

Call for Papers: special issue of *Ethnic Studies Review* One Century After *Thind*

Due Date: April 15, 2022

Publication Date: Early 2023

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Description

The 1923 Supreme Court case, *United States v. Bhagat Singh Thind* (*U.S. v. Thind*) has become a flashpoint for multiple analyses of South Asian racialization in the U.S., at times positioned as evidence of Asian exclusion and, at others, an attempt to “claim whiteness” as a strategy of inclusion. The upcoming centenary of *U.S. v. Thind* offers an opportunity to revisit the case itself as well as take up broader questions regarding migration, citizenship, caste, and racialization and to examine naturalization as a site of inquiry beyond immigrant incorporation.

The case considered whether Thind, an Indian immigrant, was eligible for naturalization based on the criteria in the Naturalization Acts of 1790 and 1870 that extended citizenship to “free white persons” and then to “aliens of African nativity and persons of African descent” respectively. Thind’s lawyers argued that “the high caste Hindu of full Indian blood” was eligible for naturalization as he was a member of the “Aryan race” and thus Caucasian or white. The Supreme Court rejected this line of argument. It conceded that while Thind may be Caucasian, as per the racial science of the time and as affirmed through the earlier case of *Ozawa v. United States* (1922), being categorized as Caucasian was not equivalent to being white. The court ruled that Thind did not meet the “common understanding” of white “by unscientific men—in classifying [Caucasians] together in the statutory category as white persons.” This case provided the final decision on Asian naturalization until all racial restrictions were lifted in 1952.

This special issue of *Ethnic Studies Review* seeks original scholarly essays, pedagogical and/or activist reflections, book reviews, and creative engagements (visual art, poetry, etc.) that take up

questions and themes generated by this landmark case. We invite scholars, educators, artists, activists, and others working in South Asian American/South Asian Diaspora Studies, Asian American Studies, Ethnic Studies, Women's and Gender Studies and other fields to reflect on the *Thind* case and/or its continuing significance broadly. We particularly seek submissions that take an intersectional and/or comparative approach in their examination of the case and its afterlives. We also welcome pedagogical pieces that reflect upon teaching *U.S. v. Thind* in the classroom or other settings.

Potential topics can include:

South Asian migration and racialization

- South Asian migration and racialization within the social and political context of the U.S.
- Histories of South Asian migration in relationship to India as a colonial site and transnational anti-colonial movements
- Implications of the case, including how South Asian American migration and racialization is shaped by caste, class, and other social positions
- Comparative examples of legal and everyday belonging from the South Asian diaspora

Social/legal histories and contemporary examination of naturalization

- Social and historical context of other racial prerequisite cases
- Comparative analyses of *U.S. v. Thind* and other legal cases
- Analyses of gendered and sexual dimensions of naturalization laws and processes
- Social histories of naturalization and citizenship laws in the United States and other sites, particularly as they relate to migration and racialization
- Past and contemporary relationships between naturalization and settler colonialism

Arts and Activism

- Forms of belonging and exclusion that transcend naturalization and citizenship
- South Asian and other racial solidarities
- Creative reflections and visual pieces on *U.S. v. Thind* or the racial prerequisite cases

Further Information

Please email the Guest Editors with any questions about this special issue, including possible essay topics or creative formats.

Full journal submission guidelines: <https://online.ucpress.edu/esr/pages/submit>

Questions about journal or submissions process:

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Complete submissions are due by April 15, 2022.