

**Neither White, Nor Black, but Fully Southern:
The Jindal & Randhawa Families Resist Stigmatization
In Wake of the Civil Rights Revolution**

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Against All Odds

Just one year before Barack Obama rocked the world by becoming the first black, and more generally non-white, president of the United States, another race-related political upset occurred with the election of Governor Piyush (Bobby) Jindal of the Deep South state of Louisiana. Two years after Obama's triumph, the country witnessed another southern surprise when Nimrata (Nikki) Randhawa Haley was elected Governor of South Carolina. As U.S. born children of foreign born Indian parents, Jindal and Haley were the first non-whites to win state-wide office in the South since the end of the Reconstruction era in 1877. In the span of three short years with Barack Obama's election squeezed in between, the United States witnessed both a strengthening white political backlash against the new president and at the same two new state leaders in the Deep South, who themselves were also young and brown.

Both Jindal and Haley have reflected on the improbability of their victories. "I don't look like many people in South Carolina," Nimrata Haley notes in her 2012 autobiography, and the same could be said for Jindal in Louisiana.¹ Like much of the American South, their states not only had historically low immigration rates, but also very small Asian immigrant populations. In 2010 South Carolina, on the eve of Haley's election, Asian Indians composed 0.18% of the state's 5 million people² while Louisiana's Asian Indian population hovered around 0.2% of the state's 4.5 million people.³ In fact, South Carolina and Louisiana were not even amongst the top five southern states in terms of Asian and Pacific Island populations which are: Virginia (4.2%), Texas (3.1%), Georgia (2.4%), Florida (1.9%), and North Carolina (1.75%).⁴

¹ Nikki Haley, *Can't is Not an Option* (New York: Sentinel, 2012), 232

² Richard Springer, "Census: Asian-Indian Population Explodes Across U.S.," *NewAmericanMedia*, May 13, 2011 <http://newamericamedia.org/2011/05/census-asian-indian-population-explodes-across-us.php> (accessed December 4, 2017)

³ N.A., "Demographics and Census Geography Louisiana State Census Data Center" *Louisiana.gov* http://louisiana.gov/Explore/Demographics_and_Geography/ (accessed December 4, 2017)

⁴ Susan A. Macmanus, "V. O. Key Jr.'s Southern Politics: Demographic Changes will Transform the Region," In: Todd Shileeds, ed. *Unlocking V. O. Key: Southern Politics for the Twenty-First Century* (Fayetteville: Arkansas University Press, 2011), 191.

As members of racial minorities, both candidates had found their way to power in a region historically defined by the tumultuous relationship between its dominant white majority and substantial black populations. South Carolina is 66% white and 28% black while Louisiana is 64% white and 33% black.⁵⁶ According to exit polls, Haley won over 70% of white voters, who also composed 69% of her vote totals during her 2010 election.⁷ Louisiana does not count each candidate's results broken down by race, but considering that Jindal won his election with 54% of the total vote, 48% of voters were black, and only 10% of black voters voted for Jindal, it can be said that Jindal dominated the white vote, as well.⁸⁹¹⁰

Moreover, these two Indian-Americans—one of them visibly brown skinned (Jindal) — had triumphed in states with solidly white electorates whose politics, before and after Jim Crow, had been characterized by brazen white supremacy. When V. O. Key wrote his classic 1949 volume *Southern Politics*, his chapter on South Carolina was subtitled “The Politics of Color” because of the sequence of “spectacular race orators” through mid-century who “put the white-supremacy case most bitterly, most uncompromisingly, and most vindictively,” even compared to elsewhere in the South. As for Louisiana (“The Seamy Side of Democracy”), Key offered a description of machine politics, populist demagoguery, and white supremacy that makes the state seem like an unlikely place for the triumph of a brown-skinned immigrant's son, who had an undergraduate degree from Brown University and was a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford.¹¹

⁵ N.A., “Demographics and Census Geography Louisiana State Census Data Center” *Louisiana.gov*

⁶ N.A., “Population of South Carolina: Census 2010 and 2000 Interactive Map, Demographics, Statistics, Quick Facts” *CensusViewer* <http://censusviewer.com/state/SC> (accessed December 4, 2017)

⁷ N.A., “ExitPolls Governor South Carolina” *CNN Election Center* <http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2010/results/polls/#SCG00p1> (accessed December 4, 2017)

⁸ Gilbert Cruz, “Jindal Triumphant in Louisiana” *Time* <http://content.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,1674122,00.html> (accessed December 4, 2017)

⁹ N.A. “State Wide Post Election Statistical Report” *Louisiana Secretary of State Elections Division* https://electionstatistics.sos.la.gov/Data/Post_Election_Statistics/Statewide/2007_0224_sta.pdf (accessed December 4 2017)

¹⁰ Billy Sothern, “Bobby Jindal: Not Much to Celebrate” *The Nation*, October 30, 2007 <https://www.thenation.com/article/bobby-jindal-not-much-celebrate/> (accessed December 4, 2017)

¹¹ V. O. Key Jr., *Southern Politics in State and Nation. A New Edition*. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1984), 130, 156.

Beyond the challenge of race and national origin, Piyush and Nimrata also had to contend with having been raised in households that practiced unfamiliar faiths that were at best exotic, if not pagan and heathen, to most Southerners. Not only were the Jindals Hindu, but the Randhawas were also Sikh, an Indian religion whose followers, like her father, are often mistaken for Muslims because they wear a turban as a public sign of their faith. This, too, was challenging in a region that cherishes its overwhelming Christian heritage, the faith of which is largely practiced by both Southern blacks and whites. South Carolina has a 78% Christian population and Louisiana's Christian population makes up 84% of the state.¹² Although they had both converted to Christianity by the time of their election (Bobby is Catholic and Nikki is Methodist), the rest of both families, save one of Nimrata's brothers, still practice their Hindu and Sikh faiths. Indeed, both had faced campaigns in which competitors sought to exploit this as a weakness. An early rival for Haley's race in the state legislature distributed pamphlets that raised questions of Haley's Christianity besides pictures of her family.¹³ And Jindal had grappled with religious-based accusations while running for governor when the President of the College Democrats at the University of Louisiana published a memo calling Jindal an Arab.¹⁴

In addition to contending with these daunting realities during their campaigns, the two, who were born and raised in the South, had to deal with their unique differences as very small minorities in an effectively segregated 1970s Christian South as children. Leslie Bow meditates on her own parents' experiences as Chinese Americans in a Jim Crow-era Arkansas alongside the memoirs of other Asians in the Segregated South in her book *Partly Colored: Asian*

¹² On the Christian population in SC: 78% of population = 3.87 million people mostly Evangelical Protestants (<http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/state/south-carolina/>) (2016 Census Bureau) In Louisiana: 84% = 3.93 million mostly Evangelical Protestant and Catholic. (<http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/state/louisiana/>) (2016 Census Bureau).

¹³ Nikki Haley. *Can't Is Not an Option*, 45.

¹⁴ Bobby Jindal. *Leadership and Crisis* (Washington D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 2010), 27.

Americans and the Racial Anomaly in the Segregated South. One chapter, “The Anxieties of the Partly Colored” focuses on the paranoid behavior that emerges in the subjects of her examined narratives whenever they are made aware of their ambiguous position in the strict and powerful dichotomy of Jim Crow. She writes, “...uneven status produces uneven or anxious narratives that oscillate between the conscious recognition of racial injustice and a resistance to seeing its self-implicating, conditioning effects...what the Asian American ‘turn in the South’ offers is...an alternative interpretive focus that brings to light the other effect of white supremacy: the degree to which its values are internalized by these subjects who do not at first appear either to bear the weight of its leveling apparatus or to share unequivocally its privileges. Looking at Asian memoirs of southern segregation, I want to explore the poetics of the *unevenly* oppressed.”¹⁵

Bow’s argument reveals the internal struggle of Asians in the South, who do not experience the overt racism doled to southern blacks but also do not have the same benefits enjoyed by whites, and as such, are constantly contending with a subtler form of white supremacy that at once, both protects them and belittles them. Michele Lamont’s work in her book *Getting Respect: Responding to Stigma and Discrimination* separates these different scales of racism into two categories: discrimination and stigmatization. Discrimination, she defines, as the deprivation or prevention from opportunities and resources due to the basis one’s race, ethnicity, or nationality. Whereas, stigmatization, includes a wide range of subjective experiences where one’s dignity, honor, sense of self, or relative status is challenged. Stigmatization, when experienced on a frequent basis, adds to the “wear and tear” of racism that may compound disadvantages and drastically inhibit positive identity construction.¹⁶ Stigmatization is involved with being

¹⁵ Leslie Bow. *Partly Colored: Asian Americans and Racial Anomaly in the Segregated South* (New York: NYU Scholarship Press Online, 2010), <http://nyu.universitypressscholarship.com/view/10.18574/nyu/9780814791325.001.0001/upso-9780814791325?rskey=vkCIfx&result=1> (accessed December 4, 2017), 128-129.

¹⁶ Michele Lamont et al., *Getting Respect: Responding to Stigma and Discrimination in the United States, Brazil, and Israel*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 30-32

discriminated, but the reverse is not necessarily true. The anxiety-inducing effects of a latent white supremacy that Bow studied falls under Lamont's definition of stigmatization. Jindal and Haley, as children whose role and identity were constantly flummoxed by their surrounding racial system, existed in this ambiguous reality that Bow examines while also having to contend with the maleffects stigmatization brings. To have the perseverance and confidence to become governors, this personal dilemma, too, was something that had to be personally resolved.

Many commentaries have been suggested in order to explain how Jindal and Haley broke these challenging barriers in order to achieve their political success. Some Indian commentators, 70% of which nationally lean Democrat, alongside others on the left feel that the two governors, particularly Jindal, are effectively pandering to white voters and thus "sell-out" for votes and political success.¹⁷¹⁸ There is also the sentiment that Haley and Jindal because of their childhoods in the South without many Indian peers, actually grew up wanting to "be white". Therefore, the political representations are the actualization of their fantasy identities.¹⁹ On the other hand, there are conservative icons, like Glenn Beck, who use the governors as an example that Southern conservative whites are indeed not racist. Beck mocks the left by saying, "the racist, horrible, hateful Tea Party elected more minorities than Democrats did."²⁰ Jindal and Haley both substantiate their constituents' claims of racial acceptance. Haley at a Press Club conference explained, "I would not have been elected governor of South Carolina if our state was

¹⁷ Max Bearak, "Indian Americans vote solidly Democratic, but some hope Trump can change that" *The Washington Post*, October 14, 2016 https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/indian-americans-vote-solidly-democratic-but-some-hope-trump-can-change-that/2016/10/14/bc6820cc-915b-11e6-a6a3-d50061aa9fae_story.html?utm_term=.ca2ccd96327c (accessed December 4, 2017)

¹⁸ Asma Khalid, "Indian-Americans Feel 'Disappointed', 'Abandoned' By Bobby Jindal" *NPR*, November 18, 2015 <https://www.npr.org/2015/11/18/456518086/unhyphenated-bobby-jindal-disappointed-indian-americans> (accessed December 4, 2017)

¹⁹ Noopur Bakshi, "When 'Nikhil' becomes 'Nik' and 'Piyush' becomes 'Bobby Jindal'" *The Washington Post*, July 21, 2015 https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2015/07/21/when-nikhil-becomes-nik-and-piyush-becomes-bobby-jindal/?utm_term=.692f76259c7c (accessed December 4, 2017)

²⁰ Glenn Beck, "Tea Party is more diverse than Dems" *GlennBeck.com*, n.d., <http://www.glennbeck.com/content/articles/article/198/47731/http://www.glennbeck.com/content/articles/article/198/47731/> (accessed December 4, 2017)

a racially intolerant place.”²¹ Jindal, too, refers to his election as proof that in Louisiana “The voters want to know what you believe, what you stand for, and what you plan to do, not what shade your skin is.”²² The personal reflections of the two individuals are interesting in that they both reject the identity politics that drew the national headlines to their campaigns.

However, this thesis contends that most commentaries that conjecture reasons for the two’s improbable success operate with an incorrect assumption about the South, in that it is all white. Firmly rooted in Southern identity and history is the black community. The story of Jindal and Haley is not of newly immigrated Indians negotiating their relationship with the white community, but rather it is a story of three groups – Indian, black, and white, as they coalesce in the historical situations of Bamberg, SC and Baton Rouge, LA between the early 1970s to the late 1980s. Through Nimrata and Piyush’s own words, the experiences of their family members, and the insights of their friends and community members, this thesis seeks to reframe the discussion of Jindal and Haley in an entirely new light and even pierce the façade of their carefully cultivated public images. In taking their awkward positions as non-white immigrants in a racially polarized, Christian, and nativist South, it proves that the success of Niki and Bobby is not rooted in notions like assimilation or pandering; it is a story of stigma and insecurities and survival, difficult choices, and an individual’s ability to navigate the jagged edge of inclusion and exclusion. While dealing in origins alone, this thesis not only meticulously parses out the tumultuous journey of two families that each produced a child who chafed at the limits placed upon them by their origin and, in doing so, made Southern history, but also while showing how

²¹ Jelani Cobb, “The Complicated History of Nikki Haley” *The New Yorker*, January 13, 2016

<http://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/the-complicated-history-of-nikki-haley> (accessed December 4, 2017)

²² Gov. Bobby Jindal, “The End of Race”, *Politico*, August 25, 2013 <http://www.politico.com/story/2013/08/the-end-of-race-095875> (accessed December 4, 2017)

tightly their story is bound up with that of the 'other' large and far more profoundly stigmatized Southern non-white minority, African-Americans.

Maneuvering the New World

In 1975, an earnest four-year old Piyush Jindal announced to his preschool class that from then on he would be known as “Bobby”, in honor of his favorite character from the show *The Brady Bunch* but also out of exasperation at having to continuously spell out his given name for people.²³²⁴ Two years later, but in Bamberg, South Carolina, the five-year-old Nimrata Haley felt pigeonholed when her kindergarten class nominated her to be Pocahontas in their Thanksgiving school play.²⁵ Nimrata, who formally adopted her family nickname Nikki when she entered politics in 2004, remembers the embarrassment she felt as “little boys [danced] around [her] and [did] the American Indian hand-to-mouth call,” thinking frustratedly to herself, “*Why can’t I be a pilgrim?*”²⁶²⁷ Haley’s family was the first Indian family to live in her hometown, Bamberg.²⁸ Baton Rouge, where Jindal grew up, featured an “Original 5” Indian families who worked around the nearby university.²⁹ Surrounded by mostly blacks and whites with very few South Asian peers, the two share experiences from an early age that convey their feelings of isolation and difference from their *American* neighbors. The two future governors reflect on their experiences in the American South in their respective biographies, Haley’s 2012 *Can’t Is Not an Option* and Jindal’s 2010 *Leadership and Crisis*.

As children, Piyush and Nimrata learned how to gain the favor of their peers in the process of becoming Bobby and Nikki, eventually transforming into the governors of the states that previously made them feel foreign. Far from being *othered*, today Haley and Jindal comment

²³ Bobby Jindal. *Leadership and Crisis* (Washington D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 2010), 41.

²⁴ N.A. “Whiz Kid.” *Brown Alumni Magazine*, May/June 1998. <http://www.brownalumnimagazine.com/content/view/1861/40/> (accessed December 4, 2017)

²⁵ Nikki Haley. *Can’t Is Not an Option* (New York: Sentinel, 2012), 6

²⁶ Philip Rucker, “Nikki Haley: 10 Things you didn’t know about the S.C. Republican” *The Washington Post* June 8, 2010 <http://voices.washingtonpost.com/44/2010/06/nikki-haley-10-things-you-didn.html> (accessed December 4, 2017)

²⁷ Nikki Haley. *Can’t Is Not an Option*, 7

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 5

²⁹ Daria Woodside. “Dancing in the Light: Navaratri” *LouisianaFolkLife*, n.d. http://www.louisianafolklife.org/LT/Articles_Essays/Navaratri.html (accessed December 4, 2017)

regularly on contemporary American issues with their heritage as South Asians from the American South in the background. The two Republican governors' books present a parallel to that of President Obama, the son of a white mother and African father, whose autobiography *Dreams from My Father* wove a narrative about how, despite and perhaps due to unique upbringing, he came to understand himself as an American and aspire to lead the country. However, constructing an identity from the position of an outsider American South involves contending with various significant external pressures and a dichotomy between blacks and whites rooted in white supremacy. The way that Piyush and Nimrata engage with these two communities is largely determined before they were truly conscious of their actions. The decisions, occupations, and backgrounds of their families laid the original groundwork for the paths the two brown children would eventually take.

New Homes

After obtaining his PhD in developmental biology from the prestigious University of British Columbia in Canada in 1969, Ajit Randhawa began searching for work in the United States so that he and his family could have a chance at the American Dream.³⁰ Yet, repeatedly Mr. Randhawa was turned down from university to university during what was a difficult time for higher education employment. Finally, he received an offer to teach biology as an associate professor at Voorhees College, a private historically black college in Denmark, South Carolina with a student body of around 600 students.³¹ In the United States at the time, historically black colleges, or HBCUs, and universities, were among the most underfunded higher education institutions. For most people with Mr. Randhawa's credentials, only having an offer at Voorhees would be humiliating. Ajit Randhawa, a determined man, decided to take the position in 1969

³⁰ Nikki Haley. *Can't is Not an Option*, 3

³¹ *Ibid.*, 4

and settled in the nearby town Bamberg with his wife Raj Kaur and his young son Harmit. Nikki Haley admits that her father's decision was not an easy one. Told by an Indian friend in Canada "that he might get shot before he got his first paycheck" in the American South, Ajit Randhawa certainly anticipated that his family would face potentially dangerous situations as new brown faces in the small Southern town of Bamberg.³²

Bamberg had been historically known as a railroad town and pit stop for those traveling north to Columbia. However, the development of the new U.S. Interstate No. 95 in 1970 moved traffic away, and the town with a population of 2500 slowly became an afterthought.³³ When Nimrata Randhawa was born in January 1972, her hometown Bamberg only boasted of a courthouse, school, and a Methodist Church. Nonetheless, Haley notes that "the railroad was still there too."³⁴ After the new interstate took away significant commerce, Bamberg's railroad tracks still served its other purpose: to divide the town into a black side and a white side. In this small town, race was understood in terms of a black/white color scale (45% of Bamberg is white and 54% is black).³⁵ The Randhawas, as the town's first Indian family, with their brown skin, saris, and turbans suddenly put Bamberg's social order in flux. After being denied two house openings by property owners, the Randhawas were finally allowed a house on the white side but with certain conditions: they could not entertain colored people, nor store alcohol, and they had to sell the house back to the same man from whom they had bought it.³⁶ The conditions eerily resembled restrictive covenants, which were often placed on deeds for houses in the South that made it difficult for black home ownership and were made illegal the year prior by the Fair

³² Ibid.

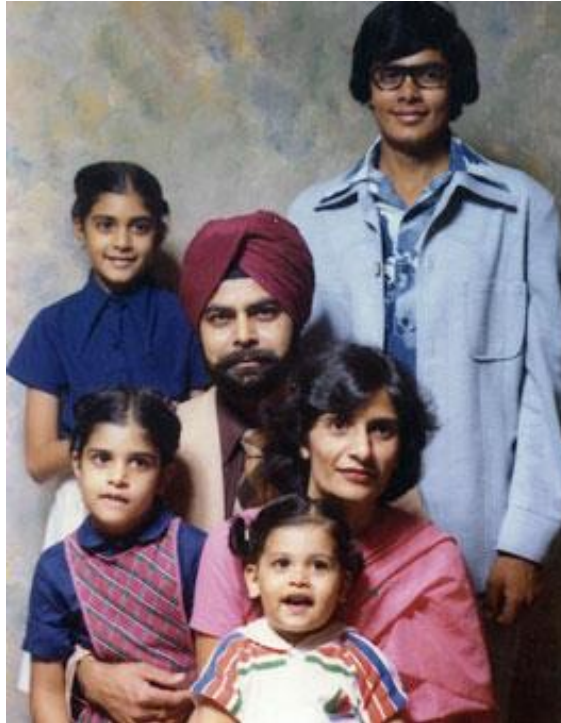
³³ Margaret Lawrence. "History of Bamberg County, South Carolina: Commemorating One Hundred Years (1897-1997)" (Bamberg: Historic Society of Bamberg County, 2003), 186-187

³⁴ Nikki Haley. *Can't is Not an Option*, 5

³⁵ N.A., "Bamberg, SC" *DataUSA* n.d., https://datausa.io/profile/geo/bamberg-sc/#category_heritage (accessed December 4, 2017)

³⁶ Nikki Haley. *Can't is Not an Option*, 5

Housing Act in 1968.³⁷ It is likely that Bamberg, like many other Southern towns, still maintained these covenants, at least informally. Feeling unwanted in this small town, Ajit Randhawa and his family sought to create a home.



(Nimrata, sitting on her father's lap, and the Randhawa family)

More than 700 miles further west of the Randhawas in the state of Louisiana in January 1971, Raj Gupta Jindal, while pregnant with soon-to-be Piyush Jindal, moved into student housing to study for her doctorate in nuclear physics at Baton Rouge's Louisiana State University.³⁸³⁹ Raj Jindal had convinced her newlywed husband Amar Jindal to apply and subsequently obtain a P3-1 visa, which is reserved for "professional or highly skilled" immigrants.⁴⁰ Unlike the Randhawas, the Jindals were not the only Indians in Baton Rouge.

³⁷ "Shelley v. Kraemer." Oyez. <https://www.oyez.org/cases/1940-1955/334us1>. (accessed December 4, 2017)

³⁸ Mike Sager. "Bobby Jindal, All American" *Esquire* June 25 2015 <http://www.esquire.com/news-politics/a4952/bobby-jindal-all-american-1008/> (accessed December 4, 2017)

³⁹ Jonathan Tilove. "Gov. Bobby Jindal releases his birth certificate" *The Times-Picayune* May 6, 2011 http://www.nola.com/politics/index.ssf/2011/05/gov_bobby_jindal_releases_his.html (accessed December 4, 2017)

⁴⁰ Ibid.

They found four other Hindu Indian families whose heads of households were either engineering students or recent graduates of LSU.⁴¹ This Indian cohort was lured by the economic boom that Louisiana, particularly Baton Rouge and LSU, was experiencing from the momentous growth of its oil and natural gas industry during the late 1960s and 70s.⁴² Although there was no central temple in town at the time, Jindal recalls being raised in a “strong Hindu culture”, worshipping at the homes of family friends, attending weekly *pujas*, and participating in frequent potluck gatherings.⁴³ Nonetheless, this small group of Indians composed an incredibly small community given Baton Rouge’s overall population of 166,000, of whom 70% were white and 28% black.⁴⁴ As such, the gatherings and activities of these few families could only provide a small buffer from the segregated Baton Rouge that became the Jindals’ new home.



(Jindal with his mother and younger brother)

By the time Piyush was born in June 1971, white flight had begun in Baton Rouge with more of the white population spreading into suburbs outside of the city.⁴⁵ The Jindals, too, eventually moved from student housing into a new subdivision in 1978 when Jindal’s younger

⁴¹ Daria Woodside. “Dancing in the Light: Navaratri” *LouisianaFolkLife*, n.d.

⁴² Penny Font. “The \$50 billion boom” *The Greater Baton Rouge Business Report* June 11, 2013 <https://www.businessreport.com/business/the-50-billion-boom-manufacturing-is-making-a-historic-comeback-across-south-louisiana> (accessed December 4, 2017)

⁴³ Mike Sager. “Bobby Jindal, All American” *Esquire* June 25 2015

⁴⁴ “America’s Black Population”, 1970 to 1982: A Statistical View, Volume 3 pg. 2

⁴⁵ “Baton Rouge: History” *City-Date.com*, n.d. <http://www.city-data.com/us-cities/The-South/Baton-Rouge-History.html> (accessed December 4, 2017)

brother Nikesh was born.⁴⁶ They now lived in Kenilworth, which featured “trim and tidy homes, leafy streets and manicured lawns.”⁴⁷ Kenilworth, only four miles away from the predominantly white LSU, accommodated mostly university professors and oil engineers as residents. This move also signaled the Jindals’ transition into suburbia and all of its associated benefits. Their new ranch-style home had three bedrooms and a yard for the children to play. Jindal harkens back to memories of his childhood neighborhood in a way that many who flocked to suburbia during white flight would relate: “It was an idyllic place to grow up. It was one of those neighborhoods where you could tell the kids to go and play outside and come back when it was dark.”⁴⁸ While Haley grew up in a small southern town of Bamberg, Bobby Jindal’s suburban Baton Rouge was marked by its large university of LSU and its oil wealth.

The two sets of immigrants share the commonality that their lives in the United States were ushered in and built around universities. During the 1970s, the immigration rate to the South had only slowly began picking up, hovering at what was the region’s peak in 100 years at 3% before continuously increasing since then. Most of the immigrant jobs in the South during that time for both South Carolina and Louisiana, which were considered low-migration states compared to the rest of the already low-migration South, were low-status merchant or labor positions, like construction or shrimping, respectively for the two states.⁴⁹ Thus, university positions allowed these individuals to immigrate to the United States and still employ their educations in mid-level status positions. With lives centered around the university, the Jindals and Randhawas could be at least partially ensconce themselves in an academic setting that was

⁴⁶ Nola.com. “Bobby Jindal in 1996: Louisiana’s 24-year-old ‘Whiz Kid’ had critics and admirers” *The Times-Picayune* June 24, 2015 http://www.nola.com/politics/index.ssf/2015/06/bobby_jindal_in_1996_louisiana.html (accessed December 4, 2017)

⁴⁷ Tyler Bridges. “Inside Look at what Bobby Jindal was like as a high school student” *The Advocate* December 3, 2015 http://www.theadvocate.com/baton_rouge/news/politics/article_4cc08c3b-ccfd-5d6e-a59e-aade6e796466.html (accessed December 4, 2017)

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Carl L. Bankston III. “New People in the South: An Overview of Southern Immigration.” *Southern Cultures* Winter 2007.

familiar terrain to them, finding some reprieve in their new world. Nonetheless, the universities they moved to were in the 1970s South, and even their ivory towers could not avoid the fires fomenting from the raging battles against segregation.

The Segregated South

The Jindals and the Randhawas moved to the South during a time when serious racial turmoil was sweeping the region. Under the backdrop of the tumultuous civil rights era in the 1960s and the subsequent white backlash in the 1970s, South Carolina and Louisiana featured gripping conflicts and tensions along the color line. Both Baton Rouge and Bamberg County are home to two HBCUs that played significant roles during the sit-ins and campus protests that ignited the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s. The Jindals and Randhawas both lived less than two hours away from important civil rights protests and violent retaliation.

On March 16, 1960, 18 miles away from the city of Bamberg, 1500 students marched from their South Carolina State College (SCSC) campus to downtown Orangeburg and staged sit-ins at department stores in what became the “largest student demonstration thus far... from a black college campus.”⁵⁰ These students set the backdrop for the tragic series of events that would lead to South Carolina’s bloodiest moment during the Civil Rights era – the Orangeburg Massacre. A few years later in January 1968, SCSC students once again took action as they attempted to integrate a bowling alley downtown. Frustration towards the students began building amongst the Orangeburg white community and its police. One month after the bowling alley integration attempt, South Carolina highway patrolmen were called to quell a gathering on the front lawn of the college campus. The police, this time, used their bullets to take control of the situation. Patrolmen fired shotguns into the crowd of students, leaving 3 dead and 27

⁵⁰ James Felder. “Civil Rights in South Carolina: From Peaceful Protests to Groundbreaking Rulings” (Charleston: The History Press, 2012), 93-94

injured.⁵¹ The Orangeburg massacre largely slipped past media attention due to the presidential election, Kent State massacre, and Vietnam protests absorbing most of the period's air time. As a result, only one person was charged and punished for the ordeal, a student organizer named Cleveland Sellers who would one day be president of Voorhees College where Mr. Randhawa would make his career. So, when the Randhawas moved into the area just one year after the horrible incident, the pain and tensions were largely unaddressed and left to fester. The state of South Carolina did not officially apologize for the massacre until Governor Mark Sanford, Nikki Haley's predecessor and close mentor, did so in 2003.⁵²



While Mr. Randhawa had already begun teaching, Voorhees College activists experienced their own nerve-wracking brushes with the law. In 1969, Voorhees students created a Black Awareness Coordinating Committee that in October occupied the university library. They renamed the library Malcolm X University and refused to leave the vicinity until their demands for improved university resources were met.⁵³ The S.C. National Guard was called in

⁵¹ Ibid, 95
⁵² Ibid, 96
⁵³ Ibid., 163

with tanks aimed at the school, but Governor McNair, fearful of another massacre like Orangeburg in his state, negotiated with the students until they finally exited the building. However, in February 1970, early in Ajit Randhawa's tenure at the college, students boycotted classes because the government failed to follow through with the Governor's compromises.⁵⁴ The National Guard again came to the fray. In context of these events, when Nikki Haley says in her autobiography that word got around that her father "worked at the black school", it is inferable that her family's shaky relationship with the town only became more at-risk due to her father's association with the revolutionary HBCU.⁵⁵

In November 1960, Louisiana segregation reared its ugly head when New Orleans burst into a race riot after four black first graders integrated two white schools. Whites boycotted the schools and organized "cheerleader" gangs of white women who would threaten and spit on the colored students. The events culminated with leaders of the White Citizens Council inciting more than 5,000 whites to take action before desegregation happens, resulting in a white mob that beat two blacks and severely hurt others.⁵⁶ Nearby in Baton Rouge and a few months earlier, students at the HBCU Southern University, only 11 miles away from LSU, staged Louisiana's first sit-in on March 1960. These sit-ins would sporadically continue for a full year, alarming many of the white community in the quiet Baton Rouge. However, after the New Orleans school crisis, Baton Rouge citizens were determined to not have a similar situation in their town. Many blacks in Baton Rouge initially avoided direct action, instead opting for biracial committees that allowed blacks to voice concerns. Nonetheless, the committees were largely ineffectual and Baton Rouge

⁵⁴ Ibid., 164

⁵⁵ Nikki Haley. *Can't Is Not an Option*, 5

⁵⁶ Nikki Brown, "New Orleans School Crisis" *knowlouisiana.org Encyclopedia of Louisiana*. Ed. David Johnson. Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities, 31 Mar 2011.

remained practically segregated.⁵⁷ By 1967, Baton Rouge became the Louisiana city considered the most likely to blow.⁵⁸

And, blow it did. In July 1969, police shot and killed, each separated by two weeks, two fleeing black youths who were suspected robbers. Baton Rouge “teeter[ed] on the brink of a full-scale riot” after the shootings, resulting in flashes of violence. Governor McKeithen sent in 250 National Guard to quell them.⁵⁹ The violence only continued, however. In October 1972, students at Southern University began boycotting and disrupting classes, demanding improved resources for the university that mirrored the conditions of its white counterpart Louisiana State University. If the conditions were not improved, they argued, then Baton Rouge must finally follow the law of the land and integrate the white university. On November 16, one hundred students occupied the President’s office, who proceeded to call in approximately 85 policemen. Tear gas and gunshots ensued, and after the smoke had cleared, two students lay dead from a shotgun round. This massacre finally drew the attention of the U.S. Justice Department, which demanded Louisiana desegregate its dual university systems.⁶⁰ Although legislatively this was a win for the black community and the Southern University students, LSU remained for the large part segregated by the end of the 1980s despite its increase in “other race” enrollment.⁶¹ So, when the Jindals moved into Baton Rouge, racial tensions in their new home were blistering, particularly in regards to the university his family now called home. However, when Bobby Jindal is asked if he ever felt this racial tension in Baton Rouge, he instead exclaims, “Not at all.

⁵⁷ Adam Fairclough, “Race and Democracy: The Civil Rights Struggle in Louisiana, 1915–1972.” (Athens: University of Georgia Press 1995), 335

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 460

⁶¹ Ibid. pp. 461

You know, this has been a great place to grow up. The great thing about the people of Louisiana is that they accept you based on who you are.”⁶²

Instead of being sheltered by the ivory tower of academia, both the Randhawa and Jindal families studied and worked in important sites of conflict during the late segregation period. Their two universities, Voorhees, a private historically black college, and LSU, a predominantly white state university, were on different sides of the battle. As such, the two families experienced different aspects of the segregation battle. The Randhawas, associated with ‘the black school’, were intertwined with the struggle early on, making the negative attention focused on them in early central aspect of Haley’s childhood. The Jindals, who do not specifically share any race-related issues they experienced at the white institution, enjoyed the benefits associated with belonging to the wealthier white university: they had housing provided to them by the university when they first moved to the city, found an Indian community who also were associated with LSU, and they moved into a wealthier suburban neighborhood that was filled with primarily LSU faculty and former students. As such, it was easier for Bobby Jindal to dispel any sentiments of racial tension because the black struggle did not affect their experience, as much as it did Haley’s.

Family Matters

It is generally accepted that much of an individual’s behavior is based off of the actions of one’s parents. Humans tend to over-imitate their parents, mimicking nearly everything the parent does while not necessarily taking outcome into consideration.⁶³ Therefore, analyzing the

⁶² Keshni Kashyap. “The Bobby Jindal Racism Issue” *The Daily Beast* March 4, 2009 <https://www.thedailybeast.com/the-bobby-jindal-racism-issue> (accessed December 4, 2017)

⁶³ Rick Nauert, PhD, “Modeling Behavior for Children Has Long-Lasting Effects” *PsychCentral* n.d. <https://psychcentral.com/news/2010/05/27/modeling-behavior-for-children-has-long-lasting-effects/14139.html> (accessed December 4, 2017)

backgrounds and behaviors of the two governors' parents will help elucidate the motivations of their children. By seeing how their parents deal with their new surroundings of the segregated South and prepare their children, we can glimpse the motivations driving Bobby and Nikki's own navigation of the South.

"I remember seeing other immigrant families where the kids spent almost all their free time with people of the same background," narrates Bobby Jindal. "But my parents were always going to crawfish boils and cookout."⁶⁴ Jindal explains that his mother Raj was fully committed to raising her sons as "Americans", which to him meant "like *Leave it to Beaver* with a Louisiana twist."⁶⁵ *Leave it to Beaver*, which aired from 1957 – 1963, features an almost all-white cast and follows the "All-American" ideal suburban, middle-class family, a mold that would be surprising for first-generation immigrants from India to transition into quickly. It is possible that Raj Jindal, who sports a modern bob haircut, worked extensively as an IT Director for Louisiana's Department of Labor, and hails from a liberal educated background in India, could have readily adapted to the suburban white lifestyle. Raj was already a trailblazer open to change. Unlike many women in India who are profoundly relegated in India's deeply patriarchal society, Raj, alongside her three sisters, had the rare opportunity to be educated well beyond primary school. Raj's father Krishan Gupta, a well-traveled Punjab banking executive, whom the young Bobby grew especially fond of during their initial visits to India, could read Urdu and was familiar with the Quran, despite living in a region infamous for its discord between Muslims and Hindus.⁶⁶ Bobby's grandfather believed in the equality of all religions and would frequently discuss philosophy. Due to his professional obligations, Gupta would take his family all across India,

⁶⁴ Bobby Jindal. *Leadership and Crisis*, 42

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 43

⁶⁶ Lauren List. "Jindal's faith rooted in open-minded family, Hindu religion" *The Times-Picayune* January 09, 2008 http://blog.nola.com/updates/2008/01/jindals_faith_rooted_in_openmi.html (accessed December 4, 2017)

encouraging his children to learn from diverse cultures.⁶⁷ However, the diversity of India was still much more familiar to Raj than was the new world in the South. Even though her open-minded background certainly must have influenced Raj Jindal's approach to transitioning to life in the American South, Jindal's radical claim that he does not recall his mother, who naturalized in 1976, and his father, who naturalized in 1986, ever referring to India as 'home' seems dubious.⁶⁸⁶⁹ In most early pictures of their family, Raj wears traditional Indian garb, demonstrating her desire to hold on to the familiarity of her traditional culture. In the midst of the fierce tensions between whites and blacks in Baton Rouge during the 1970s, the newly immigrated couple could only have turned to the existing Indian community for support and information about their new home. And, they did. The family attended frequent potlucks with the other Indian families in town, participated in weekly pujas (religious ceremony) almost every Sunday, and visited India annually during the first few years of their immigration.⁷⁰ Even today, Raj and Amar are frequent visitors to Baton Rouge's current Hindu temple, the Hindu Vedic Center.

On the other hand, a white woman who lived two doors from the family in Kenilworth remembered that "[the Jindals] didn't socialize with the neighbors."⁷¹ Reconciling Jindal's claim that his parents steadfastly assimilated in the context of this information is perplexing. Indubitably, there is some truth to his claim that his parents, at least somewhat, supported engaging with children from different backgrounds, as Jindal did participate in tennis programs

⁶⁷ Robert Travis Scott. "A Passage from India" *The Times-Picayune* December 29, 2007 http://blog.nola.com/updates/2007/12/a_passage_from_india.html (accessed December 4, 2017)

⁶⁸ Bobby Jindal. *Leadership and Crisis*, 42

⁶⁹ Esther Yu Hsi Lee. "How Many Candidates Have 'Taken Advantage' of Birthright Citizenship, But Oppose It?" August 19, 2015 <https://thinkprogress.org/how-many-candidates-have-taken-advantage-of-birthright-citizenship-but-oppose-it-d63046b4c2cc/> (accessed December 4, 2017)

⁷⁰ Tyler Bridges. "Inside Look at what Bobby Jindal was like as a high school student" *The Advocate* December 3, 2015

⁷¹ Ibid.

and was sent to summer camps frequently as a child. What is more likely and befitting the facts of the matter is that the Jindals maneuvered their relationships with the different communities in Baton Rouge in terms of their family's best chance of survival and success in their new home. Raj with her cosmopolitan and educated background surely let her children engage in and adapt to Baton Rouge culture, especially if she wanted them to succeed in this new world, but internally her Indian family held onto their cultural and religious values as members of an incredibly small minority group would be expected to do when transitioning to an entirely new environment. Bobby's decision to convert to Catholicism and the subsequent backlash from his parents lend more credence to this hypothesis.

Bobby kept his conversion to Catholicism a secret from, in his own words, his "very unsympathetic Hindu parents" for a year until Raj pressed her son on his faith after he had been in a car accident.⁷² The news took a severe toll on Jindal's parents; Jindal equates his answer to "an emotional bomb in the family."⁷³ At first, Raj Jindal was worried that her son was being manipulated or that he was doing it for his then-girlfriend Kathy Reznick, who did in fact help spark Bobby's interest in the faith. However, after Bobby persisted, the parents were riddled with guilt, blaming themselves for not effectively culturing their son and also blaming Bobby for, what they felt, disrespecting their family.⁷⁴ The family's distress was so severe that Jindal began worrying that they would refuse to pay his tuition for Brown University and so he secured a job and scholarship at LSU, just in case. His family did withdraw financial support to their son, but he was allowed to attend Brown. His parents did not, however, join their son at his baptism ceremony in college.⁷⁵ Bobby's religious conversion painfully affected his family, and although

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Bobby Jindal. *Leadership and Crisis*, 49.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Robert Costa, "Rebel With a Cause: Bobby Jindal's Spiritual Journey" July 25, 2008 <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB121694025422282727> (accessed December 4, 2017)

his parents were present at the baptisms of his wife and children, for many years they saw his “faith as a negative that overshadows [his] accomplishments.”⁷⁶ Eventually, Bobby Jindal appealed to his parents by arguing that the conversion was a personal matter and that he still respected and honored them and their heritage.⁷⁷ Jindal admits that this rupture of the internal and external division of his family resulted in many heated discussions of “family loyalty and national identity”. As such, perhaps his marriage to the accomplished engineer Supriya, who was born in India and immigrated with her family to New Orleans when she was young, functioned as a compromise between his new *Southern* religious identity and with his parents’ need for cultural preservation. Marriage in Punjabi culture is an extremely important event for the entire family. For the parents of a son, they often expect the daughter-in-law to maintain a close relationship with her in-laws, even helping them transition into old age. So, although Supriya converted to Catholicism when she married Bobby, she came from a Hindu background and could communicate much more easily with the Jindal parents, than say a white woman like Jindal’s first girlfriend Kathy Reznick could. Prior to Jindal’s official marriage in a church, he and his family held a Hindu wedding ceremony, honoring his parents’ internal cultural importance and also demonstrating that his parents had limits on the amount of assimilation that they would tolerate.⁷⁸

For the future Rhodes scholar, much of Bobby’s ambitious drive is fueled by the strong expectations set by his father, Amar Jindal. Amar Jindal’s sister Satya Bansal, who still lives in the Punjab region where his family is from, recalls her precocious brother who “thought and

⁷⁶ Bobby Jindal. “Perspectives of an Indian Convert: From July 31, 1993” July 31, 1993.

<https://www.americamagazine.org/issue/100/perspectives-indian-convert> (accessed December 4, 2017)

⁷⁷ Bobby Jindal. *Leadership and Crisis*, 50

⁷⁸ Tyler Bridges. “Inside Look at what Bobby Jindal was like as a high school student” *The Advocate* December 3, 2015

spoke of almost nothing but his studies”.⁷⁹ Amar Jindal, now living comfortably in his country club home in Baton Rouge, was the first and only child of nine to even go to high school, providing a textbook example of rags-to-riches. The young Amar lived a “hand-to-mouth” existence. Bobby’s paternal grandfather only had a fifth-grade level education and managed a tiny grocery store, which was the sole source of income for the large family of 11. Bobby’s maternal grandmother was illiterate. The large family, however, often found solace and closeness through their frequent Hindu religious rituals. But, even while young, Amar, who disapproved of Bobby’s conversion initially on the grounds that “spiritual interests, particularly something new like Christianity, were a distraction or a diversion from material success”, would be absent during his family’s rituals. Instead, Amar’s life was centered around his burning desire to escape his abject surroundings.⁸⁰ When he discovered that his nearby school did not provide education beyond the fifth-grade, Amar Jindal continued his education purely out of his own self-motivation, biking more than 5 miles a day to reach his junior high school. The lifestyle was so rigorous that Amar often missed meals and once collapsed at school out of sheer exhaustion. Amar’s drive for success, however, was also marked by a strong sense of self-importance. His siblings often felt that their brother was embarrassed by the rest of his family’s lack of education and literacy. He would rarely talk to members of his family and avoided helping out with chores as much as he could.⁸¹ It is telling that when the Jindals would visit India after they had immigrated to the United States, they would only spend time with Bobby’s maternal family.⁸² Amar Jindal’s wish to rise beyond his situation manifested itself when he began courting Raj

⁷⁹ Nola.com “Seeds of Bobby Jindal’s political success were sown in India” *The Times-Picayune* June 24, 2015 http://www.nola.com/politics/index.ssf/2015/06/seeds_of_bobby_jindals_politic.html (accessed December 4, 2017)

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Annie Gowen and Tyler Bridges, “From Piyush to Bobby: How does Jindal feel about his family’s past?” *The Washington Post* June 23, 2015 https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/from-piyush-to-bobby-how-does-jindal-feel-about-his-familys-past/2015/06/22/7d45a3da-18ec-11e5-ab92-c75ae6ab94b5_story.html?utm_term=.d0dccbef04a (accessed December 4, 2017)

Gupta while he was attending Punjab University with her brother. Raj Gupta, one of the few highly educated women in the region, shared the same intensity as her future husband, as her sister explains that “whatever [Raj] would do she would do to perfection.”⁸³ Raj Gupta, while from the same caste as Amar, came from a different income strata, which usually raises problem in the highly class-conscious Indian society. However, the Guptas were thoroughly impressed by Amar’s education and they accepted him into the family, giving the ambitious Amar ample proof that hard work and education could open countless doors.⁸⁴ Amar maintained his inveterate philosophy of achieving one’s ambition through education after immigrating to the United States, as well. Amar’s core logic – to become greater than the surroundings one was born into – gains another meaning when viewed in conjunction with Bobby Jindal’s reflection about living in the United States “for my dad, it was all about survival.”⁸⁵ Amar Jindal achieved the incredible success that he did through intertwining his ambitions closely with a survival instinct, which in the context of his childhood in rural India was actually rooted in the depravity of key necessities. This formulation suggests that in the eyes of Amar Jindal: to succeed is to live. Jindal continuously drilled this mentality into his children, teaching them that they could achieve anything in the land he felt where “nothing was impossible if you were willing to work hard.”⁸⁶

For Amar Jindal, his education and hard work were the means through which he escaped his abject condition and achieved his dreams. No longer living in a small village with his family who mainly occupied themselves with religious activity, Amar Jindal had a visa reserved for highly skilled immigrants to America, the great land of opportunity, and was married into a higher status educated family. As such, Bobby saw in his father a powerful role model of

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Bobby Jindal. *Leadership and Crisis*, 41.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 39.

success. But, in the same way Amar pushed himself, he expected even more from his son. As Bobby reflects, “[my father] lived by the idea... that no man could consider his life worthy unless his children surpassed his abilities and achievements.”⁸⁷ This philosophy certainly must have placed a serious burden on his children. Both Jindal sons cite how their father would be disappointed if they received A’s, instead expecting A-pluses. And, if one of them ever received a B they could expect punishment.⁸⁸ Bobby also shares that “one of my father’s worst insults was to say that someone ‘had great potential’.”⁸⁹ Bobby and his brother Nikesh were often hesitant to complain about difficult issues in their lives for fear of receiving one of Amar’s passionate lectures that covered “poverty, to gratefulness, to the value of hard work, to the importance of compassion, to the unique promise of the American Dream.”⁹⁰ Certainly, not being able to have their hardships fully acknowledged must have been a difficult situation for two brown children growing up in the segregated Baton Rouge. But, nonetheless, Amar’s exacting standard would achieve results: Bobby would graduate from high school at 16, complete a 5-year program in three at Brown University, and obtain acceptances from Harvard Medical School and Yale Law School, and his younger brother Nikesh, would graduate *summa cum laude* from Dartmouth College, receive a law degree from Yale Law School, and serve as an editor at the *Yale Law Journal*.⁹¹⁹² Bobby Jindal, however, does give the impression that his father’s demanding and obstinate pressure did not necessarily cease upon college graduation. Jindal compares his father to the Kennedys’ father. “There’s a story...that when a young Bobby Kennedy told his dad he

⁸⁷ Ibid., 49.

⁸⁸ Mike Sager. “Bobby Jindal, All American” *Esquire* June 25 2015

⁸⁹ Bobby Jindal. *Leadership and Crisis*, 43.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 28.

⁹¹ Jessica Taylor. “5 Things You Should Know About Bobby Jindal” *NPR* June 24, 2015

<https://www.npr.org/sections/itsallpolitics/2015/06/24/416990332/5-things-you-should-know-about-bobby-jindal> (accessed December 4, 2017)

⁹² “Nikesh Jindal” *King & Spalding* n.d., <https://www.kslaw.com/people/nikesh-jindal.pdf?locale=en> (accessed December 4, 2017).

wanted to be a Catholic priest, his dad replied, ‘Well, that’s great. We’ve never had a pope in the family before.’ That’s exactly my dad.”⁹³ Jindal came in first in the 2003 primary during his first gubernatorial campaign, which was an incredible success for a political unknown at the time and more so for the first Indian to ever run in Louisiana politics, but the moment that Bobby remembers most vividly immediately after that success was his father’s reaction: “[My dad] was disappointed we didn’t get more than 50% and win the whole shootin’ match that night. We had just shocked the nation, but that didn’t satisfy my dad.”⁹⁴ Jindal greatly admires his father and dutifully credits his success to his father’s constant pushing, but could his father’s exactingness have had other consequences on his children’s development? Amar Jindal made achievement the basis of his approval for his children, even at the cost of ignoring emotional wants, which could lead them to doggedly and single-mindedly pursue those goals. As we shall see, Amar’s approach soon spills over to other aspects of Bobby’s life.

Nikesh Jindal, Bobby’s brother who is younger by seven years, can serve as a foil to him. Nikesh, too, carried his father’s ambition: “My dad was always reinforcing to my brother and I that you should dream big to achieve anything in life.” Nikesh now lives in Washington D.C. and works as a legal counsel in healthcare and tort legal matters at the world-class international law firm King & Spalding.⁹⁵ Unlike Bobby, Nikesh accepted his Yale Law School offer after graduating *summa cum laude* in 1999 from Dartmouth College. From there, the similarities between the brothers return, albeit in different flavors. Nikesh, too, chose to pursue work in government, serving as a law clerk to the conservative Honorable Diarmuid O’Scannlain in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, in Portland, Oregon. Afterwards in 2005, Nikesh

⁹³ J Bobby Jindal. *Leadership and Crisis*, 91.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Tyler Bridges. “Inside Look at what Bobby Jindal was like as a high school student” *The Advocate* December 3, 2015

Jindal joined the Bush Administration, where Bobby also worked, as a Senior Counsel at the Department of Energy, where he remained until joining the White House Office of Management and Budget as an Associate General Counsel the following year. Until President Bush's lame duck year of 2008, Nikesh advised senior policy officials on legal and regulatory issues arising from several federal agencies, including the Departments of Health and Human Services, where his older brother once served as an Assistant Secretary from March 2001 to February 2003.⁹⁶ He is a registered Republican.⁹⁷ Nikesh Jindal, incredibly successful for his age of 39 years, jokes that his resume is "quite a shock for a Southern boy", just like his brother's. Nikesh, however, does not seem to treasure and emphasize his Southern identity like his brother. Despite likely having ample career opportunities there, Nikesh decided not to move back and settle in Louisiana, instead establishing himself in Washington D.C. Nikesh also speaks without a southern accent, unlike his brother. Nikesh professionally goes by his given name and is still a practicing Hindu.⁹⁸



⁹⁶ Nikesh Jindal” *King & Spalding* n.d.,

⁹⁷ “Nikesh Jindal Political Campaign Contributions 2004 Cycle” *CampaignMoney.com* n.d., <https://www.campaignmoney.com/political/contributions/nikesh-jindal.asp?cycle=04> (accessed December 4, 2017)

⁹⁸ Tyler Bridges. “Inside Look at what Bobby Jindal was like as a high school student” *The Advocate* December 3, 2015

Just like his Jindal counterparts, Ajit Randhawa hails from the Punjab region of India. Raised in the small village Pandori Ran Singh that had less than a thousand people, Ajit studied at Punjab Agriculture College (now University). After obtaining his masters in agriculture at the college, Ajit began working as an assistant professor until he received a scholarship to the University of British Columbia.⁹⁹ After UBC, Ajit enjoyed a successful career while at Voorhees College, being recognized as a Distinguished Professor by South Carolina governor Carroll Campbell in 1989, well before Nikki Haley entered the political scene. After 29 years of teaching, Ajit Randhawa retired as Voorhees' Chairman of Division of Natural Sciences, Math and Computer Science.¹⁰⁰ Besides academics, however, Ajit Randhawa focused most intensely on spiritual matters. Ajit is the president and one of the founding members of the first and largest Sikh temple in South Carolina, the Sikh Religious Society of South Carolina also known as Gurdwara Guru Nanaksar. However, his spiritual interests expand beyond his Sikh faith. Ajit Randhawa sits on the Advisory Board of the Interfaith Partners of South Carolina, an organization working to foster understanding and cooperation among the religious groups of South Carolina.¹⁰¹ Randhawa has written one book, "Evolution of Faith and Religion: An Exploration," which, published in 2009, espouses a universalist understanding of spirituality. Drawing on his study of various different faiths, Ajit surmises that all religions are anchored in spiritual faith in God and he hopes his work can reach "members of Generation X...so that the spirituality imbued in every faith can broaden their outlook about humanity and the human

⁹⁹ Express News Service, "Nikki Haley's roots are from Punjab; her kin feel proud back home" *New Indian Express* November 24, 2016 <http://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2016/nov/24/nikki-haleys-roots-are-from-punjab-her-kin-feel-proud-back-home-1542223.html> (accessed December 4, 2017)

¹⁰⁰ "Nikki Haley's Weddings, Family, Parents, Career, Religion" *My Marriage Website*, n.d., <http://myweddingwebsite.com/nikki-haley-wedding-family-parents-career-religion/> (accessed December 4, 2017)

¹⁰¹ "Index of Professional Files: Ajit Randhawa" *Zoominfo* n.d., <https://www.zoominfo.com/people/Ajit/Randhawa> (accessed December 4, 2017).

connection yearning for unity and wellbeing for all.”¹⁰² This universalist and compassionate view of spirituality surely must have been essential to his family’s experience as the sole Sikh family in the largely Christian Bamberg.

Early on in his family’s time in Bamberg, Ajit was hard-pressed to consider his views on religion. At the young age of 4, Haley’s older brother Mitti begged his parents to cut his hair because of the severe bullying he was already experiencing due to it and his turban. For Sikh men, worldwide, long hair is a symbol of Sikh pride, the cutting of which signifies a conscious abandonment of Sikh heritage and identity.¹⁰³ Additionally, the turban represents the willingness for Sikhs, who were once severely persecuted in India, to stand uncompromisingly in the face of oppression. For Ajit, to relent to his elder son would mean sacrificing pillars of the Sikh tradition that are deemed inherent to the identity. But relent he did, as Ajit knew he had to safeguard his son’s mental and physical well-being. His younger son, Charan, too, did not regularly wear the head garment. Ajit, however, never stopping donning his turban. Often when walking in public, Ajit would deal with “hearing people whisper...and seeing people point”.¹⁰⁴ On one occasion, Haley recalls the hot anger she felt as police were called on her father while they were grocery shopping. But, she also remembers, “My dad continued filling his bags like nothing was happening...He said hello to the couple standing next to the policeman and paid for his items.”¹⁰⁵ Ajit adopted a strategy of keep one’s head down in the face of discrimination, as he surely knew from Voorhees the potential dangers of retaliation. Ajit understood that his fragile position in the town of Bamberg could only exist while the white community was not provoked. Although Ajit

¹⁰² Ajit Randhawa. “Evolution of Faith and Religion” AuthorHouse: 2009.

¹⁰³ Amelia Gentleman. “Young Sikh Men Get Haircuts, Annoying Their Elders.” *New York Times* March 27, 2009 <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/29/world/asia/29turban.html> (accessed December 4, 2017)

¹⁰⁴ Nikki Haley. *Can’t is Not an Option*, 12.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 13

never stopped outwardly expressing his cultural and religious identity, he had to make compromises for his children's survival.

Like Raj Jindal, Raj Randhawa broke barriers in India as a highly educated woman. Prior to moving to the Western Hemisphere with her husband, Raj obtained a law degree from the prestigious University of Delhi.¹⁰⁶ However, unlike her Jindal counterpart, she was not able to use her education for her own career because of limited opportunities in Bamberg. Nonetheless, Raj channeled her high energy and ambition into her new pursuits. Hailing from a wealthy family in India, Raj was unaccustomed to mundane chores, but while her husband was studying in Vancouver, the pregnant Raj would baby-sit other children, type student papers, work at a department store and the post office in order to provide for her studying husband and first-born son.¹⁰⁷ Upon moving to South Carolina, Raj decided to obtain her master's in Education so that she could begin work as a schoolteacher for Bamberg public schools. Raj, who would always tell stories of her homeland to her children, also sought to maintain her cultural ties. While as a social studies teacher at the integrated Bamberg elementary school, the enterprising Raj avidly organized festivals that showcased international cultures in their small town of 3,000.¹⁰⁸ Her persistence in connecting and spreading her culture did not stop there, however, as her entrepreneurial side flared when she founded Exotica International Inc. in 1976. Still working as a teacher, Raj managed a gift boutique store which featured imported goods from around the world. The business quickly expanded when it added apparel to its selection in 1980, and soon earned a "must-shop" reputation with customers coming from as far as California to shop its goods.¹⁰⁹ Exotica Inc. is now a multi-million-dollar company with a 10,000-square-foot facility

¹⁰⁶ T&D Staff, "Exotica founders close store, plan retirement" *T&D* April 20, 2008 http://thetandd.com/business/exotica-founders-closing-store-plan-retirement/article_c6f33fcb-c822-5a2a-8b89-ff6ebf3583ac.html (accessed December 4, 2017).

¹⁰⁷ Nikki Haley. *Can't is Not an Option*, 2.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ T&D Staff, "Exotica founders close store, plan retirement" *T&D* April 20, 2008

in Columbia; Raj Randhawa in 2002 was a runner-up for the South Carolina Business Woman of the year.¹¹⁰

Raj Randhawa worked to pass down her drive to her children. She pushed her children academically, especially Nikki. She requested teachers to always give her daughter extra material, eventually leading to Nikki skipping a grade. Raj also gave her company's bookkeeping duties to her daughter when she was 12.¹¹¹ Nikki Haley recalls that growing up, she did not see her mom as an emotional person. "We had a loving household, but we never told one another 'I love you' or hugged much. Crying was very much frowned upon. If we did cry, we were told to get a glass of water and go to our room... They wanted us to be tough," shares Nikki Haley in her autobiography.¹¹² "So their philosophy was that you don't complain about problems, you *do* something about them," Nikki explains. Raj Randhawa monitored her children's academic success closely. Nikki Haley harkens the experience of bringing report cards home, in her words, "a typically traumatic event in an Indian household."¹¹³ While Raj Randhawa did not punish her children for unsatisfactory performance like Amar Jindal would, she would wield a mixture of "high expectations, encouragement, and, yes, guilt, to have [her children] set standards of excellence for [themselves]."¹¹⁴ Raj Randhawa's approach to her children's success, though not as stringent as Amar Jindal, carries the same tone of heavy expectations. Also like Jindal, Randhawa discouraged complaining and overt displays of emotion, instead pushing her children to look to solve their own problems. With such busy parents, who at times had their own race-related issues to contend with, Nikki Haley and her siblings readily would be largely left to handle their problems on their own.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Nikki Haley. *Can't is Not an Option*, 15.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 16

Nikki Haley attributes her mother for keeping their family close. Referring to her parents and three other siblings as “the Original Six”, Haley reminisces on their early Bamberg days when “[they] just had each other.”¹¹⁵ While her parents were busy during the day, Nikki and her siblings spent most of their time with one another, riding bikes, playing kickball, swimming at the pool, or playing tennis. Her three siblings are her older brother Harmit ‘Mitti’ Randhawa, her older sister Simran ‘Simmi’ Singh, and her younger brother Charan ‘Gogi’ Randhawa. The fact that they all have nicknames reinforces Nikki Haley’s claim that the name Nikki was a continuation from a childhood nickname. Nonetheless, Haley’s three siblings, similar to their sister, became successful individuals in their own right, demonstrating the efficacy of Raj Randhawa’s expectations, but along very unique career paths that reflect Ajit Randhawa’s open-mindedness.

After receiving his bachelor’s degree in biology from Wofford College, Harmit Randhawa joined the Chemical Corps branch of the U.S. Army. During the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, Harmit served as a Company Commander on the frontline of the “Desert Storm” campaign. Harmit retired as a major in the National Guard Reserve and switched to the private sector, now working as the National Account Director at Johnson & Johnson in Atlanta.¹¹⁶ Harmit is also the only other sibling besides Nikki to convert to Christianity; he is a Southern Baptist.¹¹⁷ Simran Singh, after graduating from the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York, carried on her father’s spiritual drive by going into life coaching. Simran has two publications, 11:11 magazine and the journal *Believe*. Simran’s life coaching attracted significant enough attention to eventually found the Believe Center in the Columbia suburb of Lexington,

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 5

¹¹⁶ Lavina Melwani, “The Nikki Haley Story” *Lassi with Lavina* November 23, 2016 <http://www.lassiwithlavina.com/thebuzz/the-nikky-haley-story/html> (accessed December 4, 2017)

¹¹⁷ Nikki Haley’s Weddings, Family, Parents, Career, Religion” *My Marriage Website*, n.d.,

South Carolina.¹¹⁸ The “baby” of the family, Charan decided to pursue his passions in music, receiving an Associate’s degree in Music Business Management from the Art Institute of Atlanta. He founded and produces music with his rock band called “Dear Enemy”, while also founding and running a web and graphic design small business.¹¹⁹ Like his sister Nikki, Charan’s spouse, his wife Amber, is white.¹²⁰ Unlike Bobby’s brother, Nikki’s siblings show more variance, like she does, from their parents, having one sibling who also converted and another with a white spouse. Additionally, her siblings all remained in the South with two in Atlanta and Simmi still in South Carolina.

The similarities abound: two educated Indian families look to American universities for employment, both families move to the South at the onset of intense civil unrest of the 1970s, both families grapple with preserving their cultures as part of a small minority group, both families raise two future governors who are only two years apart in age, are elected within two years of each other, and published their autobiographies between two years, as well. These similarities are not coincidences, rather they are the very conditions which ushered the future successes of Nimrata Haley and Piyush Jindal. As brown-skinned people, their families had to quickly adjust to the segregated South and endeavor to succeed. Both families had internal support systems (the Jindals had their “Original 5” Hindu family friend circle and the Randhawas found solace with their “Original 6” family members) while also employing strategies to interact with their neighbors (the Jindals encouraged mixing but in the context of success/education and the Randhawas kept their heads down). The divergence occurs because of the differing levels of

¹¹⁸ Simran Singh. “Real Dreams – A Family Story” *I Am Simran* November 3, 2010 <http://www.iamsimran.com/real-dreams-a-family-story/> (accessed December 4, 2017)

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ Nikki Haley’s Weddings, Family, Parents, Career, Religion” *My Marriage Website*, n.d.,

the South's racism they experienced. The Randhawas with their turbans and association with the HBCU Voorhees college felt a stronger sense of danger and were more intertwined with the black community than were the Jindals. The Randhawas were the only Indian family in a small Southern town that was economically downtrodden and not highly-educated. The Jindals, on the other hand, lived around primarily white people and enjoyed the benefits of a white university.

However, what is odd is Jindal's omission of Baton Rouge's racial tension and the mischaracterization of his parents' willingness to assimilate. As we will explore in later chapters, Jindal seems obliged to convey a perception of racial harmony and facile integration. The reality, based on the earlier statements and neighbors' comments, turns out otherwise. In fact, Jindal's parents closely upheld many aspects of their traditional culture, to the point where they almost did not let Bobby go to a prestigious Ivy League school over his conversion to Catholicism. Instead, the Jindal parents draw a line to how much their son can assimilate based on Jindal's marriage. So, rather than assimilation-minded parents, Bobby actually had to negotiate his identity as an Indian with his family. His brother serves as an important foil, as he achieved incredible success while being raised by the same principles of his parents in the same context as Bobby, but remains Hindu, does not have a Southern accent, and did not return to the region after college.

The important similarity to consider, though, is both of these parents' emphasis on education, hard work, and ambition. Ajit Randhawa, Raj Randhawa, Raj Jindal, and Amar Jindal are highly-educated and they all share cosmopolitan ideals and backgrounds. Their backgrounds and views reflect much more liberal values than the Southern conservative culture around them. In fact, Bobby Jindal admits that his parents were Democrats before he joined the Republican

party.¹²¹ Ajit wrote a book on universal spirituality, Raj Randhawa had a law degree, Raj Jindal's father read the Qur'an and allowed her to marry a lower-status man, and Amar values education above all else. However, with the open-mindedness that comes with their intellectualism also comes a notion of specialness. These are individuals who have accomplished incredible achievements: they left their hometowns in India, earned impressive educations, and traveled to the United States where they would become wealthy and recognized for their efforts. For these successful and well-educated parents, their children, too, had to measure up to the same standard. Bobby Jindal and Nikki Haley did not stay hidden from the rest of Southern society. They carried within the same ambition of their parents, but their challenge was to achieve incredible success that would make their parents proud while also growing up in the segregated South. However, they had to do this without the frequent emotional availability and cultural knowledge of the South that non-immigrant peers would have. As such, they took the strategies of their parents and adapted it to their other problems. In the next chapter, we shall see how their parents' lessons of tackling problems directly and working tirelessly to achieve your goals manifest in Haley and Jindal's social experiences.

Succeeding in the segregated South, however, entails picking a side. Southern Christian whites, the architects of Jim Crow, held a powerful monopoly over the society's economic, social, and political systems. As the Chinese merchant implied, being associated with blackness in the South could entail danger. *Mississippi Masala*, a film about the love story between a South Asian woman and a black man in Mississippi during the 1970s, offers a pertinent window into the dynamics between South Asian immigrants and Southern blacks. The relationship is one forbidden by the Indian woman's father for he not only harbors his own racist sentiments about

¹²¹ Deborah Solomon "The Convert" *The New York Times Magazine*, August 29, 2008
<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/31/magazine/31wwln-Q4-t.html> (accessed December 4, 2017)

blacks but most importantly fears for his daughter's safety. Her father is aware of the danger consistently experienced by blacks of the South, and even encourages adopting 'white' mannerisms like the Indians who emulate Southern whites in speech and behavior. Nikki Haley and Bobby Jindal, in their pursuit to realize their potentials, have to consider the racial dichotomy of their new homes. Success and power lies with white people in the South, but Indian are relegated below whites in the social hierarchy. How do Piyush and Nimrata navigate that conflict?

“My Job is to Fix It”

In 1976, when Nimrata Randhawa just turned five years old, she and her 8-year-old sister Simran, known by her family as ‘Simmi’, competed in the Little Miss Bamberg beauty pageant at their parent’s request.¹²² What the newly immigrated Randhawa parents did not know, however, was that the Bamberg pageant actually segregated its contestants – crowning only one white queen and one black queen, in order to “represent both races” and keep the peace.¹²³ The judges, however, were flummoxed by the two brown-skinned sisters. They thought to themselves, “If we put them in one category, then one group will be mad, and if we put them in the other category, the other group will be mad.”¹²⁴ On the day of the competition, Simmi remembers being called up by the judges during intermission to be told that she and her sister would have to be disqualified because the pageant did not have a category for the two Indian girls. Despite being offered consolation prizes of crayons, beach balls, and the opportunity to sing a song during the intermission, Simmi recalls suddenly feeling starkly different from the society around her and going deeper into “[her] shell” that she typically withdrew to during these kinds of moments.¹²⁵ But, Nikki did not waver. Simmi was astonished by the fact that, instead of feeling embarrassed, her little sister Nikki decided to sing the pageant’s requested song, which ironically was *This Land is Your Land, This Land is Mine*. Watching her sister, Simmi could not help but feel that her sister “believed the song she was singing. . . .”¹²⁶ Interestingly, Bamberg

¹²² Hana Rosin, “Good Ol’ Girl” *The Atlantic* January/February 2011
<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2011/01/good-ol-girl/308348/> (accessed December 4, 2017)

¹²³ Phil Sarata, “Haley: Anecdote doesn’t tell full story of her hometown” *T&D* September 19, 2010
http://thetandd.com/news/local/haley-anecdote-doesn-t-tell-full-story-of-her-hometown/article_e93b63d8-c39f-11df-9b91-001cc4c03286.html (accessed December 4, 2017)

¹²⁴ Andrew Goldman, “The Comet: Nikki Haley of South Carolina” *The New York Times Magazine* March 4, 2011
<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/06/magazine/06talk-t.html> (accessed December 4, 2017)

¹²⁵ Simran Singh, “Real Dreams – A Family Story” *I Am Simran* November 3, 2017 <http://www.iamsimran.com/real-dreams-a-family-story/> (accessed December 4, 2017)

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

stopped segregating the princesses the following year.¹²⁷ From the early age of 5, Nikki Haley already was showcasing a resolve to win over her peers even in the face of racial stigmatization, instead of backing down like her sister did. Perhaps this trait of Nikki's is why Simmi believed her sister, who from ten years old, began proclaiming that one day she would be mayor of Bamberg.¹²⁸

Like his South Carolinian counterpart, the young Bobby Jindal did not shy away from attention, despite being a minority amongst his peers. Part exposing their sons to Baton Rouge and part building their extracurricular skills, Jindal's parents were "confident enough in their Hindu identity to send [he and his brother]" to a plethora of summer camps organized by local places of worship.¹²⁹ At these camps, the Jindals were often the only brown-skinned kids in the group. During one particular camp, Camp Reznikoff, which was organized by the Baton Rouge synagogue Beth Shalom, Bobby decided to run for group president. Jindal argues that "it never...occurred to [him] that [he] might be rejected because [he] was a little different from the other kids." He also acknowledges that "being the only tan-skinned gentile in the group" was a strong motivator for his decision to run.¹³⁰ Jindal with his brown skin and Hindu background must have stuck out considerably from his Jewish peers. And, yet, Jindal sought to call more attention to himself by running for group president. It would be nearly inconceivable to win, to beat his Jewish peers on their home turf. Jindal says, however, "my parents didn't raise me to think that way."¹³¹ Jindal did not want to feel trapped by his status as the only brown child, and instead sought to persevere beyond it. Young Bobby proceeded to showcase the political acumen and determination that would one day take him to the Baton Rouge Statehouse. Jindal worked

¹²⁷ Andrew Goldman, "The Comet: Nikki Haley of South Carolina" *The New York Times Magazine* March 4, 2011.

¹²⁸ Simran Singh, "Real Dreams – A Family Story" *I Am Simran* November 3, 2017.

¹²⁹ Bobby Jindal. *Leadership and Crisis* (Washington D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 2010), 42.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

harder than his competitors. He picked the prettiest counselor as his campaign manager and offered free candy to anyone who would vote for him, demonstrating that although he came from a completely different background than the other campers, he definitely understood them.”¹³² Bobby, against all odds, went on to win the summer camp election. Jindal reflects on this early experience in his autobiography by saying, “some say I learned the essentials of Louisiana politics early.” This acknowledgement is particularly telling, as it offers a glimpse into the mindset that would one day win him the Louisiana governor seat.

For the South Asian politicians to overcome the assault on self-worth that came from the stigmatization received from being racial and religious minorities in the segregated South, Nimrata and Piyush instead set out to win the acceptance of their peers. From an early age, Nimrata and Piyush understood how to appeal to their Southern peers from their ambiguous position in the communities in ways that could make people respect them and see them for more than just their ethnic backgrounds. Haley with her performance of the inclusive American classic *This Land is Your Land, This Land is My Land* and Jindal with his calculated indulgence of his potential voters (a pretty counselor and candy) both win over the people’s sentiments. Bamberg stops segregating Little Miss Bamberg after the issue with the two sisters, and Bobby wins his election at a Jewish camp. Somehow, the two clever Indian children connect their ability to effectively gain acceptance with an interest in. As neither black nor white, they operate with enough ambiguity to construct identities more freely for themselves than their white and black peers can because of ingrained notions of Southern racial identity. Nonetheless, Haley and Jindal, themselves, come from very different backgrounds. Bamberg, unlike Baton Rouge, is very small, largely uneducated, economically downtrodden, and majority black. As such, Haley

¹³² Ibid.

and Jindal interact with and rely on different communities entirely. Their different experiences with racism also lead them to have different relationships with white and black communities and their own identity construction.

A Sheltered Childhood During Segregation

In her autobiography, Haley frequently mentions her family were in “survival mode” while they were in Bamberg, which meant clinging together tightly, working hard, and respecting their neighbors in order to avoid conflict with their new town.¹³³ As mentioned earlier, the Randhawas, as the first Sikh family in Bamberg whose patriarch was associated with the nearby HBCU, were on unsteady ground with the whites in town already. In fact, Nimrata Randhawa experienced a physical manifestation of this rocky relationship when she was a young toddler. Shortly after Nimrata’s birth, Raj Randhawa was compelled to return to teaching at the Bamberg elementary school for financial reasons, so she ventured out to the nearby trailer park by their house on the white side of town to seek out a woman who often babysat children for other families. The woman saw Raj Randhawa and baby Nimrata and declined to take care of the child. Raj, still new to the country and desperate, continued searching in the same impoverished area until she found a couple who was willing to watch over her daughter. For a few days Raj would drop off Nimrata to the couple before going to work, but after less than a week Nimrata began crying hysterically whenever they would get near the couple’s trailer. The infant Nimrata could not articulate the cause of her anguish, but one night while bathing her daughter, Raj found dark purple bruises all over her daughter’s back. As Raj stormed to the trailer park the next day, she encountered the woman who first refused to babysit her daughter. The woman conveyed that she would often hear the baby Nimrata screaming and crying during the day when she would be

¹³³ Nikki Haley, *Can't is Not an Option* (New York: Sentinel, 2012), 5

at the couple's home. Astonished that this woman never approached the couple about the wailing baby but determined to confront them themselves, Raj and Ajit went to the couple's trailer and furiously inquired about the bruises.¹³⁴ However, before they could even begin to press charges, the couple disappeared the next day without a trace. This story provides more context into the Randhawas' lives in Bamberg. Nikki Haley often tries to defend Bamberg from the stereotypical notion that it was a discriminatory small American town. She argues, "Bamberg is small-town America. It's changing for the better, but what hasn't changed is what makes it special, and that's about taking care of your neighbor."¹³⁵ But, this early life story of Nimrata reveals that the Randhawas, even amongst poor whites, were not treated as equals and did not receive the neighborly support that Nikki felt inherent to the small-town experience.

Nikki's perception of small-town cordiality, though, could have arose because of her family's insistence to shelter their youngest daughter from the more sinister aspect of their lives as much as they could. For instance, although she would get shivers from walking past the trailer when Nimrata was a child, her mother never told her the full story until she was much older.¹³⁶ After the frustrating experience that Ajit had with the police and the grocery store in Columbia, Haley recalls that her father was most upset because she had seen "a part of his daily life that he hoped [she] hadn't noticed."¹³⁷ Even during Haley's campaigns, Haley noticed that Ajit "would always stand in a corner at events he attended" so that his daughter would not have to contend with difficult comments about her Sikh identity.¹³⁸ Nikki Haley was certainly aware of the discrimination and stigmatization her family faced, but she was usually a spectator and not the direct victim. This gave her an acute understanding of how racism affects people without

¹³⁴ Nikki Haley, *Can't is Not an Option*, 11.

¹³⁵ Phil Sarata, "Haley: Anecdote doesn't tell full story of her hometown" *T&D* September 19, 2010

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ Nikki Haley, *Can't is Not an Option*, 13.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 18.

necessarily experiencing the constant psychological wear-and-tear herself. Haley agrees, “it was my older brother and father who had the hardest time being accepted in Bamberg,” who because of their head coverings bore the brunt of the dirty looks and comments.¹³⁹ Simmi, as mentioned earlier, was already more withdrawn by the time of the pageant. Nikki saw her hometown differently from the rest of her family because of the information she was given. Meditating on the pageant disqualification for herself, Nikki admits that frankly she did not even comprehend, most likely due to her young age, that they were even being disqualified when she received the consolation gifts. Although Simmi understood – alongside all the other adults at the pageants – that the pair did not fit in the Bamberg pageant because of their race, the young Nikki was simply excited to sing the song that she had been practicing. Even after the contest, Nikki really only remembers that her parents praised them for their great showing, but “other than that, we never talked about the incident again.”¹⁴⁰ Nikki’s recorded memories of Bamberg are generally quite fond. She was delivered by the close family friend Dr. Michael Watson, who not only had the first integrated office in Bamberg, but also happily saw Indian families all across the Columbia/Bamberg region.¹⁴¹ She is largely thankful to the town that helped her father become a professor, quickly granted her mother a position at the public schools, invited her onto the tennis team, and accepted her into the integrated Girl Scouts troop.¹⁴² For Nimrata, the 1970s Bamberg was a town that had its dark spots, but in the end “accepted an Indian family despite [their] cultural difference.”¹⁴³ This positive outlook on her situation in Bamberg contributed to her

¹³⁹ Ibid., 12

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 17

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 4

¹⁴² Ibid., 18

¹⁴³ Ibid.

development into the, as her father describes her, “cheerful, happy child who made friends easily.”¹⁴⁴

“Why is it,” an elementary school teacher at the private Runnels School asked her student Piyush, “that all Indians are so smart and well-behaved?” As the keynote speaker at a lecture series at Brown University in 1998 titled “Asian-American in Politics”, Jindal remembers feeling insulted at the common stereotype often thrust upon Asian-American students when he was a young boy. Jindal, “being a smart-aleck, told her it was the food.”¹⁴⁵ The older Jindal in his lecture reflected that the negative race-related experiences he had in the South were mostly the occasional stereotyping remarks or a slightly more stigmatizing incident like when he was called “a dirty Indian” on the playground.¹⁴⁶ Like his counterpart Haley, Bobby Jindal was sheltered from more extreme cases of race-related stigmatization or bullying. Jindal’s parents were able to subvert the contentious segregated school system at the time by sending Bobby to a private school, likely preventing him from getting embroiled in the political conflicts that were sweeping the town. Jindal entered elementary school in 1976, during a time when the public-school system in Baton Rouge was still very much segregated.¹⁴⁷ His education began at a private academy near LSU’s campus called the Runnels School, which had just opened its elementary school in the early 1970s.¹⁴⁸ The Runnels School, which was established in 1965 by Dr. L.K. Runnels and his late wife Patricia, most likely came about as a school attempting to

¹⁴⁴ Lavina Melwani, “The Nikki Haley Story” *Lassi with Lavina* November 23, 2016 <http://www.lassiwithlavina.com/thebuzz/the-nikky-haley-story/html> (accessed December 4, 2017)

¹⁴⁵ N.A., “Whiz Kid” *Brown Alumni Magazine* May/June 1998 <http://www.brownalumnimagazine.com/content/view/1861/40/> (accessed December 4, 2017)

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ N.A., “East Baton Rouge Parish’s desegregation case” *The Advocate* June 19, 2003 <https://www.ebrpl.com/oaal/documents/desegchronology.pdf> (accessed December 4, 2017).

¹⁴⁸ Tyler Bridges, “Inside Look at what Bobby Jindal was like as a high school student” *The Advocate* December 3, 2015. http://www.theadvocate.com/baton_rouge/news/politics/article_4cc08c3b-ccfd-5d6e-a59e-aade6e796466.html (accessed December 4, 2017).

circumvent the public school desegregation.¹⁴⁹ The school required a sizeable tuition without offering any financial aid, so this was a school reserved for wealthier, mostly white, folk, but also writes of itself as “a school for all races, religions and national origins”.¹⁵⁰ Nonetheless, Jindal was of an incredibly small minority and still could not escape being subjected to certain instances of stereotyping. However, his situation never got that bad as he explains, “people were either classified as African-Americans or ‘not’. I was placed in the ‘not’ category,” and that kids teased African-Americans a lot more than they teased Asian-Americans.”¹⁵¹¹⁵² Thus, although at times he may have felt misunderstood or put into a box by stereotyping comments like that of the teacher, his situation was not what black kids experienced, as it was already decided that he was not black. However, Jindal’s use of the word “not” also speaks to another reality, one that Jindal is purposefully trying to hide. It would be surprising for the white kids at Runnel to think of themselves as “not black”. White kids refer to themselves as white. But, Jindal uses “not-black” because he knows that he could not say that he was white like the rest of the peers. Thus, Jindal unwittingly reveals the ambiguity of his position that was above black, but below white in the racial schema. Jindal’s revelations at this lecture at Brown University are important to keep in mind, though, because they are the only time recorded where Jindal, one, speaks to his own stigmatization and, two, acknowledges that black peers had it worse. Typically, Jindal’s summary of his childhood in Baton Rouge is along the lines of a conversation he has with a reporter that he includes in his autobiography: “National reporters have often said to me, ‘It must have been so tough for you growing up in the Deep South.’ To which my response is, ‘Um...no. It was not tough, in fact it was tremendous. I’m a son of the Deep South...’”¹⁵³

¹⁴⁹ N.A., “Mission and Vision” *Runnels* n.d., <http://www.runnels.org/content.cfm?id=1442> (accessed December 4, 2017).

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ ¹⁵¹ N.A., “Whiz Kid” *Brown Alumni Magazine* May/June 1998

¹⁵² *Ibid.*,

¹⁵³ Bobby Jindal. *Leadership and Crisis*, 27.

After leaving the Runnels School in the fourth grade because the school did not offer higher grade levels at the time, Piyush’s classroom demographics changed dramatically. Jindal enrolled in Greenville Elementary School, which was a majority black school before closing down in 2010.¹⁵⁴ Jindal tested into Istrouma Middle Magnet honors program for sixth grade, which was a program designed to “meet the academic and intellectual needs of high-performing students” and help prepare them for college.¹⁵⁵ However, despite the school having GPA requirements (2.5 schoolwide and 3.0 for honors) and a commitment to academic success, it did not receive adequate funding, was in a lower-income area, and operated in dilapidated conditions.¹⁵⁶ Jindal later transferred to McKinley Middle Magnet School, another school dedicated to college preparation and rigorous academics, for seventh and eighth grade. These schools are similar to Runnels in the sense they pushed and accelerated students academically, but what made the experience different is that both schools were predominantly African-American, unlike the largely white Runnels. Magnet schools in Baton Rouge, in fact, were attempts to appease desegregationist litigators during the time, and saw high enrollment of non-white students, including the brown-skinned Piyush Jindal.¹⁵⁷ Subsequently, 99% of students at Istrouma were black before the school shutdown in 2005, and McKinley Magnet currently features a student population of whom 81.9% identify as African-American.¹⁵⁸¹⁵⁹ After middle

¹⁵⁴ N.a., “Greenville Elementary School” *Public School Review* n.d., <https://www.publicschoolreview.com/greenville-elementary-school-profile/70806> (accessed December 4, 2017).

¹⁵⁵ N.a., “Istrouma Magnet Honors Academy” *EBR Magnet Programs* n.d., <http://www.ebrmagnet.org/site338.php> (accessed December 4, 2017).

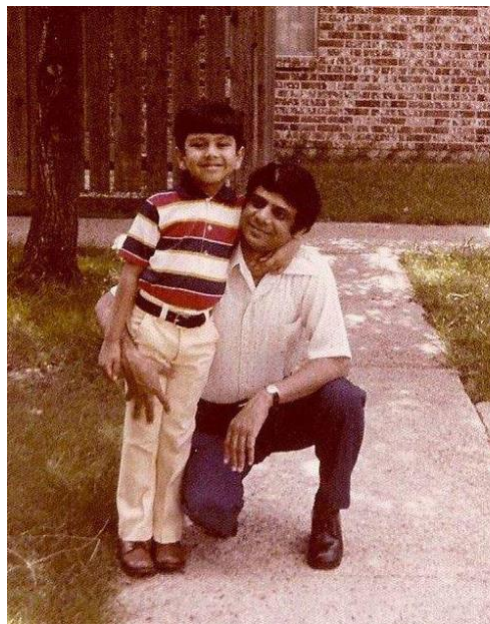
¹⁵⁶ N.a., “Greenville – Eden Park” *Point2Homes* n.d., <https://www.point2homes.com/US/Neighborhood/LA/Baton-Rouge/Greenville-Eden-Park-Demographics.html> (accessed December 4, 2017).

¹⁵⁷ Luce, Alonzo Ray, “Magnetism of Magnets: The Impact of High School Magnet Programs on Desegregation and School Improvement in East Baton Rouge Parish.” (1999). *LSU Historical Dissertations and Theses*. 7002. http://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_disstheses/7002 (accessed December 4, 2017).

¹⁵⁸ N.a., “Istrouma Middle Magnet School” *Public School Review* n.d., <https://www.publicschoolreview.com/istrouma-middle-magnet-school-profile> (accessed December 4, 2017).

¹⁵⁹ N.a., “McKinley Middle Magnet School in Baton Rouge, Louisiana” *Graphiq* n.d., <http://public-schools.startclass.com/1/38135/McKinley-Middle-Magnet-School-in-Baton-Rouge-Louisiana#Demographics&s=2iahF> (accessed December 4, 2017).

school, Bobby Jindal would go on to attend Baton Rouge Magnet High School, a school whose current student body is 14% Asian and 47% black.¹⁶⁰ Surprisingly, Jindal does not mention his experience in predominantly black schools in his autobiography or in interviews about his childhood. One is left to wonder what Jindal, who left a predominantly white Runnels as an established “not-black” thought of being surrounded by mostly black peers. Bobby Jindal was certainly aware of how blacks were treated in the early post-Jim Crow Baton Rouge. And, most likely prizing his status as “not-black”, Jindal may have been hesitant to become to the black community at the risk of jeopardizing his position and make him more liable to further teasing. As such, even the older Jindal simply avoids even publicly revealing that aspect of his childhood.



The Management of the Self

“What I want people to know is what I learned in Bamberg – my values,” urges Haley. In one sense, Haley is trying to convey that she her childhood in the small town helped instill her

¹⁶⁰ N.a., “Baton Rouge Magnet High School” *The U.S. News & World Report* <https://www.usnews.com/education/best-high-schools/louisiana/districts/east-baton-rouge-parish/baton-rouge-magnet-high-school-8588/student-body> (accessed December 4, 2017)

Southern moral and political ideals.¹⁶¹ However, the young Nimrata, despite her positive reflections, did face many challenges regarding her Indian identity while growing up. Subsequently, her exhortation also includes the values of determination and guardedness that she honed over her early years. “I had grown up in Bamberg never feeling embarrassed by being different but always being on guard,” Haley shares in her book.¹⁶² Coming into the third grade, Nimrata was realizing that her race was more than just different from those of her peers, but also that it attracted attention that came from a malicious place. She felt this most pronouncedly when she skipped second grade and entered third grade. Haley’s classmates harped on the new student, like most children do, but they were focused on her race, cultural practices, and the fact that she as a “smart girl” who chewed her hair.¹⁶³ However, in accordance to the realist philosophy of her parents who taught her to simply “deal with it”, Nikki understood that she “had trouble being accepted...[b]ut I knew it was my job to fix that.”¹⁶⁴ To young Nimrata, fixing that reality meant “focusing on finding the similarities between myself and my friends and avoiding those things that separated us...When the conversation started to drift to the differences between us, I would quickly switch it to something we could all relate to.”¹⁶⁵ Haley knew that whenever differences became apparent again, her foreignness would return and she would become the subject of stigmatization.

One telling example captures the distance that Nimrata and her family would go in order to avoid falling into a stereotype. In the almost entirely Christian Bamberg, Christmas is a ubiquitous cultural and communal event that brought the community closer. However, because they were Sikh, the Randhawas did not participate in the important ceremonies early during their

¹⁶¹ Phil Sarata, “Haley: Anecdote doesn’t tell full story of her hometown” *T&D* September 19, 2010.

¹⁶² Nikki Haley, *Can’t is Not an Option*, 29.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.

time in Bamberg, and Nikki could not employ her strategy to avoid getting teased and excluded. Eventually, after many pleas from their children, Ajit and Raj installed a small Christmas tree in their house so that their children could decorate it and exchange a few gifts between one another. The family even began sending their children to exchange gifts with friends in town, just like the other children in Bamberg would do. Although their family did not have a Santa Claus and their Christmas was not as lavish as their neighbors, Nikki was content because she could finally participate in the Christmas conversations.¹⁶⁶ As seen in the example of Christmas, the Randhawa parents would often times even support their children's calculated presentation to their Christian peers. When the parents first arrived in Bamberg, "it seemed like everyone in Bamberg worked hard to convert [their] family." Yet, nonetheless, the Randhawas would oblige people's requests and visit various congregations with their children, all while remaining steadfast to their own faith.¹⁶⁷ When Nikki's sister Simmi once received a Bible from a boy who told her that he "didn't want [her] to go to hell," Raj told her daughter to "read this cover to cover, because there's truth in here" so that Simmi could engage with her peers.¹⁶⁸ Although the Randhawas were proud of and deeply committed to their faith, they all understood the social importance of finding common ground amongst their Christian peers. Continuously putting this strategy into practice, Haley admits that "this habit of finding the similarities and avoiding the differences became very natural to me over time."

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 10.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 9.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.



(Haley is top left in the second row from the bottom)

Eventually, though, Nikki would find her strategy hit a wall when put up against the behemoth that is the early post-Jim Crow South. While governor, Nikki Haley in an interview with fashion magazine *Marie Claire* states that one major piece of advice she gives women is to have war stories, which are “the ones that really define you.”¹⁶⁹ The first war story that she brings up in the interview is a story of playing kickball in elementary school. By the late 1970s, Bamberg’s schools had been integrated by a previous court order earlier that decade, but unlike some peer Southern towns, the integration process did not see significant white flight from the public-school system, most likely due to the fact that the small town was generally pretty acquainted with one another.¹⁷⁰¹⁷¹ Nonetheless, segregation existed in other ways because of the system’s profoundly ingrained effects on the society’s notion of race. The children would automatically divide themselves based on color for groups or play and other activities, despite

¹⁶⁹ Sheila Weller, “Will Nikki Haley Be Our First Female President” *MarieClaire* January 4, 2012.

<http://www.marieclaire.com/politics/news/a6863/nikki-haley-interview/> (accessed December 4, 2012).

¹⁷⁰ James Cobb, “The Confederate Flag is Finally Placed Where the Sun Don’t Shine” *Flagpole* July 13, 2015

<http://www.flagpole.com/news/cobbloviote/2015/07/13/not-too-big-to-fur/> (accessed December 4, 2017).

¹⁷¹ Phil Sarata, “Haley: Anecdote doesn’t tell full story of her hometown” *T&D* September 19, 2010.

the fact that both black and white shared the same classroom now. One day, Nimrata's classmates decided to play a game of kickball and divided themselves into two teams based on skin color for a game of kickball – white and black. Nimrata, the only person not on a team saw the two groups and “got a sick feeling in the pit of [her] stomach, unsure how to approach this situation.”¹⁷² Nimrata asked a girl on the black side, “are we playing?” And, the girl quickly responded, “We are. You're not.” Afraid of the answer, Nimrata still asked, nonetheless, “Why?” The girl then told her, “You can play with us, but you have to pick a side. Are you white or are you black?”¹⁷³ Here, Nikki's strategy of finding commonality and avoiding differences would not work because, this time, the peers themselves were divided. Picking a side would not only entail fully committing to a white or black identity, which could also mean sacrificing some parts of her Indian identity, but it also would mean she could potentially alienate herself from the side that she did not pick for the rest of her elementary school career. Stuck in this difficult bind, Nimrata was in panic. Then, suddenly in a stroke of ingenuity, Nimrata realized that she could actually use her difference to her advantage now. She grabbed the kickball from the girl's hands and dashed to the field, yelling “I'm neither! ... I'm brown!”¹⁷⁴ Haley's evasion actually spurred the rest of the children to play without teams, and Haley remembers this war story as a success. However, this story also reveals an addendum to Haley's initial strategy: she can avoid the South's restricting dichotomy of black/white when necessary because of her undefined position in the schema. This actually affords her a privilege and opens more opportunities than her black peers have, whose identities are often imposed upon them. However, Haley ominously writes that although she was able to create a positive outcome through not picking a side, she knew that

¹⁷² Nikki Haley, *Can't is Not an Option*, 10.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

she only “had dodged the issue once again...but something told me it wouldn’t be the last time I’d have to.”¹⁷⁵



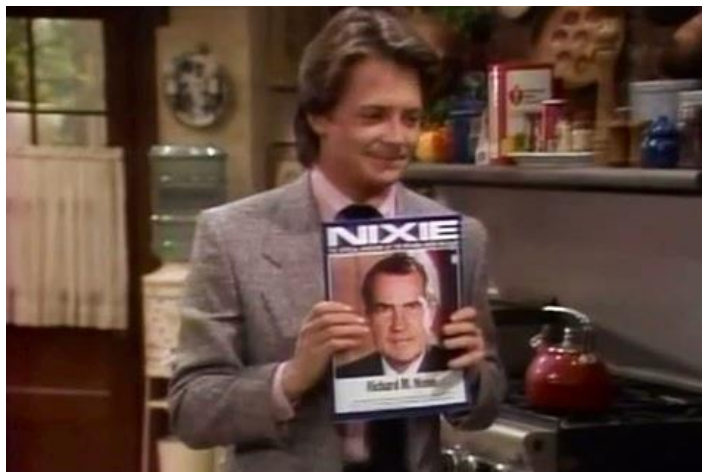
(Nikki Haley with her friends from elementary school after she was elected governor)

For a kid who received only one “B” in his entire life and whose father would constantly lecture him about the challenges he faced in his Punjabi village in order to obtain his education, Jindal certainly references a lot of TV.¹⁷⁶ From changing his name to Bobby based on a character from the show *The Brady Bunch* to explaining that his childhood was like *Leave it to Beaver* with a Louisiana twist, Bobby not only used these shows to learn about American society, but he also incorporated the information from the shows into the presentation of his everyday self. In middle school and high school, Jindal was a big fan of the 1980s sitcom “Family Ties” (once quoted to be President Reagan’s favorite TV Show), which was about the conservative and ambitious son of hippy parents, Alex Keaton. One of Jindal’s classmates, Elaine Parsons, now a history professor at Duquesne University, recalls that Jindal would often dress like Keaton: “he had a bowtie with dollar bills on it.” She continues, “When the movie ‘Wall Street’ came out, he’d go around saying, ‘Greed is good!’ People would roll their eyes at him.” Similar to his

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 10.

¹⁷⁶ Tyler Bridges, “Inside Look at what Bobby Jindal was like as a high school student” *The Advocate* December 3, 2015.

campaign at Camp Reznikoff, Jindal for years brought “bags of candy that he would keep in his backpack and sell individual pieces to sugar-craving students.”¹⁷⁷ Trying to create an image for himself that was unique, Bobby “showed up to meetings with bright green pants and a pink polo shirt with an upturned collar,” as a classmate he used to tutor recalls, “[h]e was trying to be Mr. Preppy.”¹⁷⁸ There is a common strain that goes through all of these different representations and actions. Bobby Jindal persistently engaged in what are, plainly, outrageous activities because he was trying to attract attention to himself. Dressing in a full suit and tie, shouting “Greed is Good!”, bringing candy around for years, and dressing in bright eye-catching colors, Jindal was doing whatever he could do to make a unique identity for himself.



(Michael J. Fox as Alex Keaton in *Family Ties*)

Jindal’s presentations did not always come from emulating pop culture icons, though. Because of his father’s strict expectations of academic success, Jindal did not participate in activities that were more familiar to the rest of Baton Rouge or befitting of a future politician. For instance, he was never allowed to stay out past midnight, the parties he organized involved challenging his close group of friends with obscure mathematical equations, and “he didn’t hang

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

out with the popular kids.¹⁷⁹ Jindal frequently mentions his fandom for LSU football, but for the most part, Piyush was working the concessions at the games in order to raise money for his school's math team.¹⁸⁰ He does, however, demonstrate his aptitude at spinning this difference to still create commonality when he explains that working the concessions was a learning experience because he learned "about the ingenious ways people can sneak alcohol into a sporting event."¹⁸¹ Similarly, Jindal writes about adventures in New Orleans "walking down Bourbon Street in the French Quarter and sneaking into clubs to listen to great music," but the bulk of his trips to the Big Easy were as a part of math tournament competitions.¹⁸² Reframing his stories in such a way allows Jindal to find commonality and enter a conversation, although his background and experience are unique from the usual.

This juxtaposition is not to discredit the experiences of Jindal or to belittle him, but rather to demonstrate that he, like Haley, was engaged in a process of managing his presentation as a response to stigmatization. Jindal did not want to be called a dirty Indian or be seen only for his intelligence, like his elementary school teacher viewed him. This would only remind people of his different race, which was a barrier to his acceptance. However, Jindal was constrained by the reality of his parents, who did indeed have expectations that played into stereotypes – to intensely prioritize academics, participate in Hindu cultural practices at home, and to become a doctor. Although his close friends saw the industrious math captain who, as his best friend's high-school girlfriend describes, "was reserved...not an extrovert," Jindal wanted to be and show more to the rest of the community. As such, he relied on his attention-grabbing presentations at school and his attempts at connecting with common cultural experiences to distract and build his

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Bobby Jindal. *Leadership and Crisis*, 43.

¹⁸² Ibid.

image into something that was more than just “the Indian kid”. Jindal’s high school best friend Kent Shih knew the truth. Shih explains that although everyone thought Piyush wanted to be a doctor, he knew that “[Bobby] always wanted to go into politics.”¹⁸³ He was going to rebel against all the stereotypes thrust upon him. At the close of his lecture at Brown University, Jindal explains how he is “excited about the diversity” that stands before the Asian-American community on the cusp of the 21st century. However, the exciting future of diversity he is referring to is not that typically white sectors like politics are opening up, but rather because “No longer are we clustered in certain professions or geographies.”¹⁸⁴ Jindal’s excitement for the future of Asians is that they can soon freely be the people they want. In his mind, it was not the South’s culture that were limiting his identity, but rather it was his Indian culture at home that prevented him from becoming fully accepted by his peers.

It is important to re-emphasize here that Bobby Jindal already had chosen with which demographic, and therefore which Southern, he was trying to get accepted from, unlike Nikki Haley who could not pick between the two groups. The shows, movie, and political figures that Jindal emulates all reflect conservative white values and cultural characteristics. Additionally, he avoids mentioning his experiences at predominantly black schools and was comfortable in his position as “not-black”. Thus, he is appealing for acceptance by the Southern whites around him. Perhaps, Jindal’s choice was easier than Haley’s because Baton Rouge had a significantly larger white population than the black one. Jindal also grew up in a wealthier neighborhood filled with LSU university graduates, a university which for the large part of its history had been segregated. Haley also had a personal allegiance to the black community because of her father’s position at Voorhees College. However, there was another reason why picking a side was difficult for Nikki

¹⁸³ Tyler Bridges, “Inside Look at what Bobby Jindal was like as a high school student” *The Advocate* December 3, 2015.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

Haley; picking a side meant detaching more from her home culture. The more Jindal chose to modulate himself to appease the white Christian Baton Rouge community around him, the closer he was conflicting with the culture and expectations of his parents. The two worlds and selves – Piyush and Bobby – came together in monumental fashion when Jindal decided to convert to Catholicism.

Although Bobby Jindal argues that his family, unlike the other Asian-American families around him, encouraged he and his brother to spend time with people of different backgrounds, Kent Shih, Bobby’s high school best friend and is of Chinese descent, reveals that their close group of friends were, like Jindal, “the children of Asian immigrants who embraced the United States as the land of opportunity and pushed their children to succeed by out-studying everyone else.”¹⁸⁵ The two were incredibly close and Bobby looked up to his friend Kent. Kent was the type of guy Bobby could wrangle obscure mathematical equations with, but also who “...the kind of kid who got picked first for baseball and football...Everyone wanted to be his friend.”¹⁸⁶¹⁸⁷ But, between the two best friends, religion was always a point of conflict. They would often engage in rigorous religious debate over their respective faiths, inspiring Bobby to begin intensely studying both the Bhagavad Gita and the Bible.¹⁸⁸ Kent, now a doctor in Nashville, is a born-again Baptist and gave Jindal his first Bible, which had his name engraved on it. However, sometimes the tension would get intense as Jindal also recounts Kent one day telling him, “I feel sorry for you because when my family and I go to heaven, I’m going to miss you when you’re not there.”¹⁸⁹ Jindal, understandably, felt shocked that his best friend would say

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Bobby Jindal. *Leadership and Crisis*, 45.

¹⁸⁸ Mike Sager, “Bobby Jindal, All American” *Esquire* June 25, 2015 <http://www.esquire.com/news-politics/a4952/bobby-jindal-all-american-1008/> (accessed December 4, 2017).

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

such a thing, but did not think much of the exchange, then. That is, until, “[God] used a teenage high school girl to get [Jindal’s] attention.”

Kathy Reznick, who later graduated from Tulane Law School, participated in the Math team like Bobby and was Bobby’s first girlfriend. Described as cute and blond, Kathy blew Jindal’s world away when she answered his question of “What do you want to do after school?” on their first date during a Math team party with “I want to become a Supreme Court Justice because I want to save innocent lives.”¹⁹⁰ Bobby and Kathy began dating, spending a lot of their dates visiting Kathy’s Catholic church Most Blessed Sacrament Church in Baton Rouge.¹⁹¹ Bobby, albeit still skeptical, became more interested in Christianity through these visits, reading Christian apologetics and bombarding pastors with questions.¹⁹² Bobby laughs about one conversation he had with a Catholic layman, unaware of how illustrative it really was of his personality, when he asked the gentlemen, “How does one get elected Pope?” The layperson promptly replies to the sincerely curious Jindal, “Bobby don’t become Catholic because you think you’re going to be Pope.”¹⁹³ Bobby, now more open-minded to Christianity and dating a Catholic girl, finally began accepting his best friend Kent’s invitations to his church, too. One evening at LSU’s Chapel on the Campus, sitting beside Kent’s girlfriend Anu Goel, who was also Indian and converted to Catholicism, and watching his best friend sing the church musical, Bobby “suddenly realized that Christ was on the cross because of [him] – [his] sins.”¹⁹⁴ In the summer of 1987, his junior year, Bobby Jindal baptized into the Catholic faith. In this case, Bobby experienced a very personal stigmatization, one where his best friend insinuated that

¹⁹⁰ Bobby Jindal. *Leadership and Crisis*, 47.

¹⁹¹ Tyler Bridges, “Gov. Bobby Jindal puts his religious faith front and center; not many know how he became a Christian” *The Advocate*, August 6, 2015 http://www.theadvocate.com/baton_rouge/news/politics/article_51a7b6da-0f20-5a40-9b6b-9f0e481c24d5.html (accessed December 4, 2017).

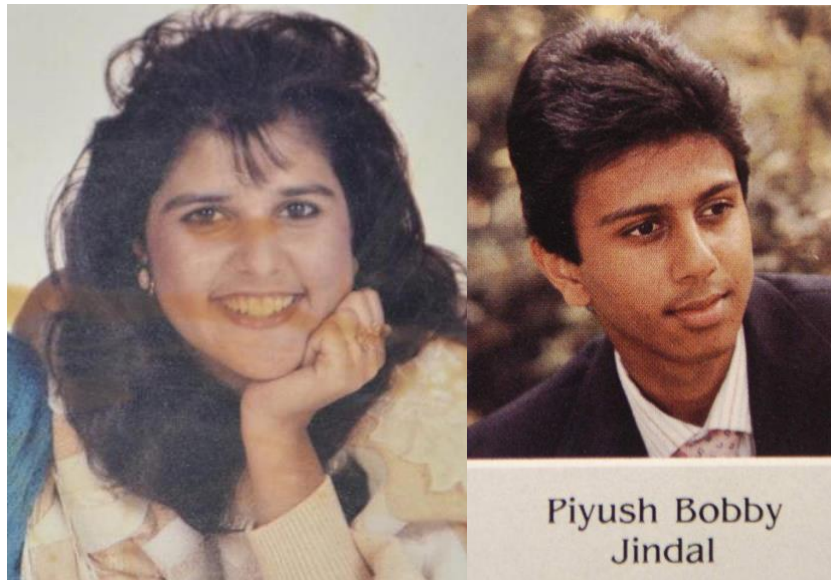
¹⁹² Bobby Jindal. *Leadership and Crisis*, 48.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

Jindal and his family would go to Hell. To add to the matter, Bobby then fell for a girl who was devoutly Catholic. As such, Bobby began entertaining Catholicism more in order to maintain these important relationships in his life, even though he knew his family would strongly disprove. Bobby jokingly admits that, “I was probably the only teenager in Baton Rouge who told his parents he was going to a party so he could sneak off to church.”¹⁹⁵ After repeated exposure to Church, many conversations with Church officials, intense studying of the Bible, and the acceptance of his closest friends, it soon became inevitable for Bobby to convert to the faith, he had moved away from his Hindu origin. Bobby Jindal made the choice, although it set off “an emotional bomb in the family” and strained the family for many years to come.¹⁹⁶

College Years



College afforded an opportunity for these two young individuals to leave their small communities for a more cosmopolitan environment that featured more diversity, specifically more fellow Indians. Here, they could finally enter communities where they did not have to

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 48.

carefully manage their outward presentations. Piyush, the fan of obtuse math puzzles and rigorously debating religious script, could enter a community of fellow Ivy League students who share the same passions. Haley, the Sikh girl constantly flustered over having to pick a side, could meet other Indian students and simply be herself.

Jindal recalls his experience being around a larger South Asian population with a tone of slight trepidation: “[I] was surprised when [I] was approached one day by an Indian-American father and son who were visiting campus. “They didn’t know me, but they singled me out and approached me, asking me to talk about Brown. They assumed that my values were the same as theirs. It’s like we were in a secret club because we looked the same way.”¹⁹⁷ Jindal was perturbed that this other brown family thought themselves similar to him. After all his painstaking attempts to be seen as anything other than just his brown skin, here at Brown University, he still could not escape this reality amongst Indian peers. Jindal believed that his childhood in Baton Rouge had led to him having values distinct from his Indian heritage, which is ironic because Jindal writes in his autobiography that “traditional Hindu values... meshed quite well with Louisiana’s traditional Bible Belt belief.”¹⁹⁸ Therefore, it was not the difference of values that made Jindal uncomfortable with this encounter, rather Jindal simply did not want to think he was similar to the brown kid. He had spent too much time running from himself. Interestingly, Jindal writes that one thing he found frustrating about the students at Brown University was that they “were also amazingly ignorant of our Judeo-Christian heritage.”¹⁹⁹ With his religious conversion, Bobby had cemented the idea in his mind that now he could claim the Judeo-Christian that laid the foundation of American society as his, as well. The rest of Jindal’s

¹⁹⁷ Stephanie Grace, “Bobby Jindal’s Pitch” *Brown Alumni Magazine* January/February 2011, <http://www.brownalumnimagazine.com/content/view/2749/40/> (accessed December 4, 2017).

¹⁹⁸ Bobby Jindal. *Leadership and Crisis*, 45.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 55.

pivotal experiences at Brown University that he shares compare his involvement at College Republicans (which he founded and grew to a staggering 300 people), Campus Crusade for Christ, and Intervarsity Fellowship, firmly establishing himself with the white conservative Christians at Brown.²⁰⁰²⁰¹

Nikki Haley fondly remembers attending Clemson University as the chance she finally got to let her guard down after life in Bamberg.²⁰² Haley was content. In her freshman year, she met her future husband Michael Haley and they began dating shortly after their introduction. However, Haley remembers that in her second year, things changed. One day, while walking with a group of close friends, one of the friends made a racial slur about the Indian students on campus who did not speak English well. Haley remembers not saying anything at the time, but going home that night and thinking, “That insult was aimed at me. If he said that and I didn’t say anything, he said that to me – and I just let him do it!” Nikki Haley remembers this interaction as a defining moment. She continues, “I promised myself then and there that not only would I not stand by and allow anyone to make someone feel bad about being different, but I would also talk more openly about the ways I was different. I had spent so much time changing the subject. Now I talked about being Indian and being raised in a small town, and my friends were fascinated by it. I discovered that my differences actually made me a more interesting friend, a better person, and a better student. All those years I had worried about fitting in. At Clemson, I finally realized that my differences were my strengths and gained a new confidence.”²⁰³ Her own words speak volumes. College brought out a transformed Nikki Haley.

²⁰⁰ N.a, “Bobby Jindal (94-96 DCO), Louisiana's Rising Star” *McKinsey & Company Alumni Center Weekly Standard* November 03, 2017, https://alumni.mckinsey.com/public_content/500174682 (accessed December 04, 2017).

²⁰¹ Bobby Jindal. *Leadership and Crisis*, 53.

²⁰² Nikki Haley. *Can't is Not an Option*, 29.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*

Jindal and Haley's respective experiences in college reveal their willingness to expand their worldviews and determine whether or not they gain the self-awareness to understand the trajectory of their own identity formation. Bobby Jindal, after committing to his identity construction so deeply with his religious conversion, refused to critically examine himself and his childhood experiences. Even he admits that at Brown, he "wasn't very self-aware."²⁰⁴ Nikki Haley, on the other hand, was emboldened. At Clemson, she had fallen in love with a committed partner and was around other Indians for the first time. When hearing racist insults being levied upon those very other Indians, Haley saw her own experience tied up with the Indian students, achieving a meta-cognition of her childhood that helped de-normalize the racism and stigmatization with which she had grown up with since birth. With this kind of self-awareness, Haley would be less subjected to her upbringings in the South, and instead more skillfully manage her relationship with her home state and her own identity.

Michèle Lamont and a team of sociologists across the world published an expansive study in 2016 about how middle- and working-class minorities in three different areas of the world experience assaults on their self-worth through stigmatizing incidents and, subsequently, respond to the stigmatization in ways in order to regain respect, either with the stigmatizer or with themselves. The team extrapolated their findings to make credible statements on the experiences and responses of the stigmatized through 400 interviews that featured African-Americans in New York suburbs, Black Brazilians in and around Rio de Janeiro, and Arab Palestinians in Israel. First, the sociologists distinguished between discrimination and stigmatization. Based on the answers of the respondents, discrimination involved incidents in

²⁰⁴ Stephanie Grace, "Bobby Jindal's Pitch" *Brown Alumni Magazine* January/February 2011.

which “interviewees believed they were deprived or prevented from getting access to opportunities or resources due to their race, ethnicity, or nationality.” Stigmatization, then, were “a wide range of subjective experiences, namely, incidents in which respondents experienced disrespect and their...sense of self was challenged. This occurs when one is insulted, receives poor services, is the victim of jokes, is excluded from informal networks (not invited to parties), is the victim of physical assault, or is threatened physically. It also includes instances where one is misunderstood or underestimated.”²⁰⁵ Lamont also argues though that “establishing that an assault-on-worth (a phrase they use interchangeably with stigmatization) requires establishing the belief participant’s belief in such an incident,” in essence the victim-in-question must his or herself believe that they have experienced one of the different categories of stigmatization.²⁰⁶ In the case of Nikki Haley and Bobby Jindal, the two governors point to certain examples where they were stigmatized in their narratives. Nikki Haley was physically assaulted as a small child, excluded from informal activities like dodgeball, feeling shunned from certain conversations, the victim of jokes, and spectator to disrespect shown to her family. Bobby Jindal, too, was misunderstood, excluded from certain activities, insulted, and the victim of stereotypical jokes. These two individuals experienced a reality that, although was not at the level of discrimination of their black peers in the 1980s South, constituted a continuous assault on their self-worth.

Lamont and her team argue that assault-on-worth are important to consider because they are essential in early development of one’s identity and meaning-making. Additionally, continuous assaults on self-worth result in a psychological “wear-and-tear” on an individual, which can “compound inequality and disadvantages.”²⁰⁷ As such, individuals must respond to

²⁰⁵ Lamont, Michele. “Getting Respect: Responding to Stigma and Discrimination in the United States, Brazil, and Israel” Princeton University Press: 2016, 31.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 30.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 32.

stigmatization in a way to prevent dramatic internalization of this negativity and build respect. The sociologists inductively determined five categorical response types to stigmatization, in descending order of frequency: confrontation, management of the self, not responding, a focus on hard work, and self-isolation.²⁰⁸ For the two governors, we largely see the second most common type of response across the three regions, the management of self. In *Getting Respect*, the management of self-response “entails individual calculations...in Goffmanian terminology, it involves managing the ‘front stage’ presentation of the self in a way one considers satisfactory. This may mean making the effort not to...confirm other stereotypes frequently applied to one’s group.”²⁰⁹

Nikki Haley and Bobby Jindal both actively worked to manage themselves in order to avoid confirming stereotypes thrust upon in order for them to enter the groups that otherwise excluded them, and gain respect. Both had the impetus to appeal to their stigmatizers, Haley even called it her ‘duty’, so that they would accept them. They both worked to find out ways they could create commonality and dispel stereotypes, even if at times that meant actually changing their lifestyles at home. Simply put, this was a survival technique. Especially without a substantial in-group community of fellow Indians to find refuge in, the two children would feel alienated and unconfident, severely stunting any chance of success in the South. Their response to manage their identities in a way satisfactory to their greater Southern communities is a common response seen in similar situations around the world.

The two, however, employed two distinct methods of self-management, which substantially impacted their later identities and choices. Nikki Haley’s strategy involved finding common threads in her life with those of her peers, and then at the same time simply avoiding

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 32.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

situations that would find her feeling different. Unlike Jindal, Haley enlisted her parents in creating similar experiences, like going to church or celebrating Christmas. In this way, she still maintained a respectful relationship with her home culture whilst achieving her goal.

Additionally, Haley for several reasons could not pick a side of the color line from which she would seek the most acceptance. As such, she occupied a more nebulous position across the three groups – white, black, and brown – without committing to one, too early before she could open her perspective more after leaving Bamberg. Jindal, on the other hand, committed too early and tried too hard. In order to preserve his status as a “not-black”, avoid further stigmatization, and hopefully glean white acceptance, Jindal resorted to calling as much attention to other aspects of himself to distract people from his Indian-ness, stretching the truth to create commonalities with Southern whites, and even converting to Catholicism in high school. Perhaps his parents’ lack of emotional and social support was why Jindal overcompensated. They did not understand their son’s experiences, like the Randhawas did, who experienced racism’s ugly side early in their time in the South. As such, Jindal’s parents were even partial antagonists in his pursuit of acceptance. Although Jindal does not mention the support of his parents like Haley does, he did carry the deeply ingrained wisdom of his father to singularly pursue and achieve one’s goals. Then, perhaps the brilliant Rhodes Scholar was cursed by his intelligence, perceiving early that whites controlled the South and driving with heady realism to quickly ingratiate himself with that side. There is one potential factor that goes unspoken for in both Jindal and Haley’s books, which is their skin color. Even today, many people are surprised to discover that Nikki Haley is Indian, whose fair skin complexion allowed her to even take the liberty to list herself as ‘white’ on a voter registration form in 2001.²¹⁰ Jindal’s story about being

²¹⁰ Siddharta Mahanta, “Indian Nikki Haley Says She is White” *Mother Jones* July 29, 2011, <http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2011/07/indian-nikki-haley-says-she-is-white/> (accessed December 4, 2017).

called a 'dirty Indian' reflects a reality about his brown skin. His dark complexion was something that he could not as easily escape, and therefore operated with a constant self-consciousness of that fact. Most likely, this confluence of reasons are why Jindal tried more ardently to avoid stigmatization, which in the end prevented him from having his liberating moment of self-awareness that Haley had in college. Haley's fortune in these matters allowed her to take more control of her own fate, partially escape the region's stigmatizing white supremacy, and chart herself on a journey that will take her beyond just the American South.

Picking A Side

Having the opportunity to present a strategically constructed identity to gain respect from stigmatizers and to omit race-related aspects of one's childhood are privileges, privileges that Jindal and Haley's Southern black peers do not have. As Frantz Fanon writes in his *The Fact of Blackness*: "I came into the world imbued with the will to find meaning in things...and then I found out that was an object in the midst of objects...For not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man."²¹¹ Nikki Haley and Bobby Jindal, although how to contend with the fact that they were brown, could to an extent, control the perception that whites had of them because of the ambiguity of their outsider status. In the South, white identity has been historically constructed in relation to a black one, while brown did not have any true significance to white society at that point. Additionally, because there were very few or no other Indians around them while growing up, they had weak in-group pressure to reflect aspects of their "Indian" identity. Therefore, in this unique context, Bobby Jindal and Nikki Haley could present different versions of themselves to the distinct groups in the South with narrative cohesion.

The two Indians had an interesting situation before them. From time to time, their strategies would gain the desired respect and acceptance that their black peers could not achieve as easily. At an early age, they had the impression that they could gain the favor of different communities, be it Jews at summer camp or the pageant audience, despite their unique backgrounds. Couple this perception with the ambition instilled into them by their parents, it makes sense why the two would be interested in entering politics from young ages. However, to

²¹¹ Edited by Alan Read. *The Fact of Blackness: Frantz Fanon and Visual Representation*. London: Seattle: Institute of Contemporary Arts; Institute of International Visual Arts; Bay Press, 1996.

enter politics, one must eventually choose a side – Republican or Democrat – and in the South, this decision is largely racial.

Could Nimrata and Piyush have seen political success in their states if they were Democrats? South Carolina has not picked a Democrat for President since 1976 and last elected a Democratic U.S. Senator in 1998. They hold only one of the state’s seven U.S. House seats. The Democrats cling to minority position in both the state House and Senate.²¹² The Democrats’ history in Louisiana has been a bit less extreme. In 1978, 90% of Louisiana’s registered voters identified as Democrat. As recent as 2000, 950,000 whites composed more than half of all Democrats, forming a solid coalition alongside 800,000 black Democrats. However, by 2011, the number of white Democrats had plunged by 29% or nearly 275,000 people, while the Republican party saw their party gain 164,000 new voters and the “no party” affiliation increased by 190,000 registrants. This decline is attributed partially to steadily growing conservatism, but mostly to the Democratic Governor Blanco’s poor handling of Hurricane Katrina and Barack Obama’s presidency.²¹³²¹⁴

Largely influenced by the high expectations of their parents, Haley and Jindal had deeply internalized senses of ambition and an early desire for political involvement. In short, they wanted to win. For Nimrata, it would not have made sense to run as a Democrat. The Democratic Party, when she entered politics, had no clear future in the state and did not have a stable trajectory for success for their candidates. On the other hand, although Bobby Jindal’s Louisiana

²¹² Avery Wilks. “For SC Democrats, rebuilding party ‘is a long process’” *The State* September 18, 2016. <http://www.thestate.com/news/politics-government/politics-columns-blogs/the-buzz/article102592807.html> (accessed December 4, 2017).

²¹³ Joe Stoogie. “The Decade of Louisiana Democratic Party Decline” *BayouBuzz* December 27, 2011, <https://www.bayoubuzz.com/buzz/latest-buzz/item/577-the-decade-of-louisiana-democratic-party-decline> (accessed December 4, 2017).

²¹⁴ Marsha Shuler, “Democrats lose Voter Majority” *The Advocate*, August 14, 2011. http://www.theadvocate.com/baton_rouge/news/politics/article_1ef14256-fdf0-508c-9df8-6f8333b7c1fa.html (accessed December 4, 2017).

was trending conservative, the Democrats were still a relevant force in the state and had state-wide elected officials. In fact, when Jindal first ran for Governor in 2003, he lost in the run-off to his Democratic opponent, Governor Blanco, who won over the staunchly conservative North Louisiana (often nicknamed Duke Land for former KKK grandwizard David Duke).²¹⁵ In Louisiana, which features an open primary, party affiliation matters less so than in South Carolina.

Yet, it is Jindal who hunkers down on his Reagan-esque ideals and strongly appeals to the conservative white base. Jindal published his autobiography with Regnery Publishing, an act of which clearly delineates his position in American politics and the country's racial schema. Regnery defines itself as "the country's leading publisher of conservative books," and believes itself to be a major force in the conservative movement. The group's authors include a bevy of conservative icons like, Donald Trump, Ann Coulter, David Limbaugh, Laura Ingraham, Dinesh D'Souza, and Newt Gingrich.²¹⁶ The Regnery family has been deeply involved in conservative American politics for three generations. William H. Regnery was a founding member of the America First Committee, which fought to maintain American neutrality towards Nazi Germany. William Regnery's son Henry then went on to found the Publishing Group.²¹⁷ And, currently, William H. Regnery II, a man who wrote that "a flood of immigrants were changing the look of America from a palette of prime colors to a third-world monochrome", founded and runs the white nationalist think tank the National Policy Institute. The front man for the institution and the

²¹⁵ Swati Pandey, "Good enough for me and my Bobby Jindal" *Los Angeles Times* October 24, 2007 <http://www.latimes.com/opinion/la-oe-w-pandey24oct24-story.html> (accessed December 4, 2017).

²¹⁶ N.a., "About Regnery Publishing" *Regnery Publishing* n.d., <https://www.regnery.com/about/> (accessed December 4, 2017).

²¹⁷ N.a., "William H. Regnery II" *Southern Poverty Law Center Extremist Files* n.d., <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/individual/william-h-regnery-ii> (accessed December 4, 2017).

poster boy for the “alt-right”, Richard Spencer, attributes Regnery for playing a “vital and indispensable role in building the alt-right movement.”²¹⁸

Tracing back to how he managed his identity and responded to stigmatization in his childhood, Jindal’s association with the Regnerys, denial of negative race-related experiences in the South, and hardline conservative rhetoric reflect again his tendency to overcompensate his presentation. Jindal spent much of his lifetime on being something else, and was never fully able to escape his racial anxiety. By suppressing his background and experiences so ardently, Jindal loses any narrative cohesion, and subsequently, relatability with audiences beyond conservative whites. This overcompensation actually limits Jindal’s future for success and his ability to create lasting change for the region he called home. By welding himself to the dark pulses of Southern society, Jindal loses the chance to connect with a broader American community or make any meaningful impact in his Southern state. Governor Bobby Jindal left his gubernatorial seat with a statewide 20% approval rating and a 55% negative opinion amongst Republicans.²¹⁹ His presidential campaign, which only lasted four months and never gained any traction, fell victim to criticisms of his indigestible assimilation, a strong Twitter campaign of #JindalSoWhite, and no clear narrative.²²⁰

Nikki Haley, however, is often seen as much more authentic than her Louisianan counterpart, and much more palatable for different American voters. Although she employed the same strategy of managing her self-presentation in the face of stigmatization, as Jindal did, she did a better job at balancing that representation to the different groups in the South. As seen in

²¹⁸ Lance Williams. “Meet the ex-GOP insider who created white nationalist Richard Spencer” *Reveal News* July 21, 2017, <https://www.revealnews.org/article/meet-the-gop-insider-who-created-white-nationalist-richard-spencer/> (accessed December 4, 2017).

²¹⁹ Julia O’Donoghue, “Even Louisiana Republicans don’t approve of Bobby Jindal anymore: UNO poll” *The Times-Picayune* November 12, 2015, http://www.nola.com/politics/index.ssf/2015/11/uno_poll_bobby_jindal.html (accessed December 4, 2017).

²²⁰ Clare Fogan. “Where Bobby Jindal Went Wrong” November 18, 2015, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/11/where-bobby-jindal-went-wrong/416532/> (accessed December 4, 2017).

her kickball story, Haley avoids committing to a side, and instead, tries to stake out her position in all three groups for as long as she can. In the end, Haley does join the predominantly white Republican party, most likely motivated out of the political realities of the state. However, Haley publishes her autobiography through a Penguin center-right subsidiary, Sentinel. Penguin Group is also publishing Obama's forthcoming memoir. Haley achieves the narrative cohesion that Jindal was not able to maintain. She styles herself similar to Obama, sharing stories of dealing with her racial identity in the South in a manner that connects with a broader American audience.

A large reason for this cohesion is part of her existential story. In college, she let herself be surrounded by diversity and developed the self-awareness that would allow her to rise above a fate dictated solely by white supremacy. Two examples capture how Haley was able to levy her privileged status as an Indian in the South to challenge the force of white supremacy. Haley brought change to South Carolina, and the South, in general, when she strategically negotiated the take-down of the Confederate Flag in Columbia in 2015. As a Republican Governor who relied primarily on white votes, she took the political risk that both supported the black community and uplifted her status in the larger public's view. The second example is Nikki Haley's appointment of the first black Senator in the South since Reconstruction, Senator Tim Scott. Scott, one of the few black Republicans, does not denounce President Obama or engage in the bombastic rhetoric of his fellow black conservative peers.²²¹ Instead, Scott is the one sharing his experiences of being stopped by police due to his skin color to fellow conservatives on the floor of the Senate, he is the one who met with President Trump one-on-one to explain the

²²¹Jamelle Bouie. "Tim Scott Will Rise Again" *Slate* November 11, 2014. http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/politics/2014/11/tim_scott_won_south_carolina_s_senate_seat_the_first_black_republican_senator.html (accessed December 4, 2017).

President's error in blaming "all sides" of the violence in Charlottesville.²²²²²³ Scott was able to win re-election in 2014, but from the advantaged position as a sitting Senator, a position he obtained through Governor Haley. Haley's appointment of Scott demonstrates a deeper motivation running through Governor Haley, one that seeks to grow the Republican party and the South into a better future. Perhaps one, where other children like Piyush Jindal, may not feel as pressured to quickly pick a side.

²²² David Wiegel. "On the Senate floor, black GOP senator talks of disrespect from police" July 13, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/on-the-senate-floor-black-gop-senator-talks-of-disrespect-from-police/2016/07/13/db67c7de-4949-11e6-bdb9-701687974517_story.html?utm_term=.91901becb158 (accessed December 4, 2017).

²²³ Yamiche Alcindor and Glenn Thrush, "After Charlottesville, Black Republican Gives Trump a History Lesson on Racism" *New York Times* September 13, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/13/us/politics/trump-tim-scott-charlottesville-race.html> (accessed December 4, 2017).