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AHC RESPONDS TO UNSUCCESSFUL VIRGINIA SENATE CONFIRMATION OF SUPARNA DUTTA TO VIRGINIA STATEWIDE SCHOOL BOARD DUE TO A VIRGINIA MOSQUE IMAM'S HATE SPEECH

STERLING VIRIGINIA – February 21, 2023. The failure of confirmation of Suparna Dutta's appointment to the Statewide School Board on the floor of the Virginia State Senate just one week after a 14-1 bipartisan committee vote approving her confirmation is a shameful day for the Commonwealth of Virginia legislature, mired in hate speech and unsubstantiated character assassination. This extraordinary event marked by Virginia State Senators (including Senator Ghazala Hashmi, an Indian American Muslim) succumbing to false allegations of "Hindu Extremism" and affiliation with White Supremacists groups, which was lodged by Rafi Ahmed, Imam, Dar Al-Noor Mosque in Manassas Virginia, was never vetted for truthfulness and Suparna Dutta was never allowed an opportunity to publicly defend herself.

Two articles (Real Clear Politics; News India Times) attached to this Press Release provide context.

Regarding Rafi Ahmed's accusation against American Hindu Coalition of being a Hindu Extremist Organization, AHC Chairman Shekhar Tiwari responded with a brief comment: "The American Hindu Coalition advocates policy positions based on Hindu enlightenment principles that are closely aligned with the U.S. Constitution. We are not a Hindu religious organization. Our board membership and our various chapter leadership comprise of Hindus, Christians, and Muslims. We have supported Christian and Muslim political candidates, recently campaigning to elect Aisha Khan, a Pakistani-American Sunni Muslim, for Maryland Delegate. We have worked with Muslim and Jewish religious organizations, both of minority faiths, to submit amicus briefs before federal courts in support of our freedom to practice our faith without government infringement."

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[Smearing a Hindu American Woman of Color as a 'White Supremacist' | RealClearPolitics](#)

Smearing a Hindu American Woman of Color as a 'White Supremacist'

COMMENTARY

By Asra Q. Nomani * Real Clear Politics

February 18, 2023

Right after 11 a.m., Monday, Feb. 6, Democratic Virginia state Sen. Chap Petersen was walking up a hill to a session of the state legislature in Richmond when his phone rang. The caller was Rafi Ahmed, the Pakistan American cofounder of the Dar Al-Noor Mosque in Manassas, Va., and board chair of the Virginia Council of Muslim Organizations, overseeing 10 mosques in Northern Virginia. According to people familiar with the call, Ahmed went straight to the point: Vote no against Suparna Dutta, a Northern Virginia mother and citizen activist whom Republican Gov. Glenn Youngkin had nominated to the Virginia Board of Education. His issue wasn't partisan. Petersen could vote yes on Youngkin's other Republican nominees.

"Suparna Dutta belongs to an anti-Muslim Hindu extremist organization," Ahmed claimed, apparently referring to the [American Hindu Coalition](#), a bipartisan Virginia-based grassroots organization of Indian Americans. For years, as a national Muslim leader, Ahmed has been [campaigning](#) against India's Hindu leaders over [alleged "genocide"](#) against Muslims in the country, one time [posting a tweet](#) mocking India for its "so called world largest democracy" and punctuating his remark with "#indianterrorism."

Other Pakistani American Muslim leaders and community members flooded Petersen with the same refrain, according to people familiar with the calls, including: Raheel Sheikh, another leader at Dar Al-Noor mosque and a onetime local Democratic political candidate; Atif Qarni, former state education secretary under Democratic Gov. Ralph Northam; and Babur Lateef, the Democrat who chairs the Prince William County school board. Petersen had [broken bread](#) with all of them at a political fundraiser for Sheikh.

They all repeated the same talking points: Dutta was a Hindu "extremist." None of the men provided evidence. None of the men returned numerous attempts to reach them for comment. In recent days,

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several constituents said Petersen told them: “I heard from elders at the mosque and other Muslim leaders that Suparna is an anti-Muslim extremist. Some of them are clients. I had to listen to them.”

But the men were joining a refrain building up against Dutta by left-leaning activists, according to [an investigation](#) I’ve just completed for Independent Women’s Network. There was an unholy alliance between these two groups – leftists, arguing “my body, my choice” for women’s rights, working with establishment Muslims who segregate women and girls at the mosque so they won’t be sexual distractions to men. In [a new book](#), released this week, I call this network the Woke Army, a red-green alliance that is destroying America’s freedom.

My investigation reveals that a network of leftist activists worked in concert with establishment Muslim leaders to put a hit on Dutta and defeat her nomination with an ugly character assassination campaign.

Two nights before the vote in Richmond, at 10:25 p.m., a Sunday, a far-left teachers’ union organization, Virginia Educators United (allied with the larger National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers) attacked Dutta from its Twitter account -- [@RedForEdVa](#), a not-so-subtle nod to the group’s self-proclaimed socialist agenda.

Posting photos from a parents’ rally Dutta had attended in October 2021, right after U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland had equated parents to extremists engaged in “domestic terrorism,” the Twitter user [@RedForEdVa](#) [called the event](#) “Suparna Dutta’s rally with America First.” A local right-wing activist, Fredy Burgos, had planted flags for America First Foundation behind parents with no clue about the controversial views of the group launched by a polarizing Christian nationalist, Nick Fuentes. Dutta didn’t know, and as a Hindu immigrant woman of color, certainly doesn’t support its bigoted ideas. Just days before the rally, Youngkin staffers had booted Burgos from a rally because he refused to remove a pin bearing Fuentes’ logo.

Within minutes, at 11:08 p.m., Vanessa Hall, cofounder of a 501(c)4 lobbying group, [4 Public Education](#), supporting northern Virginia’s mostly Democratic school boards, [posted a tweet](#) from her account [@V_TheClash](#), writing: “Keep white nationalism out of our Board of Education. Vote #NoToDutta.”

Before dawn the next morning on Monday, Feb. 7, Robert Rigby, a substitute teacher in Fairfax County Public Schools and a Dutta foe on local educational policy, [responded](#), drawing connections between Dutta and the “sacking of the US Capitol building on January 6, 2021,” “PizzaGate” and “Alex Jones’ InfoWars.”

At 7 a.m., Hall, the 501(c)4 lobbyist, [piped up](#), hand-drawing a circle around Dutta in a photo from the parents’ rally and pointing an arrow to the mother with a bold caption: “Suparna Dutta rallies with white nationalists.”

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There was no concern, of course, for the facts. “I had no idea what the flags were about,” Dutta told me. “I hardly knew Fredy Burgos, and I had never even heard of America First.”

Online support for the smears arrived from Sujatha Hampton, local education chair of the Fairfax County NAACP, and Makya Little, former president of the TJ Alumni Action Group, a Democratic candidate for state delegate from Prince William County and self-described “#EdEquity Advocate.” In 2020, both had fiercely opposed Dutta’s efforts to preserve the merit admissions test at her son’s school, Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology.

At 8:33 a.m., Juli Briskman, a Democrat who had flipped her middle finger at then-President Trump while riding her bike in Loudoun County, Va., earning her a seat in local office, wrote, “No thanks. #NotoDuta,” misspelling her name.

The barrage continued. At 10:45 a.m., the Herndon, Va., and Reston, Va., chapter of Indivisible, a progressive national organization, posted an explosive campaign from the “Virginia Grassroots Coalition,” which includes 51 leftist groups in the state, including the Virginia chapter of the socialist group Justice Democrats, noting: “Don’t let the Virginia Senate Confirm a Far-Right Extremist to the Board of Education.”

Not long after, the Pakistan American mosque leader, Ahmed, called Virginia state Sen. Petersen, with the icing on the cake, alleging that Dutta belonged to a “anti-Muslim Hindu extremist group.”

Shekhar Tiwari, chairman of the American Hindu Coalition, rejects the smears, saying his organization “advocates policy positions based on Hindu enlightenment principles that are closely aligned with the U.S. Constitution.”

How did this character assassination begin? One thing is clear: It happened fast. Just six days earlier, on the night of Tuesday, Jan. 31, the Virginia Senate Privileges and Elections Committee – including all of its Democratic members – voted unanimously 14-0, for Dutta’s nomination to the state Board of Education.

It was a remarkable journey for the immigrant from India. In 1947, her father, a Hindu refugee, crossed the border to West Bengal in India from a region that Pakistani military leaders were claiming as East Pakistan (later to become modern day Bangladesh after a war in 1971). Fleeing war with just his family and the clothes on his back, he walked miles from his family’s new home in a village to the closest school, enlisting in his teens in the Indian Air Force.

In the summer of 1993, Dutta, then 23, arrived in the United States for her graduate studies. Her assets consisted of her clothes, a supply of rice, lentils, and red kidney beans -- and \$250. As a grad student at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville, Dutta remembers once walking across campus, quarters in her pocket, wishing she could afford a burrito at Taco Bell.

In 2020, Dutta became an accidental activist (with me), spurred to speak to the school board of Fairfax County Public Schools when the principal at Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and

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Technology sent parents and students an email to check their “privileges” and join a “racial equity” campaign that eventually meant removing the merit admissions test to the school, ranked the No. 1 school in America by U.S. News & World Report. In resisting this ill-advised approach to a dubious policy, she became an instant hero to many local parents.

An omen appeared the very next day, however, on Feb. 1, when Dutta got into a back-and-forth with fellow board member Anne Holton, the wife of powerful Democratic Sen. Tim Kaine. Holton said the U.S. Constitution wasn’t “remarkable.”

Dutta, an immigrant from India, begged to differ. Little could she know how vicious and organized the response would be to her nomination. On Tuesday, Feb. 7, on the floor of the Virginia Senate, Democratic state Sen. Ghazala Hashmi, a Muslim immigrant from India, defamed Dutta with the “white supremacist” smear. Hashmi, Petersen, and the other 20 Democrats voted unanimously against Dutta. On a straight 22-18 party-line vote, she was defeated. On Twitter, the Woke Army cheered. At home, Dutta responded with the resilience and courage that is her hallmark. “It is a badge of honor,” she said. “I will never give up in my defense and love of America.”

Asra Q. Nomani is a former reporter for the Wall Street Journal and author of the new book, “Woke Army: The Red-Green Alliance That Is Destroying America’s Freedom.” She is a senior fellow in the practice of journalism at the Independent Women’s Network.

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<https://www.newsindiatimes.com/why-was-duttas-nomination-to-va-board-of-education-killed-last-minute/>

Why was Dutta's Nomination to VA Board of Education Killed Last Minute?

T. Vishnudatta Jayaraman * News India Times

February 13, 2023

The contentious decision, of the Virginia Democrat-led State Senate, on February 7, 2023, to reject the confirmation of Indian American Suparna Dutta to the State's Board of Education, is fraught with questions as to why Dutta's nomination was nixed last minute, even though a Senate Committee comprised of ten Democratic and four Republican Senators unanimously confirmed her for the position exactly a week prior to the Senate vote.

In an email to VA Democratic State Senator Chap Petersen, on February 10, Dutta questioned, "I was unanimously confirmed by the Senate Privileges and Elections Committee on January 31st. So, what changed in a week between that and the full Senate floor vote? The fact that I challenged Senator Tim Kaine's wife, Anne Holton, on her views about the constitution and socialism..."

"I understand that you spoke on the Senate floor the day after the BOE [Board of Education] confirmation vote. While I appreciate the conciliatory comments, it is too little, too late..." read Dutta's email to Petersen that further noted, "You said the Muslim elders told you that I belong to an extremist Hindu organization..." while naming a mosque in Falls Church and Muslim business associations that lobbied against her. News India Times was given access to Dutta's email exchanges with Petersen from February 7 and 10.

Questioning the timing of events that led to her removal, Dutta told News India Times on February 11, "After I was nominated by Governor Youngkin last July, the Senate Committee voted to approve my appointment unanimously on January 31. There were no issues until then. On February 1, I had an argument with Holton about founding documents. On February 6, I was informed that there was an amendment placed against me. Then, on February 7, Senator Ghazala Hashmi introduced a floor amendment S.J. 276 to remove my name from the Board appointments."

The February 7 email reveals, before the vote, Dutta asked Petersen for a meeting to defend herself. In response, Petersen wrote "Yes, I've been hit with a floodtide of comments on your nomination, some from the usual suspects but others from groups which have historically supported me on business and

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other issues...” adding Dutta has “become a lightning rod” and he is not happy to see these issues play out in social media and not raised in the Committee.

On the floor, Republican Senator Stephen Newman noted, “As a matter of fact, it didn’t happen until we got onto this floor. We went all the way through the committee system, and not a word about [Dutta] and not until yesterday did we see an amendment to take her off,” while asking Hashmi the reasons to remove Dutta’s name.

Hashmi responded, “This particular board member [Dutta] is being removed through this amendment because of concerns of a lack of work in the field of education... [she] has not been a part of education or any kind of educational entities, has not worked in the space of public education and therefore is not qualified to serve on the Board of Education.”

“In addition to the lack of background in education or educational expertise, [Dutta] has raised some serious issues around the concerns of racism, slavery, American history, [and] most recently in the discussions on Standards of Learning [Dutta] indicated that racism was not a factor in American history...” Hashmi said while pointing out she herself is a South Asian woman, an immigrant, and would welcome a person of similar background to this prestigious board.

A Democratic Senator, Joseph Morrissey, while responding to his Democratic colleague, Scott Surovell’s statement said, “But he’s wrong. When we say both sides do this every year, sometime[s], you got to take the higher road.”

“And let me say this, if you were in power over there, you do it. And the people that are in power over here are doing it and it’s wrong,” Morrissey emphasized. “But this I know it’s certitude, if somebody is appointed by a Governor irrespective of whether he is a Republican or Democratic Governor, I actually think we do have to talk about it here... I don’t know Suparna Dutta... And we don’t take them off unless it’s warranted. And you don’t take them off because you can....”

While stressing that Surovell voted to confirm her appointment on January 31, Dutta claimed she invited the wrath of Democrats mainly for sparring with Holton over the founding documents and socialism. “I was also targeted for proposing curriculum reforms and voicing my opinion that the August 2022 History and Social Sciences Learning document was a defective product. I said it had jargon-heavy and difficult-to-test academic concepts. These make SOLs more subjective and less specific.”

According to Dutta, the themes and concepts in the document talked about questionable concepts like “conflict” and “power relationships” while highlighting “colonialism” and “imperialism” to name a few.

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“It is not about me, but about parents’ rights. I was marginalized for questioning the orthodoxies and for not conforming with groupthink,” she said.

Chairman of American Hindu Coalition Shekhar Tiwari said, “Our membership, both Democrats and Republicans, is really surprised that a last-minute social media campaign succeeded in derailing Suparna’s confirmation... She earned the ire of opponents because of her outspokenness on merit-based education.”

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