



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### Reimagining an Anti-Caste Future

*Multimedia Dalit Art Exhibition and Dance Party Brings Together Over 30 International Artists of South Asian Origin*

**Oakland, CA, March 21, 2024** - The Asian American Women Artists Association (AAWAA), Oakland Asian Cultural Center, ARTogether and Discostan present '*Dalit Dreamlands: Toward an Anti-Caste Future*,' a multimedia Dalit art exhibition and dance party, happening April 6, 2024, will bring together over 30 multiply marginalized artists from Dalit, Adivasi, Bahujan, Afro-Indian, Indo-Caribbean, Indo-Fijian and Muslim communities to showcase the depths of creativity and community. This event, supported by AAWAA's Emerging Curator's Program, will center queer and trans caste abolitionist futurisms through art across various mediums, including fashion design, music, performance, film, painting and visuals.

South Asians are often perceived as a monolithic group; however, behind this "shared brownness" there is an ancient and deeply violent separation of social classes. Dalit is a caste marker for caste-oppressed communities formerly known as *Untouchables*, Adivasi refers to tribes who are indigenous to South Asia, and Bahujan is an umbrella term that includes all caste-oppressed communities. Dalits are considered impure & have been oppressed for centuries by caste-privileged people who dictate what Dalit people should wear, how they speak, whom they can marry, what resources they can access, and the kinds of art they are allowed to engage with. South Asians are far from a monolith: a Dalit dad's (grandmother's) hands tell wildly different stories than those of the matriarch in a caste-privileged family. *Dalit Dreamlands* is here to tell these stories.

*Dalit Dreamlands*'s curator, Manu Kaur, is a descendant of Dalit oppression and challenges the "shared brownness" narrative to highlight how casteism still permeates all societies that contain communities of South Asian origin: "The idea for this exhibition was born after an incredibly painful year, during which I almost lost my life. I am hoping this exhibition will make my ancestors proud. Too often, society talks about the trauma and pain associated with being caste-oppressed. But what about our celebration and healing?"

Manu envisions an artistic ecosystem for this exhibition that presents their own version of Begampura, otherwise known as the 'land without sorrow,' a utopian casteless society introduced by Dalit guru Guru Ravidas over six centuries ago. Manu's Begampura is queer, trans, anti-caste, and pro-liberation of all oppressed communities in this global climate. *Dalit Dreamlands* is a safe space for caste-oppressed and marginalized South Asians to dismantle shame and reclaim their power as strong creatives and visionaries without being forced to operate under the stereotype of what people want 'Dalit' or 'Adivasi' art to look like. Jai Bhim, Jai Savitri, Jai Fatima\*.

*Dalit Dreamlands* is a multi-venue experience that will feature art at both the Oakland Asian Cultural Center and ARTogether. The opening reception will lead into a dance party at 7th West in collaboration with Discostan, a diasporic discotheque which imagines past, present and future soundscapes from Beirut to Bangkok via Bombay. London-based trans Dalit artist Mya Mehmi from Pxssy Palace – an arts platform rooted in intentional nightlife,

celebrating black, indigenous and people of color who are women, queer, intersex, trans or non-binary – will be one of four guest DJs and performers at the event in collaboration with Discostan's Arshia Fatima Haq. Other DJs include Seema Hari and DJ Anjali, as well as a performance by singer Manpreet Singh, a flash tattoo shop, and an art station. *Dalit Dreamlands* is a historic event that marks one of the first queer Dalit centered spaces to exist in California. This is an event you don't want to miss.

**CURATOR:** Manu Kaur, AAWAA Emerging Curator Fellow

**PRESENTATION PARTNERS:**

Asian American Women Artists Association, Oakland Asian Cultural Center, ARTogether, Discostan

**EXHIBITION DATES:** April 6 - June 10, 2024

**April 6, 2024:** Art Exhibition Opening and Reception

The opening reception takes place across two nearby venues that both host the exhibiting artists' work

**5:30 - 7:30 pm**

Oakland Asian Cultural Center  
388 9th St Ste 290, Oakland, CA 94607

**6:00 pm - 8:00 pm**

ARTogether  
1200 Harrison St  
Oakland, CA 94612

**8 pm - 1 am:** Dalit Dreamlands Zindagi Dance Party featuring Dalit Bahujan DJs Arshia Fatima (Discostan), Mya Mehmi of Pxxsy Palace (LDN), Seema Hari (LA), and DJ Anjali (PDX)

7th West  
1255 7th St, Oakland, CA 94607

**DALIT DREAMLANDS ARTIST LIST**

1. Rinku Kumari @exploring\_the\_self\_
2. Jessie Sohpaol @jessiesohpaol
3. Shivam Kamble @shivamkambles
4. Nazrina Rodjan @nazrinarodjan & @studionaz.art
5. Manpreet Singh @monaymusic
6. Malvika Raj @malvikarajart
7. Seema Mattu @seemaworld\_
8. Mya Mehmi @myamehmi\_
9. Seema Hari @seemahari
10. Shyama Kuver @heartovercrown
11. Akhil Kang @Kangbang09
12. Kaushik Tadvı @kauushhik
13. Rahee Punyashloka @artedkar
14. Aravind Chedayan @aravind\_chedayan
15. Ajay Madhukar Dhoke @unodkhi
16. Shweta Ashokraj @marudaanimummy

17. Students at Ashoka Shishu Vihara Children's School @asvbangalore
18. Kamna Singh @Kamnaesque
19. Anika Nawar Ullah @ko.ko.muni
20. Aindriya Barua @huesonmycanvas
21. Ramnath Siddi
22. Siddi Tribe of Karnataka
23. Nrithya Pillai @nrithyapillai
24. Dalit Queer Project @dalitqueerproject
25. Parth Pawar @artwalahoe
26. Imaan Abbasi @imzys.photos
27. Sri Vamsi Matta @srivamsimatta
28. Purushu Arie @purushuarie
29. Shradha Raj @shredasaur
30. Jay Sagathia @jaysagathia
31. Dee Chawla @deesensitize
32. Mia Kaur @dmightymia
33. Kunu Bodhi @qnriri
34. Rohini bhadarge @nili\_chimani
35. John Ramachandran @rainblue\_robin
36. Kulpreet Rana @ranakulpreet
37. DJ Anjali @anjaliandthekid
38. DJ Arshia @arshiaxfatima & @discostan
39. DJ Seema Hari @seemahari
40. Simrah Farrukh @simrahfarrukh

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\*Jai Bhim, Jai Savitri, and Jai Fatima are a few of the greetings and slogans used by folks who are committed to the anti-caste movement. Jai means "victory" or "long live". Jai Bhim specifically honors Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, a Dalit social reformer and activist who led the liberation movement for Dalit people in India. Jai Savitri honors Savitribai Phule, one of India's first woman teachers who advocated and fought hard for education access for caste-oppressed girls and women. Jai Fatima honors Fatima Sheikh, India's first Muslim woman teacher who worked alongside the Phule family to provide education to caste-oppressed children. There are many more radical activists who fought for the rights of caste-oppressed communities and we honor and appreciate all of them.

\*\*The organizers of *Dalit Dreamlands* would also like to acknowledge that this is the first time an art exhibition of this caliber has been planned and executed in the so-called Bay Area. The organizers ask for grace and understanding as they navigate the complexities and nuances of identities and oppression. Though efforts have been made to have a variety of artists coming from different marginalized communities, it is impossible to include every multiply marginalized South Asian identity or culture in this one event and unfair to expect that labor from a Dalit femme curator. We hold this event with the hope that *Dalit Dreamlands* will open doors to more events and spaces that challenge the mainstream privileged narrative of South Asian representation.

\*\*\*Statement of Fierce Solidarity with Palestine: No Dalit liberation without Palestinian Liberation

Dalit Dreamlands stands in solidarity with the liberation of Palestine. The organizers would like to acknowledge the incongruous discomfort experienced in organizing this art exhibition and dance party during the brutal

genocide of the Palestinian people. Dalit liberation is deeply tied to Palestine and we feel a strong commitment to the people and land of Palestine. We dream of land back to the Palestinian people, to the Indigenous people of Turtle Island, to the Dalit and Adivasi people of India, and an end to all occupations globally. We recognize that our liberations are interconnected and so is our joy. Free Palestine, Congo, and Sudan. Jai Bhim!

**About AAWAA**

[Asian American Women Artists Association](#) serves Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) women-identified and nonbinary artists. Its mission is to advance the visibility and recognition of AAPI women in the arts. Based in San Francisco with membership in the Bay Area and across the US, AAWAA has consistently promoted both local and national efforts to achieve its mission, defining and redefining the contributions of Asian American women artists since its founding in 1989 by noted regional artists Betty Nobue Kano and Flo Oy Wong along with Mills College professor Moira Roth and artist Bernice Bing. Established as a nonprofit in 2007, AAWAA has produced exhibitions, publications, public programs and offers an informative website as an accessible resource and portal for educators, academics, researchers, arts and social justice communities and the general public.