

# DEI Statement

Avijit Ghosh

✉ [ghosh.a@northeastern.edu](mailto:ghosh.a@northeastern.edu)

I am a proud gay man who grew up in a conservative society in India. Being from a sexual minority myself, questioning my non-conformity in a rigid societal structure has been an integral part of my growing up, and has led me to become sharply observant and critical of the society in which I exist. I am well versed with the concepts of systemic discrimination, social dynamics, and intersectionality, and thus these are motifs that are reflected in my research interests and personal goals. I am committed to making a difference in academia and in the greater society through my work.

Firstly, I would like to talk about my work to help the queer community. I am an ardent believer in challenging the status quo, and have dived headfirst into pressing social issues. I have regularly championed the causes of LGBTQ students in my college, both at IIT Kharagpur and at Northeastern, and was one of the student petitioners in the Supreme Court of India case against the Union of India to decriminalize homosexuality, which resulted in the landmark judgment in our favor in September 2018<sup>1</sup>. As a PhD student, I have been involved with organizations such as oSTEM<sup>2</sup> and QueerInAI<sup>3</sup>, and have organized socials and workshops that invited the research community to focus on technological harms to queer people, at reputable conferences such as SIGIR<sup>4</sup> and FAccT<sup>5</sup>. These interactions have led me to make meaningful connections and have future collaborations with other queer researchers who also deeply care about this issue.

Secondly, I would like to touch upon the broader themes of diversity, equity, and inclusion through my work. My research expertise in algorithmic fairness stems from a sense of social justice and correcting past socioeconomic harms. Even though I would primarily classify myself as a machine learning researcher, I have been very cognizant about ensuring that whatever I do has practical applications, and this is how I settled on my thesis topic of investigating the real-world implementation challenges of fair machine learning. I try not to stop at just publishing a new paper, but also try to follow up with stakeholders who might benefit from my findings—for instance, when I published my adversarial attack to make fair ranking models unfair, I reached out to people at Google and Bing Search teams to inform them of the potential vulnerabilities in their deployed systems and to investigate whether they can make their systems resilient to such an attack, to ensure that minority groups are fairly represented in image search.

Thirdly, I firmly believe that a diverse student and faculty body is extremely important for academia – it leads to a rich exchange of different ideas and helps robust growth. Presently, I am a proud ally of the Underrepresented Genders Group at our college and plan to commit to similar efforts going forward. As a faculty member, I would like to be involved in efforts in measuring diversity in the research program to see if the existing minority outreach programs of the university are having an impact. Additionally, I would actively seek opportunities to interact with and benefit prospective students and future faculty from diverse backgrounds, including but not limited to people within my intersection (queer, international, people of color), with the hopes of recruiting them into the program.

Finally, in the same vein, I am a fervent supporter of different kinds of teaching styles and classroom culture (as further detailed in my teaching statement). I believe that meeting people where they are, and encouraging them to think critically about the society in which they are embedded, is a pathway to broadening participation in responsible ML research, and this aligns with my lifelong commitments.

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/iitians-who-fought-against-section-377-celebrate-empowering-judgement-1913804>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.ostem.org/>

<sup>3</sup><https://www.queerintai.com/>

<sup>4</sup><https://sites.google.com/view/queer-in-ai/sigir-2021>

<sup>5</sup><https://facctconference.org/2022/acceptedcraft.html#colab>