PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release:  April 9, 2021

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UC Berkeley-Stanford Collaborative Project “From Nation to Homeland: Religion, State and Belonging in South Asia” Receives $370,000 Grant from Henry Luce Foundation

April 9, 2021: The Political Conflict, Gender and People’s Rights Initiative at the Center for Race and Gender (PCRes-CRG) at UC Berkeley has been awarded a three-year grant of $370,000 from the Henry Luce Foundation to examine the fault lines between citizenship, religion in the public sphere and belonging in contemporary South Asia.

‘Homeland’ has become a key term in the current materialization of the state in South Asia. Territorial definitions of citizenship (jus soli) are giving way to community and descent-oriented understandings of citizenship (jus sanguinis) where the ‘nation’ has been a place of complex yet diverse belonging. The onslaught of aggressive majoritarianism profoundly impacts marginalized religious groups and identities in multiple and fraught political situations. Nationalism and majoritarianism are accompanied by legislation, the acculturation of religio-ethnic differences and the escalated consolidation and racialization of citizenship.

In this project, PCRes-CRG is delighted to partner with Stanford University’s Department of Anthropology and Stanford Libraries. PCRes-CRG Founding Co-Chair and Principal Investigator Angana P. Chatterji (UC Berkeley) is joined by Thomas Blom Hansen (Stanford) and Sharika Thiranagama (Stanford) as Co-Principal Investigators. They will collaborate with Michael Keller
(Stanford) and C. Ryan Perkins (Stanford) for a component of the project. The project will also partner with premier civil society collectives in five regions across South Asia. The Advisory Consultative Panel is comprised of Paola Bacchetta (UC Berkeley), Abdul JanMohamed (UC Berkeley) and Leti Volpp (UC Berkeley).

The study will excavate the majoritarian thrust from nation to homeland wherein state actions stretch beyond the delimits of legitimate authority while claiming such actions to be lawfully permissible. This repositioning is used to justify exceptional methods in the name of national security. This shift is marked by the extreme politicization of vulnerable groups into increasingly monolithic objects of threat. The escalated transformation of citizenship towards nativist and majoritarian definitions raises larger questions of nationality status, freedom, restrictions of citizenship, regularized political and gendered violence and precarity on the basis of religion, which are the focus of this project.

“We are very grateful for the support from the Luce Foundation for this important research project,” said UC Berkeley Associate Vice Chancellor for Research, Linda Haverty Rugg. “This wonderful collaboration between UC Berkeley and Stanford scholars is a timely endeavor that applies an innovative new lens to our understanding of ‘nation’ and ‘homeland’ in South Asia.”

The grant is awarded through the Luce Foundation’s Initiative on Religion in International Affairs, headed by Director of Policy Initiatives and Secretary, Toby Alice Volkman. The Berkeley-Stanford project will advance intellectual insight and expand our comprehension of the march of political majoritarianism through interdisciplinary inquiry that underscores the value of local knowledge. The project bears witness to the profound erasures experienced by vulnerable groups and the resistance of targeted communities and their allies through counter-memory and civic action. The outcomes foster formative diagnosis and comparative, nuanced discussion and publication in education, policy and advocacy on the shift from ‘nation’ to ‘homeland’ and the future of nation, justice and democracy in South Asia.

“As South Asia embraces the ethos of majority homeland across states and regions, the question of what this means for the citizenship of minority communities could not be more urgent,” said Center for Race and Gender Director, Leti Volpp. “This necessary research will help us better understand the relationship between majoritarian nationalism, citizenship, violence and belonging in South Asia, as well as around the world.”

About the Henry Luce Foundation

The Henry Luce Foundation seeks to enrich public discourse by promoting innovative scholarship, cultivating new leaders and fostering international understanding. The Foundation advances its mission through grantmaking and leadership programs in the fields of Asia, higher education, religion and theology, art and public policy. Established in 1936 by Henry R. Luce, the co-founder and editor-in-chief of Time, Inc., the Foundation’s programs today reflect the value Mr. Luce placed on learning and leadership.