**2011 DIASPORA CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENT**

**2011 Conference Theme: The Global South Asian diaspora in the 21st century, antecedents and prospects.**

**Sponsors:** The University of the West Indies (St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago), The Yesu Persaud Centre for Caribbean Studies, University of Warwick (Coventry, United Kingdom), and the National Council of Indian Culture (NCIC), Trinidad and Tobago.

**Venues:** St. Augustine Campus, The University of the West Indies and Divali Nagar, Chaguanas, Trinidad.

**Dates:** Wednesday 1st June to Saturday 4th June 2011.

The St. Augustine campus of the University of the West Indies has since 1975, played a pioneering role in promoting debate, discussion and publications regarding the Indian diaspora. The following is a list of conferences held since 1975:

* 1975 -- East Indians in the Caribbean: colonialism and the struggle for identity.
* 1979 -- East Indians in the Caribbean: a focus on contemporary issues.
* 1984 -- East Indians in the Caribbean: beyond survival.
* 1995 -- Challenge and change: the Indian diaspora in its historical and contemporary contexts.
* 2000 -- Asian immigrations to the Caribbean.
* 2002 -- Religions in the New World: adaptation and change.

From these Caribbean beginnings, diasporic conferences have been held since 1987 in New York, Toronto and at the Centre for Caribbean studies, University of Warwick in May 1988. The most recent was held at Warwick in June 2010. Following that successful Warwick conference, participants agreed to conduct another meeting in Trinidad during the period Wednesday 1st to Saturday 4th June 2011.

**PANELS**

1. ***The Civilizational heritage****.*

This panel would seek to explore the legacies of the South Asian diaspora, embracing the whole range of the civilizational heritage and its role in shaping the South Asian experience abroad. These concerns include religio-cultural beliefs and practices, popular culture (as expressed in art, music, literature and language) and the ecological and environmental problems of the host societies. It is hoped that this panel will explore concerns such as the cultural and economic effects of the first and subsequent Diasporas and the manner in which South Asians transferred the ancestral traditions to diasporic destinations adapting these to the new environments. How did the processes take place and what can we now discern as aspects of the civilizational heritage?

1. ***The historical context*.**

This panel will incorporate three major historical phases**, which** may be identified in the process of the formation of the South Asian diaspora.

* The COLONIAL phase will focus on the historical forces [political, economic and social], which resulted in large numbers of Indians departing from the Indian subcontinent during the 19th and early 20th centuries for overseas colonies where the majority settled permanently.
* Then there was the POST-COLONIAL phase in which the panel would seek to examine the push and pull forces behind this second wave of emigration from the subcontinent, particularly after the formal attainment of political independence in 1947. The panel will examine the social and occupational background of the second wave of immigrants, the receiving countries, the reception by the host countries and the nature of their accommodation within the structures of those societies.
* Then there was the NEW DIASPORA in the contemporary period when we are seeing the outward movements of descendants of the first diaspora to new lands. The panel proposes to examine the forces which motivated these people to migrate from places where the forbears had migrated to the major metropolitan areas of Europe and North America, Australia and New Zealand.
1. ***Cultural reconstruction in diasporic communities: resistance, accommodation and survival*.**

This panel will examine the process whereby South Asians sought to establish a cultural presence in the new settlements. How did these *arrivants* in different parts of the diaspora and in different periods approach the question of the reconstruction of their cultural lives? Papers will focus on areas such as music and other performing arts, economic reorganization, festivals and other forms of community activities and the forces *working* against the process of cultural reconstruction.

1. ***Family histories and biographies*.**

This is an area of increasing importance in the South Asian Diaspora. The ongoing work has already produced a body of data which can provide useful insights into the very intimate world of diasporic South Asians. The everyday world of the indentureds for example, is an area which is still to be properly researched. Family histories allow a window into the world where the individual life is placed center stage. The process of tracing family histories, beginning in the present and going back into the past or beginning in the past and moving forward into the present, is an academic exercise which will provide to any interested scholar valuable methodological insights. This panel will provide the opportunity for the exchange of research experience in addition to exposing a rich world of new information not found in customary sources. Papers may deal with themes such as: the nature of family relations; cultural change within families over one, two or three generations; property relations and social change; the impact of education on social mobility as seen in the lives of family members; religion and its influence on the welfare of family members; the family as an economic unit.

1. ***Leadership and Power relations in the South Asian Diaspora***

This panel looks at the political consequences both in the short and long term of the dispersal of the various communities from the Indian subcontinent during the pre and postcolonial phases of history. Analysis will focus on both the micro and macro levels, on the problems posed by the modes of incorporation into the state and on the strategies devised to achieve universalistic and democratic participation in the social and political order by communities of the Diasporas.

**South Asians and the law.**

This section will accordingly include consideration of pressure groups, political parties, coalitions, electoral activity, bureaucracy, social movements and the strategies and behavior of political elites in the context of the pressure of the global political environment and of the host society in which they are located. It could also consider scenarios for the future.

1. ***Gender issues in the South Asian diaspora: Critical challenges of feminism and masculinity***

This panel will consider the issues of relevance to South Asian communities in the diaspora from a gender perspective. It is evident that the diverse processes of migration, which have created this evolving diasporic community, have given rise to shifts in consciousness and rapid change particularly in the area of gender roles in relations. The focus of the panel will range over a broad spectrum of gender-specific issues. Proposals for papers are invited on the following topics: the impact of global feminism; postmodern and postcolonial theories; ethnicity or race and class; sexuality/sexual politics; new reproductive technologies; aesthetics; negative silences on the emergence of voice; Women in the professions: breaking the glass ceiling.

1. ***a. Voices from the South Asian Diaspora***

The broad purpose of this panel is to present a forum for an examination and analysis of the literary presentations of the experience of Indian communities overseas. One of the questions to be explored is what similarities and differences there might be in the experiences of the several Indian communities overseas. Crucially, what similarities and differences are there in the forms and styles in which these are presented?

This should lead into a difficult, nebulous and controversial subject: is there such a thing as an Indo Caribbean or Indo Mauritian or Indo-Whatever sensibility? How does it manifest itself in Literature and Art? Is it the same in all the territories where they are overseas or Diaspora Indians? To what extent does this sensibility, if there is one, derive from India; and to what extent is it for the recent historical experience and cultural contacts?

**Genres:** Prose, fiction, poetry, drama, essay, autobiography, letters and any other personal writings, blogs and social cyber networking.

**Authors:** Writers dealing with the subject matter outlined above. These would include authors of the Indian or part-Indian origin, authors with Indian connections, and authors of any race who deal with any aspect of the Indian diaspora experience: Salman Rushdie, Anita Desai, V.S. Naipaul, Earl Lovelace, Ismith Khan, Rabindranath Maharaj, Ramabai Espinet, David Dabydeen and a host of others. The selecting of papers for the panel/s will try to ensure that the papers being presented orally shall not only be useful as individual papers, but shall form a coherent group in dialogue with one another.

  **b**. ***South Asians in the Media.***

This panel will focus on a number of issues of relevance to the media: representation of diasporic peoples and local/international media, changes in the perception of South Asians abroad, diasporic newspapers, journals, ephemera, representation and participation in the electronic media, ownership of media houses and significant media personalities.

1. ***South Asian religions in the Diaspora.***

The panel will look firstly at the transference of South Asian religions to diasporic venues. What were the belief systems, rites and rituals, which came with migrants from the sub continent? Papers are invited on the role of religion in education, new religious movements which syncretised diverse beliefs, religion in plural societies, conversions and missionary activity, interfaith dialogue, religious freedom and leaders in diasporic religious movements.

1. ***Diaspora influences on South Asia.***

This panel will look at the many ways in which diasporic initiatives have affected the ancestral places. Papers are invited on the impact on South Asia of the returnees among the Girimityas [agreement signers], collaboration between the colonies and India towards the abolition of indentureship and the effect of such joint action on the independence struggle and the role of the Mahatma in this agitation. This panel will detail the activities of Non-Resident Indians [NRI] and People of Indian Origin [PIO] vis-a-vis South Asia from the mid-20th century to the present and South Asian initiatives to encourage dialogue and projects.

1. ***Economic enterprise in the South Asian diaspora.***

From the period of the plantation diaspora to the present time, diasporic peoples have significantly transformed the environments to which they migrated. They resuscitated the sugar industry in Mauritius, Natal, Fiji and the Caribbean. Punjabi migrants stimulated the economies of the Napa Valley in California and the vast spaces of Western Canada. In our own time, they have moved to the Eastern seaboard of North America, the Metropolitan centers of Canada and the plazas of Western Europe. In the Caribbean, efforts are now being made to strengthen commercial ties between this region and South Asia. This panel will look at the past, contemporary contacts and future prospects.

1. ***Science, Technology, Medicine and Lifestyle***

This panel will focus on the way in which South Asians have participated in the creation of new technologies in their places of settlement, health issues and dietary concerns. How has the South Asian ethic influenced productivity among Diasporic South Asians?

**DEADLINES**: The following deadlines will guide our preparations:

1. Final date for the submission of proposals 28th February 2011.
2. Final date for the submission of papers 30th April 2011.

Please note that the conference organizers feel no obligation to entertain offers submitted after the deadline dates.

**FORMAT**: All conference participants whose proposals have been accepted will receive, in advance, from the respective panel coordinators a sample sheet showing the format for the preparation of all papers. Some of these papers will be selected for oral presentation at the conference but all papers accepted will be tabled at the conference and made available to participants so that the benefits of scholarly discussions and exchange would be shared as widely as possible. All papers are to be submitted in typewritten form. Papers should be approximately 6000 words in length, should reflect original, unpublished work and should be of publishable quality.

**REGISTRATION:** There will be a registration fee of US $100.00 for participants. This fee will cover copies of the conference papers and refreshments on the conference days. Paper presenters will be exempted from these registration payments, and full-time students will pay a registration fee for full attendance, of US $50.00, or US $ 20.00 per day.

**AFFILIATED ACTIVITIES**: As in previous conferences, there will be cultural evenings, outreach presentations to the wider community and tours to places of interest. There will be a book fair at the main conference venue and an exhibition of memorabilia from past conferences. This will include publications from previous conferences.

**CONTACTS:**

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