding effectively launders the reputational capital of Hindutva organisations, granting them state legitimacy while they simultaneously operate as nodes within a transnational far-right network.

The Ministry for Ethnic Communities' funding criteria do not currently include mechanisms for assessing the ideological affiliations of applicant organisations or their connections to transnational supremacist networks. This absence is not neutral—it actively enables the diffusion strategy Pal (2024) describes, in which Hindutva organisations present as benign cultural bodies to secure institutional access and legitimacy while advancing ideological agendas that are fundamentally at odds with Te Tiriti, with the rights of religious minorities within Indian communities, and with the democratic principles of Aotearoa. The continued state funding of these organisations while they actively promote anti-Muslim sentiment, enact anti-Māori racism through support for campaigns targeting Te Tiriti, and suppress academic freedom through coordinated intimidation campaigns represents a profound failure of state accountability.

This paper calls for an urgent review of funding mechanisms to ensure that public resources are not channelled to organisations connected to the transnational Hindutva network. Such a review must be informed by the scholarly literature on organisational diffusion, must involve consultation with diverse Indian communities—including those marginalised by Hindutva dominance—and must establish clear criteria that prevent the state from legitimising and resourcing supremacist organisations regardless of the cultural or religious framing through which they present themselves.

CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM, DESTINY CHURCH AND THE CONVERGENCE OF ANTI-INDIAN AND ANTI-MĀORI HATE

Brian Tamaki's Destiny Church and its constellation of affiliated movements—True Patriots of NZ, Freedoms NZ—represent a distinctive formation that merges Christian nationalism with far-right anti-immigration activism, producing a convergent targeting of both Indian and Māori communities. This convergence operates through several mechanisms. First, Tamaki's explicit framing of New Zealand as a "Christian nation" positions Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, and Muslim communities as existential threats to national identity, deploying the language of invasion and replacement familiar from global far-right discourse (WSWS, 2025). Second, Tamaki's movement appropriates Māori cultural practices—haka, taiaha, moko—to legitimise anti-Indian and anti-religious hate, instrumentalising Indigenous culture in the service of white Christian supremacy (The Spinoff, 2025).

The disruptions of Sikh Nagar Kirtan processions in Manurewa and Tauranga illustrate this convergence. True Patriots members blocked roads, performed haka as a confrontational act, and chanted Christian slogans while displaying banners targeting Indians. Tamaki adopted rhetoric from India's Hindutva government, labelling Sikh activists as "Khalistan terrorists" and referencing designations by Prime Minister Modi (NZ Herald, 2025a; WSWS, 2025). This rhetorical borrowing from Hindutva to target Sikhs in Aotearoa exemplifies the transnational circulation of hate: Christian nationalist movements draw on Hindu nationalist framings to divide Indian communities while pursuing their own exclusionary agenda.

The global dimensions of this convergence are significant. Tamaki's attendance at Tommy Robinson's London rally in September 2025, where his performing group ripped up a Palestinian flag, connects Aotearoa's Christian nationalist movement to international far-right networks. These networks share anti-Muslim sentiment as a common denominator—linking Islamophobia across far-right, Hindutva, and Christian nationalist formations at a global scale. The result is a complex ecosystem where anti-Indian, anti-Māori, anti-Muslim, and anti-Sikh hate mutually reinforce each other through shared platforms, narratives, and organisational infrastructure.

DIGITAL PLATFORMS AND THE INFRASTRUCTURE OF HATE

The proliferation of anti-Indian hate on digital platforms constitutes a critical structural dimension of the crisis. As Dutta, Jayan, Rahman, Elers, and Whittfield (2021) document in CARE's work on hate speech regulation, digital platforms create communicative infrastructures that amplify, circulate, and normalise racist speech at unprecedented scale. Brian Tamaki's social media posts—describing Indian immigration as a "mass invasion," framing Sikh processions as security threats, and promoting rally footage—reach audiences far beyond his immediate following, feeding algorithmic amplification cycles that reward provocative content.

The NZ Herald reported that online vitriol aimed at Indians, often called "Indian hate," has risen significantly in recent years (NZ Herald, 2026). This online hatred creates material effects: the Papatoetoe graffiti was connected to social media discussions around the Papatoetoe Ōtara Action Team and local body politics, with community leaders noting that inflammatory online rhetoric was "spilling over" into physical spaces (Awaaz, 2026). The international amplification of the Sikh parade disruptions—praised by far-right commentators in the United States as "epic" and cited as a model for similar actions—demonstrates how local acts of hate become recruitment tools for global white nationalist networks.

Current platform governance is profoundly inadequate. As Ngata (2021) documents in the Māori context, regulatory mechanisms including the Harmful Digital Communications Act and Netsafe consistently fail to protect racialised communities from targeted online campaigns. Since Elon Musk's takeover of Twitter (now X), content moderation has further eroded, providing expanded space for far-right content creators. The absence of effective platform regulation constitutes a structural condition that enables the ongoing escalation of anti-Indian racism from online rhetoric to physical violence.organisational infrastructure.

THE POLITICAL MAINSTREAMING OF ANTI-INDIAN FACISM

Perhaps most concerning is the progressive mainstreaming of anti-Indian sentiment within political discourse. While explicit hate speech has emanated primarily from far-right formations, the broader political context has enabled its normalisation. Debates around the India-New Zealand free trade agreement generated political rhetoric casting Indian migration as an economic threat. Deputy Prime Minister Seymour himself acknowledged the emergence of anti-Indian sentiment linked to FTA discussions, particularly in South Auckland (Awaaz, 2026). Te Pāti Māori expressed concerns about the exclusion of Te Tiriti obligations from the trade agreement framework (NZ City, 2025).

The political mainstreaming operates through the convergence of multiple vectors: the far-right's explicit anti-immigration platform; debates around trade, immigration policy, and housing affordability that construct Indians as threats to economic security; and the failure of mainstream political institutions to name and address structural racism. The Race Relations Commissioner's statement acknowledging increasing anti-migrant rhetoric, while welcome, points to a regulatory and political infrastructure that remains reactive rather than preventive—responding to hate incidents after they occur rather than addressing the structural conditions that produce them (RNZ, 2026b).

THE PARMAR CONTROVERSY, THE INDIA FREE TRADE AGREEMENT AND THE MAINSTREAMING OF ANTI-INDIAN RACISM

An Indian-Origin MP's Attack on Te Tiriti, Te Reo and Kaupapa Māori

ACT MP Parmjeet Parmar exemplifies the complex dynamics through which Indian-origin politicians, operating within upper caste frameworks of model minority respectability, can simultaneously experience anti-Indian racism and enact anti-Māori racism. Parmar's parliamentary record includes seeking advice on whether imprisonment was a possible penalty for Te Pāti Māori MPs who performed a haka during the Treaty Principles Bill debate—an act that Indigenous rights advocates saw as targeting Māori cultural expression at its most fundamental (RNZ, 2026d). She has opposed Māori-focussed scholarships, designated spaces, and courses at universities, and specifically argued that requiring international students to study the Treaty of Waitangi held "little value" (RNZ, 2026e). These actions constitute direct attacks on kaupapa Māori education—a signature of Aotearoa's educational identity—and on the Te Tiriti framework that is foundational to the democratic fabric of the nation.

Parmar's participation in the New Zealand delegation for the signing of the India-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement further complicates the picture. Her dual role—as both a politician who actively undermines Te Tiriti and Māori rights, and as the ACT Party's ethnic communities spokesperson who claims to represent Indian interests—illustrates how the model minority performance functions in practice. The Indian community is invoked as deserving and contributing when it serves the political project of undermining Indigenous rights, while the diverse Indian voices who support Te Tiriti and Māori sovereignty are rendered invisible.

The Haka at Rainui Regionals: Diverse Māori Responses and the Complexity of Lateral Racism

In April 2026, former Te Pāti Māori president Che Wilson performed a haka at the Tainui Regional Kapa Haka competition that was directed at Parmar, including the phrase "purari karikari iniana," interpreted as a derogatory reference to Indians, along with gestures mimicking Indian cultural practices (RNZ, 2026d). The haka's choreography included sitting cross-legged in a prayer position, pressing a thumb to the forehead where a bindi is worn, and mimicry of Indian accent and head movements. Te Whānau o Te Pae Kahurangi, the collective that composed the haka, stated it was directed specifically at Parmar for her prejudice toward Māori culture, not at the Indian community broadly, and apologised for offence caused to the wider Indian community.

The Māori response was notably diverse and revealed the depth of anti-racist analysis within te ao Māori. Indigenous rights advocate Tina Ngata offered a powerful critique, acknowledging that Parmar "has indeed done a lot of damage, and delivers racist harm to Māori and many others," while insisting that the answer should not be to "deliver racist harm back upon her people by mocking them, ridiculing their culture, jeering at the poverty on their lands that comes from the same coloniser, and using racial slurs cloaked in our reo" (RNZ, 2026d). Ngata described the incident as a case of colonial harm turning into lateral racism, calling on Māori leaders to pursue anti-racism training. Māori-Gujarati academic Dr Jessica Hutchings, with whakapapa to Ngāi Tahu, Ngāti Huirapa, Waitaha, Kāti Māmoe and Ngāi Tūhoe alongside Gujarati-Indian heritage, described how the haka harmed all parts of her identity, stating "They mocked my culture. They mocked our tikanga, our wairuatanga" (Te Ao Māori News, 2026). The anti-racism group PAPARA—People Against Prisons Aotearoa and Racism in Aotearoa—stood by Indian communities while affirming that criticism of Parmar's individual actions was justified, but "when criticism of her actions extends to all people who share her identity, that is racism" (RNZ, 2026e).

This diversity of Māori responses—ranging from Wilson's combative stance to Ngata's structural anti-racist critique to Hutchings's embodied experience as Māori-Indian—illustrates both the depth of legitimate grievance against Parmar's political actions and the imperative for anti-racist practice that does not reproduce the very harm it seeks to challenge. The CCA framework is instructive here: genuine anti-racism must centre subaltern solidarity rather than reproducing lateral violence between communities that share, in Ngata's words, a common coloniser.

The Upper Caste Performance of Victimhood

Parmar's response to the haka is analytically significant. She framed the incident through the language of racism—"racism in any form is unacceptable"—and positioned herself as defending the dignity of the Indian community: "Many in the Indian community have come to New Zealand seeking opportunity, safety, and a sense of belonging. They deserve to be treated with dignity" (RNZ, 2026d; Newstalk ZB, 2026). This response is typical of what Dutta (2025) identifies as upper caste Indian mobilisation of victimhood: the capacity to invoke the framework of racism when critiqued by Māori, without owning the racism one perpetuates through specific policy frames and parliamentary actions. Parmar's framing erases her own role in the very conditions that produce anti-Indian sentiment: her attacks on Te Tiriti, her pursuit of penalties for Māori cultural expression, her targeting of kaupapa Māori education, and her alignment with ACT's broader project of dismantling Indigenous rights all contribute to the polarisation that makes Indian communities vulnerable to backlash.

Shane Jones, the "Butter Chicken Tsunami" and the Mainstreaming of Racist Language

In the same week as the haka controversy, New Zealand First deputy leader Shane Jones described the India Free Trade Agreement as a "butter chicken tsunami coming to New Zealand," claiming that unfettered immigration would drive down wages, clog roads, and overwhelm health services (RNZ, 2026f; RNZ, 2026g). Race Relations Commissioner Melissa Derby called the comments "outrageous and uncalled for," describing the rhetoric as dehumanising (RNZ, 2026f). Labour leader Chris Hipkins called the remarks "overt racism" (RNZ, 2026g). National's Carlos Cheung, MP for Mount Roskill, explicitly labelled the comments racist. Prime Minister Luxon described them as "unacceptable" and "alarmist" but notably stopped short of calling them racist (RNZ, 2026g).

Jones's comments did not emerge in isolation. They landed, as economist Shamubeel Eaqub documented in the second Social Cohesion in New Zealand report, in a context where public attitudes toward immigration are hardening rapidly, with 36 percent of New Zealanders saying immigration levels are too high, and over half believing that immigrants do not make good citizens—sentiments specifically directed at Indian and Chinese communities (Newsroom, 2026). Jones's racist language, deployed by a senior Cabinet minister with a national

platform, legitimised, mainstreamed, and catalysed the anti-Indian racism already circulating through far-right networks and online platforms. The trajectory from Jones's "butter chicken tsunami" to the Papatoetoe graffiti reading "Kill All Indian" is not a coincidence but a predictable escalation: when political leaders deploy dehumanising language targeting specific ethnic communities, the conditions for physical violence are created.

The India Free Trade Agreement: Opaqueness, Mistrust and the Falure of Dialogue

The India-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement has become a flashpoint precisely because it has been negotiated and advanced without adequate transparency, dialogue, or public engagement. The opacity of the agreement's terms, the absence of meaningful discussion about its implications for immigration, labour markets, and social infrastructure, and the failure of media to ask critical questions have all contributed to a vacuum that is readily filled by racist rhetoric and conspiracy. The FTA provides for up to 5,000 additional temporary work visas, yet political opponents have been able to construct narratives of "mass invasion" and "unfettered immigration" precisely because the government has not proactively engaged the public in honest dialogue about the agreement's actual provisions and their implications.

Te Pāti Māori raised concerns about the absence of Te Tiriti obligations within the trade agreement framework—a legitimate structural question about how international trade agreements interact with the foundational document of Aotearoa (NZ City, 2025). The trade unions called for transparency. Yet these substantive questions were drowned out by the spectacle of racist language and political point-scoring. The rising public mistrust—which Eaqub's research documents as extending to declining trust in government institutions broadly—further feeds anti-Indian racism by creating conditions where populations are susceptible to scapegoating narratives. Immigration must be discussed honestly and transparently, anchored in Te Tiriti obligations and the values of social cohesion, rather than being weaponised through racist language that targets specific ethnic communities.

THE IMMIGRATION (ENHANCED RISK MANAGEMENT) AMENDMENT BILL: TRUMPIAN LOGICS IN AOTEAROA'S IMMIGRATION INFRASTRUCTURE

The Immigration (Enhanced Risk Management) Amendment Bill, introduced to Parliament on 18 March 2026, represents a significant structural intensification of the anti-migrant policy architecture within which anti-Indian racism operates. While framed by Immigration Minister Erica Stanford as "practical, targeted improvements" to "detect, deter, and respond to risk in a firm but fair way" (Beehive, 2026), the Bill's provisions fundamentally shift the immigration system away from its humanitarian orientation toward one built on suspicion and control (Marlowe & Fadgen, 2026). The Bill extends deportation liability for residence class visa holders from 10 to 20 years for serious offences, removes appeal rights against deportation on humanitarian grounds for temporary visa holders, expands immigration officers' powers to demand identification from suspected overstayers in homes and workplaces, restricts asylum claimants' ability to apply for alternative visas, and introduces the concept of "bad faith" claims—whereby a claimant's asylum case could be discounted if they are deemed to have contributed to their own risk through media or political activity (Immigration Amendment Bill, 2026; MBIE, 2026).

The Trumpian character of these proposals is not merely rhetorical. As Marlowe and Fadgen (2026) document in their analysis for The Conversation, the Bill shares the preemptive logic of enforcement-first immigration regimes: suspect first, verify later, enabled by expanded surveillance and reduced transparency. Green MP Ricardo Menéndez March described the Bill as "Trump-inspired, MAGA-loving" legislation targeting undocumented migrants (RNZ, 2026h). The US experience under the second Trump administration illustrates how quickly a protection framework can transform: deportations increase, access to asylum is constrained,

enforcement capacity grows, and refugee admissions are reduced while access to judges narrows and enforcement extends into everyday spaces (Marlowe & Fadgen, 2026). New Zealand is not yet at that point, but the direction of policy drift is recognisable and deeply concerning.

ACT's Parmjeet Parmar—the same MP who has targeted Te Tiriti, kaupapa Māori education, and Māori cultural expression—has positioned herself as wanting to go further still, proposing that deportation liability for residence visa holders should be unlimited for serious crimes. NZ First leader Winston Peters responded on social media that even ACT's proposal "doesn't even touch the sides" (Marlowe & Fadgen, 2026). This competitive escalation—where coalition partners outbid each other on punitive immigration measures in an election year—creates a ratchet effect that normalises increasingly harsh treatment of migrant communities while providing a structural backdrop that legitimises anti-Indian and anti-migrant racism more broadly. Labour's Phil Twyford described the entire package as "election-year politicking at the expense of migrants and refugees" (RNZ, 2026h).

The "bad faith" provision is particularly troubling from a CCA perspective on communicative inequality. By penalising asylum seekers who draw attention to their situation through media or political activity, the Bill creates a paradox that directly attacks subaltern voice: remain invisible and your claim may lack evidence; become visible and your claim may be discounted. This provision effectively criminalises the very communicative agency that the CCA identifies as essential for marginalised communities to articulate their experiences and demand justice (Dutta, 2021). The Bill's restrictions on asylum claimants—preventing them from switching to work or partnership visas if they withdraw their claims—further constrain agency, trapping people in precarious legal positions that increase vulnerability to exploitation.

ACT'S ELECTION IMMIGRATION PLATFORM AND THE NEW CITIZENSHIP VALUES TEST: THE WHITENESS OF THE DEFINITIONAL FRAMEWORK

On 3 May 2026, ACT leader David Seymour released the party's election immigration platform, a six-point plan that includes deporting serious non-citizen offenders regardless of how long they have been in New Zealand, a five-year welfare stand-down period for all residency visa holders, a $6 daily infrastructure surcharge for temporary work visa holders, strengthened English language requirements, a specialised Immigration New Zealand enforcement unit targeting overstayers, and a requirement that migrants "share [the country's] values of tolerance, freedom and democracy" (NZ Herald, 2026b; ACT, 2026). Seymour framed New Zealand as a "settler society" that had been "built by people willing to make a journey to try and build something better," explicitly erasing the Indigenous foundation of Aotearoa and positioning settler colonialism as the nation's originary narrative (NZ Herald, 2026b).

Ethnic community leaders responded with outrage. Shail Rishi of the Ethnic Communities Advisory Board described the five-year welfare stand-down as "horrific" and "inhuman," noting that the policy demanded economic contributions from migrants while refusing to invest in their wellbeing (RNZ, 2026i). Others likened elements of the policy to the discriminatory poll tax that was historically imposed on Chinese immigrants in New Zealand—a comparison that underscores the racialised character of the proposals beneath their ostensibly neutral framing (RNZ, 2026i). The $6 daily infrastructure surcharge for temporary workers—amounting to over $2,000 annually—would disproportionately burden low-wage migrant workers from the Global South, including Indian workers in the very sectors (hospitality, agriculture, logistics) where exploitation is already documented.

Notably, ACT's proposals drew criticism from within the coalition itself. Immigration Minister Erica Stanford publicly stated that Seymour "hasn't thought through" the policy implications, warning that the measures would hurt businesses and farmers who depend on migrant labour (NZ Herald, 2026d). This intra-coalition

fracture exposes the tension between the economic dependence on migrant workers and the political utility of anti-migrant rhetoric in an election year. As The Spinoff (2026) observed, New Zealand's current immigration debate echoes something out of the 1870s—when similar anxieties about the racial and cultural character of the nation were mobilised to justify exclusionary policies targeting Chinese immigrants. The historical parallel is instructive: the same arguments about cultural incompatibility, economic threat, and values misalignment that were used to justify the poll tax and other discriminatory measures are being recycled in contemporary form, now targeting Indian and other Global South communities through the language of "values," "infrastructure," and "risk management."

The new citizenship values test announced by Prime Minister Luxon on 7 May 2026 further illustrates the whiteness of the definitional framework shaping immigration policy. From late 2027, citizenship applicants will be required to pass a test covering the Bill of Rights Act, criminal offences, voting rights, democratic principles, and the structure of government, needing seventy-five percent of questions correct (RNZ, 2026j; NZ Herald, 2026c; 1News, 2026a). Internal Affairs Minister Brooke van Velden stated the test would ensure people understood "the values of democratic freedoms" that make New Zealand "wonderful" (RNZ, 2026j). Immigration lawyer Pooja Sundar dismissed it as "a solution without a problem," questioning whether any data showed that knowledge of these topics made better citizens (RNZ, 2026j).

From a CCA perspective, the most significant feature of both the ACT platform and the citizenship values test is what they omit: Te Tiriti o Waitangi. The values framework makes no mention of Te Tiriti as the foundational document of Aotearoa, no reference to the obligations of all people in this land to tangata whenua, no engagement with tikanga Māori as a constitutive element of what it means to belong here. The "values" being tested—the Bill of Rights Act, democratic principles, governmental structures—are exclusively framed through Westminster constitutional traditions, reproducing a vision of New Zealand citizenship that is culturally and structurally white. This is not an accidental omission. It is consistent with ACT's broader project of erasing Te Tiriti from public life, from the Treaty Principles Bill to Parmar's opposition to Te Tiriti courses at universities. The citizenship values test, in this light, is not merely a neutral administrative measure but a tool for reproducing the settler colonial vision of Aotearoa as a "settler society" in which Te Tiriti obligations are invisible and Māori sovereignty is unrecognised.

The convergence of these immigration proposals—the Enhanced Risk Management Bill's enforcement-first logic, ACT's punitive election platform, and the Te Tiriti-erasing citizenship values test—constitutes a comprehensive structural assault on migrant communities and Indigenous rights simultaneously. These policies create the institutional conditions within which anti-Indian racism flourishes: when the state itself frames migrants as risks to be managed, economic burdens to be surcharge-taxed, and culturally suspect populations requiring values testing, the ground is prepared for far-right actors, racist politicians, and ordinary citizens to escalate from policy to prejudice to violence. The trajectory from the Immigration Amendment Bill to Shane Jones's "butter chicken tsunami" to the Papatoetoe graffiti is not a sequence of unrelated events but a single structural logic operating at different registers of state power, political discourse, and street-level violence.

PATHWAYS TO TRANSFORMATION: CULTURE-CENTRED SOLUTIONS

Anchoring in Te Tiriti o Waitangi

Any meaningful response to anti-Indian racism in Aotearoa must begin with anchoring in Te Tiriti o Waitangi as the foundational document of the nation. For the Indian diaspora, this means understanding that migrant rights in Aotearoa are fundamentally linked to Indigenous rights—that the framework enabling diverse communities to live, work, and practice their cultures in this land is premised on the Treaty relationship

between Māori and the Crown. Dutta (2025) argues that balancing immigration and migrant rights with Indigenous rights lies at the heart of how migration from India is managed. This requires the Indian diaspora to actively support Māori sovereignty rather than aligning with settler colonial campaigns that undermine Te Tiriti, as segments of the community have done through supporting the Treaty Principles Bill and Hobson's Pledge campaigns.

Building Solidarity Across Communities of Colour

The culture-centred approach calls for building solidarity as a practice of anti-racism anchored in subaltern agency (Dutta, 2023). Tuiono and Dutta (2019) argue for solidarity in anti-racist struggles as a culture-centred intervention that connects diverse communities of colour through shared structural analysis of white supremacy. For the Indian community in Aotearoa, this means actively weaving together anti-racist practices that connect Indians to Māori, Pasifika, and other communities of colour—not through the neoliberal multicultural logic of celebrating diversity, but through sustained organising against shared structures of oppression.

The joint response to Tamaki's Queen Street rally—where Islamic, Sikh, Buddhist, and Hindu organisations came together with Māori leaders to condemn religious hatred—provides a model for such solidarity. Kapa-Kingi's statement of solidarity from Toitū Te Tiriti—"To our whānau who are Muslim, Buddhist, Sikh, Hindu, Palestinian, Rainbow and Takatāpui, we see you and commit to standing by you against violence"—exemplifies the kind of relational solidarity the CCA envisions (NRI Affairs, 2025).

Culture-Centred Community-Led Dialogues

The CCA prioritises community-led dialogues as spaces for subaltern voice and co-created knowledge production (Dutta, 2008, 2021). Addressing the multiple dimensions of anti-Indian racism requires creating dialogue spaces within and across Indian communities that can grapple with difficult questions: the role of Hindutva in diaspora politics, the reproduction of anti-Māori racism, the diversity of Indian experiences that are erased by neoliberal multicultural framings, and the conditions of precarious labour that many Indian migrants face. These dialogues must be led by the communities most affected—including Dalit, Muslim, Sikh, and other marginalised Indian voices that are routinely excluded from dominant community representations.

Such conversations must also create space for intergenerational dialogue, addressing the fear and anxiety experienced by families and children—as the Papatoetoe graffiti so starkly illustrates. Community members described parents worried about sending children back to school and the lasting psychological impact of targeted hate messages on young people (RNZ, 2026a). Culture-centred dialogues can provide community-owned frameworks for processing collective trauma while building collective agency for structural change.

Addressing White Supremacy and Racism in Politics

The political mainstreaming of anti-Indian racism demands political responses. Community leaders and ethnic organisations have repeatedly called for strengthened hate speech laws—calls intensified after both the Queen Street rally and the Papatoetoe graffiti (RNZ, 2025a; NZ Herald, 2025c). The Federation of Islamic Associations, Combined Sikh Association, and NZ Buddhist Council specifically urged the government to implement a sustained strategy for social cohesion, noting that current regulatory gaps are exploited by hate actors. Sher Singh, president of Migrant Rights Network NZ, called for community pressure on the government to find lasting solutions (RNZ, 2026b).

Addressing racism in politics also requires confronting the ways in which mainstream political actors contribute to the conditions that enable hate. This includes the political mobilisation of anti-Māori sentiment through policies like the Treaty Principles Bill, which legitimate the white supremacist framework within which

anti-Indian racism also flourishes. As Rata, Brayne, and Barber (2023) argue, Māori sovereignty or death is not a rhetorical flourish but a structural analysis of the stakes of colonial governance. The Indian diaspora's political engagement must centre support for Te Tiriti and opposition to all forms of racialised targeting rather than aligning with settler colonial power for short-term political advantage.

Having Difficult Dialogues on Immigration, Te Tiriti and Social Cohesion

Addressing anti-Indian racism requires having difficult, honest dialogues about immigration, Te Tiriti, the social fabric and character of Aotearoa—in ways that lift the mana and dignity of diverse ethnic communities rather than weaponising these questions for political gain. The current discourse has failed spectacularly: legitimate questions about immigration levels, infrastructure capacity, and social cohesion have been hijacked by racist language and scapegoating, while genuine engagement with how Te Tiriti should frame immigration policy has been avoided by both the government and opposition parties. What is needed are community-led, culture-centred dialogues that bring together tangata whenua, diverse migrant communities, trade unions, and civil society organisations to discuss immigration within a Te Tiriti framework—one that centres Māori sovereignty while affirming the dignity and rights of all communities who make Aotearoa home.

Such dialogues must confront the role of political actors in stoking division. When a senior minister uses racist language like "butter chicken tsunami," or when an MP targets kaupapa Māori education and Māori cultural expression while simultaneously claiming to defend migrant dignity, these contradictions must be named and challenged. The Indian diaspora—in all its diversity—must be part of these conversations, but so must Māori, Pasifika, and other communities affected by immigration policy. The CCA's emphasis on co-created knowledge and community ownership of solutions provides the framework: these dialogues cannot be imposed from above by government agencies or managed by political parties, but must emerge from the communities most affected, creating genuinely shared understandings of how Aotearoa can welcome new communities while honouring its Te Tiriti foundations.

A Te Tiriti-based Values Framework and Citizenship Test

The whiteness of the government's proposed citizenship values test demands not merely critique but a concrete alternative. This paper proposes that any values framework for citizenship in Aotearoa must be anchored in Te Tiriti o Waitangi as the foundational document of the nation. A Te Tiriti-based values test would assess prospective citizens' understanding of the Treaty relationship between Māori and the Crown; the obligations of all people living in Aotearoa to uphold tino rangatiratanga; the significance of te reo Māori as a taonga and official language; the principles of kaitiakitanga (guardianship) in relation to the natural environment; the history of colonisation and its ongoing structural effects; and the role of diverse communities in honouring Te Tiriti through solidarity and mutual respect.

Such a framework would fundamentally reorient what it means to belong in Aotearoa. Rather than testing whether migrants can recite Westminster constitutional facts, a Te Tiriti-based values test would ask whether all who seek to make this land home—including those already here—understand and commit to the relationship with tangata whenua that makes their presence possible. This is not an assimilationist demand but a relational one: it asks for understanding and commitment to the unique constitutional and cultural foundations of Aotearoa, grounded in the recognition that Indigenous sovereignty and migrant rights are mutually constitutive rather than competing.

The CCA provides the framework for how such a test should be developed: not by government officials in Wellington reproducing colonial knowledge, but through genuine co-creation with Māori communities and diverse migrant communities who can together articulate what belonging in Aotearoa means from subaltern perspectives. The process of developing the test would itself be an act of culture-centred dialogue—modelling

the kind of community-led, Te Tiriti-anchored conversation this paper calls for across immigration policy more broadly. Such a framework would also apply to all residents, not just immigrants—addressing the reality that many New Zealand-born citizens, as the Treaty Principles Bill and Hobson's Pledge campaigns demonstrate, lack understanding of Te Tiriti obligations that should be foundational to life in Aotearoa.

Regulating Digital Platforms

Platform regulation represents a critical structural intervention. Drawing on CARE's work on hate speech regulation (Dutta et al., 2021), this paper calls for binding regulatory frameworks that impose meaningful accountability on platforms for the amplification of racial hate. This includes mandatory transparency reporting on hate speech removal, algorithmic accountability requirements that address the amplification of extremist content, accessible and culturally appropriate complaint mechanisms for racialised communities, and meaningful sanctions for platform failure. The current self-regulatory approach has demonstrably failed to protect communities from digital hate that translates into physical violence.

Supporting Community Safety and Wellbeing

Immediate responses must address community safety and wellbeing. This includes enhanced police responsiveness to hate crimes with culturally competent investigation; funded community safety planning led by affected communities; accessible mental health support for communities experiencing racialised targeting; and school-based interventions that address racist bullying through the structural frameworks developed in CARE's work on racist bullying in schools (Dutta & Alam-Simmons, 2026). These responses must be community-led rather than imposed by institutions that have historically failed to protect racialised communities.

CONCLUSION

The rise of anti-Indian racism in Aotearoa New Zealand represents both an urgent crisis and a structural condition rooted in overlapping formations of white supremacy, neoliberal multiculturalism, Hindutva nationalism, Christian nationalism, and inadequate platform governance. The culture-centred approach reveals these as interconnected rather than isolated phenomena, each contributing to the communicative infrastructure that produces and normalises anti-Indian hate.

Critically, addressing anti-Indian racism requires confronting the internal contradictions within the Indian diaspora: the role of Hindutva in reproducing cultural essentialism, the enactment of anti-Māori racism by segments of the community aligned with settler colonial politics, and the model minority performances that entrench rather than challenge white supremacist hierarchies. Genuine anti-racism cannot be selectively applied—it demands solidarity with Māori sovereignty and with all communities targeted by white supremacy.

The pathways forward are clear, even as the work is difficult: anchoring in Te Tiriti o Waitangi as the foundation for all communities in Aotearoa; building sustained solidarity across communities of colour; creating culture-centred community-led dialogues that address both external targeting and internal divisions; demanding political accountability for the mainstreaming of racist rhetoric; and regulating digital platforms as sites of structural violence. The Indian community in Aotearoa—in all its diversity—deserves safety, belonging, and freedom from racial violence. Achieving this requires dismantling the structures that produce hate while building the solidarities that enable genuine justice.

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