

Between Indigenous and Immigrant:  
A Workshop on South Asian Migration in Global History  
October 26 – 28, 2017

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This workshop probes how indigeneity, immigration, and shifting politics of empire, nation, and citizenship are illuminated through South Asian migration histories in comparative and connected contexts. One session will explore the role of Canadian histories at multiple levels – indigenous, imperial, migrant – as they intersect with South Asian histories and politics of migration. Thematic panels will explore citizenship, labor diasporas past and present, the arts, legal histories, and radicalism. Furthermore, the workshop will also include the space to bridge academic research and public engagement, including a session about data management and archiving community histories. Finally, the workshop will include a “next steps” session, in which participants will discuss potential publication as well as future collaborations.

**Participants**

Gaiutra Bahadur, Independent Scholar/Journalist/Writer

Victor V. Ramraj, UVIC

Sana Aiyar, MIT

Sara Shneiderman, UBC

Anneeth Kaur Hundle, UC-Merced

Seema Sohi, UC-Boulder

Gajendra Singh, Exeter

Joanna Ogden, Independent Scholar

Samip Mallick, SAADA, South Asian American Digital Archive

Vivek Bald, MIT

Anne Murphy, UBC

Nilanjana Bhattacharjya, Arizona State University

Davina Bhandar, SFU

Renisa Mawani, UBC

Marina Martin, Frankfurt

Andrea Wright, William and Mary

Riyad Koya, UC-Berkeley

Neha Vora, Lafayette College

Bikrum Singh Gill, Aberystwyth

# Schedule

## Thursday, October 26, 2017 – David Strong Building, C126 4:30 p.m.

Opening Words, Dr. Victor V. Ramraj, CAPI  
 Welcome, Dr. John Price, UVIC, Asian Canadians on Vancouver Island  
 Opening Words, Dr. Davina Bhandar, Simon Fraser University  
 Opening Words, Dr. Neilesh Bose, University of Victoria

**Gaiutra Bahadur**, *Conjure Women and Coolie Women*

## Friday, October 27, 2017 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

**1) Race, Empire, and Citizenship – Fraser 152.** **9 – 10:30 a.m.**  
 (Chair, Sikata Banerjee, University of Victoria)

**Sana Aiyar**, MIT  
**Anneeth Kaur Hundle**, UC-Merced  
**Sara Shneiderman**, UBC

**2) Legal Histories – Fraser 152.** **10:45 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.**  
 (Chair, Supriya Routh, University of Victoria)

**Renisa Mawani**, UBC  
**Marina Martin**, Frankfurt  
**Victor V. Ramraj**, UVIC

Break for Lunch **12:15 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.**

**3) The Arts, Literature, and Culture – Fraser 142** **1:45– 3:15 p.m.**  
 (Chair, Neilesh Bose, University of Victoria)

**Anne Murphy**, UBC  
**Nilanjana Bhattacharjya**, Arizona State University

**4) Radicalism – Fraser 142** **3:30– 5 p.m.**  
 (Chair, Bikrum Singh Gill, Aberystwyth)

**Seema Sohi, Colorado-Boulder**  
**Gajendra Singh, Exeter**  
**Johanna Ogden, Independent Scholar**

**Saturday, October 28, 2017 – 9 a.m – 3:30 p.m.**

**5.) Archives and Community – Fraser 142** **9 – 11 a.m.**  
 (Chair, Greg Blue, University of Victoria)

**Samip Mallick, SAADA**  
**Vivek Bald, MIT**  
**Davina Bandar, SFU**  
**Bikrum Singh Gill, Aberystwyth**

**Break for Lunch** **11:15 – 12:15 p.m.**

**6.) Labor Diasporas Past and Present – Fraser 142** **12:30– 2 p.m.**  
 (Chair, Davina Bhandar, Simon Fraser University)

**Andrea Wright, William and Mary**  
**Neha Vora, Lafayette College**  
**Riyad Koya, UC-Berkeley**

**7.) Next Steps – Fraser 142** **2:15 – 3:30p.m.**

**SSHRC options**  
**Future Projects and Collaborations**

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## **Panel 1, Race, Empire, Citizenship**

**Sana Aiyar**  
**Associate Professor of History,**  
**MIT**

“Out of India: East Africa and its South Asian Diasporas”

Where does the Indian diaspora belong? This is a question of historical and historiographical concern. Mapping on to one another, nationalist histories, and their historiographical doppelgangers, drew boundaries around the question of belonging, as Indian citizenship was defined territorially and singularly in 1947. Jawaharlal Nehru urged over a million Indians living overseas at the time to consider their adopted hostlands their “home”, making it clear that the diaspora belonged *elsewhere* and not in India. Yet he reminded Indians that they were “guests of the Africans”, a trope picked up by nationalists in East Africa to emphasize the extent to which Indians were outsiders and did not belong there. Diasporic mobility similarly created an analytical dilemma for historiographical approaches to the study of the Indian diaspora as the area-studies framework focused the gaze of historians within the territorial boundaries of South Asia and East Africa. South Asian diasporas rarely featured in these works. Over the last five years, however, important new works that put Indians in East Africa at the center of their studies on empire, nationalism, race, and community have been published in rapid succession. Together, they point to a significant new historiographical shift that brings together South Asian, African, and diaspora studies that is equally attentive to local *and* transnational dynamics. They chart new geographies, scales, and discourses of belonging, all of which constitute diasporic consciousness. My paper surveys the interventions and new perspectives offered in these works. Moving beyond the trope of the Indian in East Africa as an exploitative trader, this essay remaps the diaspora as having multiple sites of belonging that were invoked in languages of claim making in political discourse.

**Anneeth Kaur Hundle**  
**Assistant Professor of Anthropology,**  
**UC Merced**

“Unsettling Citizenship: Race, Security and Afro-Asian Politics  
in Contemporary Uganda”

This position paper will explore my original research and book manuscript on the politics of multi-racial citizenship, Afro-Asian relations, community-building, and South Asian political practice and political subjectivity in the context of both decolonizing and neoliberal political processes in contemporary Uganda. In the paper, I will address the significance of working through the Ugandan case study in the broader East African, African, and Indian Ocean contexts. Indeed, in doing so, I ethnographically “trace” the conceptual and ideological underpinnings of, and everyday uses of, liberal citizenship and its failure in the Ugandan postcolony. Exploring and reassessing the 1972 expulsion of Asians from Uganda in 1972 as a “critical event” (Das 1997)—as well as an unresolved historical event for both indigenous and migrant/settler-subject communities—I argue for the importance of an analytics of citizenship, race and security in postcolonial Uganda (and indeed, in African postcolonies with plural, multi-racial communities that cannot be understood in the context of formal inclusion for minority communities in liberal multicultural democracies like South Africa). Utilizing ethnographic fieldwork and life history narratives from Kampala, Uganda and other small towns in the country, I examine the development of “flexible securitization” practices among new and old South Asian communities in the context of ongoing nation-building processes, arguing for the importance of studying South Asian political practice in East Africa in relation to ongoing practices of decolonization and democratization in the region. Finally, I hope to use this case study to contribute to the discussion of South Asian migration in broader, global perspective.

**Sara Shneiderman**

**Associate Professor of Anthropology and School of Public Policy and Global Affairs/Co-Director, Institute of Asian Research, University of British Columbia**

“The Irony of Open Borders: Mobility, Citizenship and Ethnicity in Contemporary Himalayan South Asia”

In this era of travel bans and renewed populist nationalism, arguments for open borders and global citizenship appear ever more compelling. Yet the actual effects of open borders on framework for inclusive citizenship and sovereignty from below may not always be as imagined. Drawing upon my ongoing ethnographic research in two different contexts—the movement for an independent state of Gorkhaland in the Darjeeling district of India’s state of West Bengal, and the Madheshi regionalist movement for full citizenship in Nepal—I argue that the political-historical reality of the postcolonial open border between Nepal and India has yielded unexpected results. In both contexts, members of marginalized communities are unable to gain full recognition from the state in which they are born, due to ethno-racialized frameworks for regulating citizenship, which in turn curtail formal political agency. I ask: in such contexts, how do the experiences of both those who negotiate multiple citizenships (simultaneously or sequentially) and those who possess no citizenship (de facto stateless people), complicate state-promoted narratives of singular citizenship and nationalist belonging, yielding their own forms of political action? How have global discourses of indigeneity and marginality worked to counter neocolonial forms of cultural imperialism, challenging nationalist claims to territory through locally-emergent social movements? Finally, I consider what it means to examine these questions within non-diasporic contexts of regular regional mobility across land borders, where many of the received analytical frameworks for understanding the histories, politics, and socialities of settler colonialism and trans-oceanic migration may not apply.

*Notes: (Panel 1)*

*Notes: (Panel 1)*

## Panel 2, Legal Histories

**Renisa Mawani**  
**Professor, Sociology**  
**University of British Columbia**

“Across Oceans of Law:  
 The Komagata Maru and Jurisdiction in the Time of Empire”

*Across Oceans of Law* follows the journey of the *S.S. Komagata Maru*, a British-built and Japanese-owned steamship. The steamer rose to prominence in 1914, when Gurdit Singh, a railway contractor and rubber planter, transported 376 Punjabi migrants and travelers from Hong Kong to Vancouver. To date, the voyage has typically been narrated through the coordinates of landfall, territoriality, and national sovereignty and is an oft-cited example of immigration exclusions and legalized racism. Engaging “oceans as method,” a mode of thinking and writing that repositions land and sea, the book asks what is at stake, historically and conceptually, when histories of Indian migration are situated within maritime worlds. Specifically, the book considers how immigration prohibitions and Indian anticolonialism take on distinct contours and valences when the ship and the sea are analyzed as key juridical forms. Inspired by maritime studies yet expanding beyond its area-studies focus, the book traces the currents and counter-currents of British law, colonial policies, and Indian radicalism through multiple ocean arenas. Placing the Pacific, Indian, and Atlantic Oceans into necessary conversation, the book analyzes the circulating and shared legalities that connected the Dominions, colonies, and territories; the shifting intensities of racial, colonial, and legal violence which joined indigenous dispossession, transatlantic slavery, Indian indenture, and so-called “free” migration; and the transoceanic repertoires of anticolonial critique that challenged the empire’s underlying racial, spatial, and temporal divides, including east/ west, land/ sea, citizen/ subject. By following the movements of a single ship and bringing oceans into sharper view, *Across Oceans of Law* places motion at the heart of colonial legal history.



**Marina Martin**

**Research Fellow Sonderforschungsbereich/Collaborative Research Centre,  
University of Frankfurt**

“Subjects or Aliens? The Making and Unmaking of Subjecthood. Indian South Africans through the Prism of ‘Settler Colonialism’”

This paper studies how a complex landscape of settler colonialism within South Africa shifted the primary identity of Indian migrants from ‘British subject’ to ‘Asiatic’. A picture of the colonial government’s commercial and political design, and economic interactions and tensions between the white settler communities and Indians emerges. These dynamics motivated the creation of new immigration policies, the restriction of land entitlements and defined membership through categories of racial difference, and the construction of racial hierarchies. Restrictive laws such as these provide an insight into the social and political impact of Indian migrants on South Africa and consequently their volatile status. At the same time, the identity of Indian migrants was framed by the political and legal discourses on membership that circulated between Britain, South Africa and India from the late 1800s to 1960. As these respective countries underwent various political transitions during this period, the status of Indian South Africans was shaped by diplomatic relations, rising nationalisms and the breakdown of the British Empire. The political dialogues stimulated an inflected form of settler colonialism which was symptomatic of the changing dynamics between the “metropole” and the colonial peripheries. Relevant to resurgent debates in Europe on migration and identity, this research underscores the implications of legislative interventions to shifting identities and discourses around legitimacy, citizenship, exclusion and alienation. It examines the various kinds of enforcement that were implemented, and their impact on drawing territorial lines between Indians, Africans and Europeans.

**Victor V. Ramraj**  
**Professor of Law/ CAPI Law Chair/CAPI Director**  
**University of Victoria**

“Law and Migration without Borders:  
Methodological Nationalism and the Rise of the Modern State”

How does the hegemonic control of the idea of the modern state and its legal, territorial jurisdiction affect our thinking about the movement of people, goods, and legal norms? Using the East India Company’s encounters with the subcontinent as a starting-point, this paper will consider our ideas of law and migration have changed with the rise of the modern state and whether, in an age marked both by economic globalization and resurgent nationalism, they are changing again.

*Notes: (Panel 2)*

*Notes: (Panel 2)*

## **Panel 3, Arts, Literature, and Popular Culture**

**Anne Murphy**  
**Associate Professor of Asian Studies,**  
**University of British Columbia**

“Connected Literatures:  
 Local and Transnational Cultural Production in Punjabi”

My presentation seeks to open discussion of the deeply local and simultaneously transnational nature of Punjabi language cultural production, inviting consideration of the ways in which cross-border work functions to destabilize understanding of ideas of "Diaspora," "Homeland" and indeed "Nation" itself, and in so doing to produce an ethics of engagement both within and across national boundaries.

**Nilanjana Bhattacharjya**  
**Senior Lecturer in the Honors Program,**  
**Arizona State University**

“Tejaswini Niranjana’s *Mobilizing India: Migration, Popular Music, and the Constitution of Nation, Modernity, Gender, and Sexuality*”

I will consider a crucial contribution to studies on South Asian migration, Tejaswini Niranjana’s *Mobilizing India: Women, Music, Migration Between India and Trinidad*, and to open a discussion on how we may incorporate some of her own methodology into our own scholarship. Niranjana’s book focuses on how music and dance help define the identities of Indo-Trinidadian women, and in doing so, affect our understanding of what constitutes the nation, modernity, gender, and sexuality in India. Niranjana’s book transcends the conventional categories of genre, discipline, and geography, and she is especially interested in what it means for somebody like her, an Indian woman, to study Indo-Trinidadian women— women who may look like her but whose histories require Niranjana’s own efforts to discover if, where, and how their histories diverge and converge with her own. Based in India, she considers how scholars from the South can engage in comparative work across the South and to move beyond depending on conceptions that originate from the study of Western European culture. Finally, as an established scholar in Caribbean and African literature, she explains how within her studies of literature she never found a space to address music’s regular exclusion as a legitimate “text” in her

discipline— an issue that she found especially troubling given popular music’s role in West Indian cultural politics. Furthermore, she notes that any attempt to move beyond the “official histories” must consider everyday cultural practices in diasporic communities, which motivates her focus on chutney-soca and calypso.

*Notes: (Panel 3)*

## Panel 4, Radicalism

**Seema Sohi**  
**Associate Professor of Ethnic Studies,**  
**University of Colorado-Boulder**

“Indian Anti-colonialism, State Surveillance, and Decolonial Epistemologies  
 in North America, 1907-1920”

This paper will trace the anticolonial politics of Indian migrants in North America during the early decades of the twentieth century. Drawing from imperial archives, U.S. state records, and Indian anticolonial writings that emanated from a North American context, I will examine strands of anticolonial politics and the severe repression such politics generated amongst U.S., British, and Canadian officials. Taken together, Indian anticolonial writings constitute a critical archive that interrogates race, empire, and modernity. I argue that a significant component of Indian radical anticolonialism was its decolonial epistemologies. In other words, while clearly anticolonial in that it was taking a stand against colonialism, Indian radical anticolonialism was also an epistemic and political decolonial project that elucidated modernity’s racial underpinnings and contested the epistemological hegemony of the West. Though deeply rooted in the politics of an anticolonial movement that demanded self-government and the eradication of British rule in India, these activists also contested the racialized foundations of empire, a critique that brought them under the scrutiny of state authorities and made them a critical part of early South Asian American history and the histories of global anticolonialism, immigrant exclusion, and state surveillance in the early twentieth century.

**Gajendra Singh**  
**Lecturer of South Asian History,**  
**University of Exeter**

“Some *Bhang*, a Rape and a Killing: Everyday Violence and Anti-Colonial  
 Imaginings in the Ghadar Movement in Colonial India, January 1915”

In Lahore, on the 26<sup>th</sup> April 1915, a trial began of 81 individuals for their connection to the Ghadar Movement. It was one of the first of a long list of prosecutions that were to take place in India, Burma, Canada and the United States. The Ghadar Movement served, in the Anglo-American imagination, as

the missing link between anti-imperial violences in India, Ireland and Egypt and the ideologies of Anarchism, Bolshevism and Pan-Islamism. The dangers Ghadar posed required extraordinary measures. The Lahore trial was the first in a series of ‘Conspiracy Cases’ in British India that suspended ordinary jurisprudence. Guilt was assumed; it was innocence which had to be proven. The near certainty of successful prosecutions made the Lahore trial a process of constructing a narrative of events rather than proving guilt. And, in that narrative of events relatively inconsequential crimes could become treason as long as it was shown that the participants were one step removed from an identifiable Ghadari. This paper will focus on one such event – the Sahnewal dacoity on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1915. It involved several men who killed and robbed a village moneylender, assaulted his wife and collectively raped his daughter-in-law. The paper will analyse how this relatively minor event could be used to construct revolutionary criminality and revolutionary consciousness in India during the First World War. It will explore the bodily violences committed at Sahnewal as a way of reading into the alternative consciousnesses of the rebel, and not-so-rebel, Ghadari.

**Johanna Ogden**  
**Independent Scholar**

“The Radical East Indians of Oregon”

I will explore two inter-related themes that I believe are critical to understanding the rise of the radical nationalist Ghadar Party and its 1913 formation in Oregon. First, East Indians were overwhelming laborers in North America. As such, they were immersed in the working-class politics of the day, whether by choice or as exclusionist targets. Mainstream working class political organizations in the North American West, as part of a global movement, were central to the spread and enforcement of white right. Yet East Indians, overwhelmingly laborers, were propelled into radicalism against their racial targeting and colonized status – in exactly this milieu. I will explore the synergy and unexpected consequences in settler colonies between the time’s endemic racism and the greatest extension of democratic rights to those defined as white. Ghadar was, in a way, East Indians’ claim to the heart of whiteness – the right to self-rule and democratic rights. Secondly, early political leaders in Oregon argued for a specific form of – as DuBois described the times –the white religion. Rooted in western post-Civil War politics, and honed with Chinese migrants, Oregon’s racial policy presented as racial tolerance and opposition to communal ethnic violence. In reality it was a policy of racial supremacy crafted to foster particular business and state interests.

*Notes: (Panel 4)*



## **Panel 5, Archives, Communities, and Histories** **between the Local and Global**

**Samip Mallick**  
**Executive Director,**  
**South Asian American Digital Archive/SAADA**

“Community Archives in the Digital Era: Building the South Asian American Digital Archive”

For the last nine years, SAADA (the South Asian American Digital Archive) has been collecting and sharing stories and archival materials related to the diverse history of South Asians in the United States. The archive, which now makes accessible more than 3,000 unique items, includes historical photographs, newspaper clippings, correspondence, flyers, community publications, and other ephemera, as well as video, oral history interviews, and born digital materials. Through community storytelling initiatives such as the First Days Project and Road Trips Project, SAADA creates digital spaces for sharing the lived experiences of South Asian Americans. And through *Tides*, SAADA’s online magazine, public events and presentations, and other outreach efforts, the organization seeks to raise awareness about South Asian American history both within the community and amongst the general public. In addition to sharing more about SAADA’s digital post-custodial model, this presentation will address three questions: 1. How a post-custodial community-based approach challenges traditional conceptualizations of the role of the archive; 2. The potential benefits and limitations related to a digital-only approach to building a community archives; 3. Exploring how community archives like SAADA can understand and measure their affective impact on the communities they serve.

**Vivek Bald**  
**Associate Professor of Writing and Digital Media,**  
**MIT**

“Documenting the Histories of the Undocumented:  
South Asian Muslim Lives Beyond U.S. and British Archives”

How do we find, piece together, narrate, and open up space for the stories of South Asian Muslim migrants, immigrants, and sojourners who came to the United States at the height of the Asian Exclusion Era – people whose first

imperative was to remain hidden and unnoticed, who quietly integrated into other U.S. communities of color? This question is at the center of the trans-media Bengali Harlem/Lost Histories project, which consists of a work of written history (*Bengali Harlem and the Lost Histories of South Asian America*), a documentary film (*In Search of Bengali Harlem*), and a web-based community archive (“The Lost Histories Project”). This presentation will discuss the ways that different methods and media are being employed to excavate the stories of Bengali Muslim men who jumped ship and built clandestine labor networks in the U.S. between the 1910s and 1950s, to document the cross-racial communities that emerged from their settlement in neighborhoods such as Harlem, and to record the memories of their children and descendants. I argue that in order to raise up “peoples histories” of peoples who were simultaneously rendered stateless by British colonialism and criminalized by U.S. immigration laws, we must not only critically engage official archives, but create our own. In so doing, we transform the nature of archives and challenge what and who “counts” as historical.

**Davina Bhandar,**  
**Co-Director, Centre for Policy Studies on Culture and Communities**  
**Adjunct Professor of Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies,**  
**Simon Fraser University**

“Tripping on Pavements: Possessive / Possessed Inclusion and Settler Migrations”

There is a particular form of haunting that takes place when writing, investigating and examining the internal logics of family history. This haunting is both a monstrous exhumation of past wrongs and rights that have been somewhat buried from view and others are the spritely ghosts that can no longer be repressed. Too often the writing in of minority histories comes at a cost of understanding in full detail the apparatus that has hidden, organized or produced this knowledge from coming to light. The language surrounding a community’s self-discovery or how to engage with a past that can easily be re-invented, appropriated or celebrated. What are the methods, practices and forms of constitutive knowledges that are taking place in the discovery, collection, creation of South Asian diaspora histories in the context of British Columbia? How are communities being recreated in this process? I seek to examine the relationship between projects of South Asian data collection in British Columbia and how what I call a logic of possessive inclusion functions.

**Bikrum Singh Gill**  
**Research Fellow, International Politics,**  
**University of Aberystwyth**

“The (Im)possibility of a Politics of Belonging: Historical Traces of Sikh Women Workers in the Movement between Punjab and BC”

The province of British Columbia has been fundamentally shaped by racialized and gendered technologies of violence through which particular forms of labour have been rendered invisible. There remains insufficient awareness, however, of both the impact that such foundational violence has had upon those consigned to such invisibility, and how the world-making response of such “marginalized” subjects has been essential to creating the liveability of British Columbia. This presentation aims to foreground such “historical traces” of the marginalized by engaging the ongoing history of Sikh women working in hotels and factories in Victoria, and will particularly try to locate both how they have been impacted by, and have in turn impacted, the “historical geography” of movement and place between Punjab and BC. It thus constitutes an accounting of the intersection of race, gender, and class in the formation of both subjects and place, as well as thinking about how such categories are subverted.

*Notes: (Panel 5)*

*Notes: (Panel 5)*

## **Panel 6, Labor Diasporas Past and Present**

**Amanda Wright**

**Assistant Professor, Department of Anthropology,  
College of William and Mary**

“Security, Rights and the Postcolonial State: Indian Laborers’ View from the Persian Gulf”

In this paper, I use archival and ethnographic materials to explore shifting legal engagements with the discourse of consent and how it is mobilized in regards to the treatment of migrant laborers. I look at how consent became instrumental in shaping colonial and contemporary labor mobilities, and I examine how the rights of individuals were structured as secondary to the security of the nation-state. Beginning with nineteenth century legal debates in England around the consent of Indian indentured laborers, I find legal debates concerning workers’ ability to freely consent motivated policies, contracts, and bureaucratic structures. In the colonial period, a focus on consent was meant to ensure that Indian indentured workers were traveling of their own “free will” and with a “knowledge of their [future] labor conditions.” This legacy of consent continued in the postcolonial moment and informed how bureaucrats in the nascent Indian nation-state envisioned the state’s obligations to citizens abroad. Today, the consent of workers continues to be a key factor in labor migration, but it is increasingly tempered with rhetoric of the security of the state. In the twentieth century, as the oil industry in the Persian Gulf became increasingly important to the geopolitical security of the British Empire, the mechanisms used to move indentured laborers throughout the British Empire were re-invigorated to move Indian laborers to the Gulf. I find routes excavated by the movement of slaves and indentured labor were refashioned to move Indians to work in the oilfields because Indians were seen as apolitical. I argue the structures used to move Indian workers in conjunction with a rhetoric of insecurity meant that the rights of workers were actively curtailed while simultaneously framed as consensual.

**Neha Vora**  
**Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology,**  
**Lafayette College**

“Normalizing the Arabian Peninsula within Comparative Approaches to Labor Migration”

In order to accommodate corporations and alleviate nativist concerns, global immigration trends seems to be shifting towards temporary labor regimes: many countries, for example, have relaxed immigration laws and/or created new categories of migrants that cannot threaten “national identity” by demanding the rights afforded to citizens. These exceptions could be considered counter to the liberal and democratic claims of most Western and postcolonial nation-states, and resemble to a large extent the “kafala” system of migrant sponsorship that is prevalent in the Gulf Arab states, where I have been conducting research for a decade. However, I have found that the Gulf migration literature has not been utilized to reflect on other parts of the world precisely because of these claims—the exceptionalism and sensationalism through which the region’s economy, culture, demography, politics, labor exploitation, and urbanism are viewed in contrast to other parts of the world all combine to make it seem impossible to compare the Arabian Peninsula to anywhere else. How might de-exceptionalizing the Gulf lead to better understandings of global labor migration? This is the entry point into my new research project, which considers the trajectories of Indian students-to-workers in the US. The wealthiest group of migrants, Indians also have the fastest growing rate of undocumented status. My Gulf-based expertise brings a different perspective to their everyday lives of migration, education, labor, race, and precarity that can help to explain such a paradox, which highlights larger trends in what I call “illiberal” immigration practices in the contemporary world.

**Riyad Koya**  
**Ph.D. candidate, Department of History,**  
**University of California Berkeley**

“Laboring and Other Diasporas: Defining the Emigrant and Dividing the Diaspora under the Indian Emigration Act of 1922”

The dispersal of Indian indentured laborers to colonies in the Caribbean, Indian Ocean, East and Southern Africa, and the Pacific in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is often treated as a prototypical example of a labor diaspora. The category of a “labor diaspora” itself pluralizes a broader concept of “diaspora,” raising questions about the relationship of labor diasporas to other forms of diaspora. The relative status of this “subaltern” diaspora to “elite” diasporas has been thrown into relief by the differential access to citizenship rights afforded to the descendants of indentured laborers by the postcolonial Indian state. The reluctant embrace of so-called “Persons of Indian Origin” has raised questions as to the genesis of India’s disenchantment with its “older,” laboring diaspora. This paper historicizes the disjunction between labor and “elite” diasporas through an examination of colonial Indian debates concerning the passage of the Indian Emigration Act of 1922. The 1922 Act, I argue, may be properly understood as an extension of a longer debate on the abolition of indentured labor. The Emigration Act introduced a vital distinction between skilled and unskilled labor for purposes of defining emigration. This distinction enabled the restriction of the emigration of unskilled labor to specific destinations while facilitating the continued emigration of skilled labor. In seeking to prohibit of the emigration of unskilled labor, I argue, nationalists sought to promote the international standing of India. In this final repudiation of the system of indentured labor we may locate a pivotal moment in the Indian state’s longer-term disavowal of its laboring diasporas.

*Notes: (Panel 6)*

*Notes: (Panel 6)*



## *Section 7: Next Steps*

## **Participants**

**Gaiutra Bahadur** is a Guyanese-American writer. She is the author of *Coolie Woman: The Odyssey of Indenture*, a narrative history of indenture which was shortlisted in 2014 for the Orwell Prize, the British literary prize for political writing that is artful. Her fiction debut, the short story “The Stained Veil,” is forthcoming in the anthology *Go Home!* (New York: The Feminist Press at CUNY, 2018) and *The Red Hen Anthology of Contemporary Indian Writing* (Pasadena, California: Red Hen Press, 2019).

**Sana Aiyar** is Assistant Professor of History at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Her research and teaching interests lie in the regional and transnational history of South Asia and South Asian diasporas, with a particular focus on colonial and postcolonial politics and society in the Indian Ocean. Her book, *Indians in Kenya: The Politics of Diaspora* (Harvard University Press, 2015), explores the interracial and extraterritorial diasporic political consciousness of South Asians in Kenya from c. 1895 to 1968 who mediated constructions of racial and national identity across the Indian Ocean.

**Sara Shneiderman** is Associate Professor of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia. Her research focuses on the Himalayan regions of Nepal, India, and China’s Tibetan Autonomous Region and the relationships between political discourse, ritual action, and cross-border mobility. Her book *Rituals of Ethnicity: Thangmi Identities Between Nepal and India* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015) focuses on the cross-border circulation of Thangmi people and their ideas about ethnic, national, religious and political identity. Sara is Co-Director of the UBC Center for India and South Asia Research.

**Anneeth Kaur Hundle** is Assistant Professor of Anthropology at the University of California-Merced. Her interests include decolonization and globalization; citizenship, sovereignty, Uganda, East Africa, South Asian diasporas, and the Global South more broadly. Her current book project focuses on the politics and possibilities of multi-racial citizenship, South Asian urban life, and African-Asian relations in the context of urban “deracialization” and Africanization projects in Uganda.

**Seema Sohi** is Associate Professor of Ethnic Studies at the University of Colorado-Boulder. Her work examines the radical anticolonial politics of South Asian intellectuals and migrant workers based in North America during the early twentieth century as well as the inter-imperial efforts of the U.S. and British states to repress them. A history of radicalism and antiradicalism, her

book *Echoes of Mutiny: Race, Surveillance, and Indian Anticolonialism in North America* (Oxford University Press, 2014) looks at the racial formations of South Asians through the lens of antiradicalism during the early years of South Asian migration to the United States.

**Gajendra Singh** is Lecturer of History at the University of Exeter. His research in South Asian history focuses on the hybridities of Empire – of the networks of peoples and ideas that could make even the most marginal individuals polyglot, multicultural bodies. His published work includes *The Testimonies of Indian Soldiers and Two World Wars: Between Self and Sepoy* (Bloomsbury, 2014) and the edited volume *An Imperial World at War: Aspects of the British Empire's War Experience, 1939-1945* (Routledge, 2016).

**Johanna Ogden** is an independent historian and activist from Oregon. In 2013 she initiated and was the consulting historian for Astoria's two-day Ghadar Party Centenary Commemoration. She is presently writing a book about Ghadar's roots in Oregon for the University of Washington Press.

**Samip Mallick** is the Co-Founder and Executive Director of the South Asian American Digital Archive. He was formerly the Director of the Ranganathan Center for Digital Information (RCDI) at the University of Chicago Library. He was also previously the Assistant Bibliographer for the Southern Asia Collection at the University of Chicago Library and has worked for the South Asia and International Migration Programs at the Social Science Research Council (SSRC).

**Bikrum Singh Gill** is a political theorist and scholar of postcolonial and decolonial politics. He is a research fellow in the Department of International Politics at Aberystwyth University, and a visiting postdoctoral fellow in the Center for Global Studies at the University of Victoria

**Vivek Bald** is a scholar, writer, and documentary filmmaker whose work focuses on histories of migration and diaspora, particularly from the South Asian subcontinent. He is the author of *Bengali Harlem* and the *Lost Histories of South Asian America* (Harvard University Press, 2013) and co-editor, with Miabi Chatterji, Sujani Reddy, and Manu Vimalassery of *The Sun Never Sets: South Asian Migrations in an Age of U.S. Power* (NYU Press, 2013). Vivek is currently working on a documentary film "In Search of Bengali Harlem" (currently in production) and a digital oral history website in development at [bengaliharlem.com](http://bengaliharlem.com).

**Anne Murphy** is Associate Professor in the Department of Asian Studies at the University of British Columbia and co-Director of the Centre for India and South Asia Research in the Institute of Asian Research. Her monograph, *The Materiality of the Past: History and Representation in Sikh Tradition* (Oxford University Press, 2012), explored the construction of Sikh memory and historical consciousness in textual forms and in relation to material representations and religious sites from the eighteenth century to the present. Dr. Murphy is currently pursuing research on the history of the Punjabi language and the early modern and modern emergence of Punjabi literature.

**Nilanjana Bhattacharjya** is Honors Faculty Fellow at Arizona State University. As an ethnomusicologist, she works on popular music from South Asia and its diasporic communities. Her articles and essays appear in journals including *Asian Music* and *South Asian History and Culture* as well as in the edited collections *Global Bollywood: Travels of Hindi Song and Dance* (Minnesota) and *South Asian Transnationalisms: Cultural Exchange in the Twentieth Century* (Routledge).

**Davina Bhandar** is Co-Director of the Centre for Policy Studies on Culture and Communities and Adjunct Professor of Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies at Simon Fraser University. She focuses on Canadian Studies, security and border studies, theories of citizenship and multiculturalism, and critical race studies with a specific focus on the South Asian community in North America.

**Victor V. Ramraj** is the Director of the Centre for Asia-Pacific Initiatives, Professor of Law, and CAPI Chair in Asia-Pacific Legal Relations. Professor Ramraj has edited/co-edited several books published by Cambridge University Press, including *Emergencies and the Limits of Legality* (2009) and *Emergency Powers in Asia: Exploring the Limits of Legality* (2010). His research interests include comparative constitutional and administrative law, transnational regulation, and the history of and regulatory challenges arising from state-company relationships in Asia.

**Renisa Mawani** is Professor of Sociology at the University of British Columbia. Her interests include colonial legal History, critical theory, race and racism, affect, time and temporality, oceans and maritime worlds, indigeneity, colonial India and the diaspora, and posthumanism. Her book, *Colonial Proximities: Crossracial Encounters and Juridical Truths in British Columbia, 1871 - 1921* (Duke University Press, 2009) details legal encounters between aboriginal peoples, Chinese migrants, Europeans, and those enumerated as

“mixed race” along Canada’s west coast. Her new book, *Across Oceans of Law*, traces the currents and counter-currents of British/ colonial law and Indian radicalism through the 1914 journey of the *S.S. Komagata Maru*, a British-built and Japanese owned steamship, oriented towards a global and maritime legal history.

**Marina Martin** is a Research Fellow at the Collaborative Research Centre, University of Frankfurt. She is interested in the colonial history and legacies of exchanges and encounters between Britain, India and Africa. Marina is writing a monograph on the creation of British colonial immigration laws with respect to Indian migration in sub-Saharan Africa, connecting the development of British colonial ideas about Indian, African and European economic and political interests. Marina worked as a broadcast journalist with Bloomberg TV and the BBC World Service (radio), and then as a consultant carrying out research and policy analysis for government, academia and the corporate sector.

**Andrea Wright** is Assistant Professor of Anthropology and the Program in Asian and Middle Eastern Studies at the College of William and Mary. Professor Wright's research focuses on labor and energy policies in South Asia and the Middle East. Her current book project looks at oil production in the Arabian Sea and the role of Indian labor migration in the oil industry.

**Riyad Koya** is a PhD candidate in History at the University of California-Berkeley. His research examines the significance of imperial citizenship for claims to political equality and religious freedom within the multiethnic British Empire. My project explores the complex legal regime that emerged for the “transnational” governance of marriage within the British Empire, offering a prehistory to postcolonial debates on multicultural citizenship, gender equality, and legal pluralism.

**Neha Vohra** is Associate Professor of Anthropology at Lafayette College. Her interests include citizenship and belonging, South Asian diasporas, gender and ethnicity, neoliberalism, states, migration, transnationalism, the Gulf Arab states, feminist theory, and Indian Ocean connectivities. Her book *Impossible Citizens: Dubai’s Indian Diaspora* (Duke University Press, 2015), draws on her ethnographic research in Dubai’s Indian-dominated downtown to explore how Indians live suspended in a state of permanent temporariness.

### *Conference Organizers*

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**Neilesh Bose** is Canada Research Chair and Assistant Professor of History at the University of Victoria. His research and teaching interests include the history of modern South Asia, the British Empire, decolonization, and the history of diasporas and migrations. Earlier publications include *Recasting the Region: Language, Culture, and Islam in Bengal* (Oxford University Press, 2014) as well as articles in *South Asia Research*, *Modern Asian Studies*, and *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, among others. Current research focuses on religious reform in nineteenth century India and a biography of the itinerant activist Taraknath Das (1884 – 1958).

**Renisa Mawani** is Professor of Sociology at the University of British Columbia. Her interests include colonial legal History, critical theory, race and racism, oceans and maritime worlds, indigeneity, colonial India and the diaspora, and post-humanism. Her book, *Colonial Proximities: Cross-racial Encounters and Juridical Truths in British Columbia, 1871 - 1921* (Duke University Press, 2009) details legal encounters between aboriginal peoples, Chinese migrants, Europeans, and those enumerated as “mixed race” along Canada’s west coast. Her new book, *Across Oceans of Law*, explores British colonial law and Indian radicalism through the 1914 journey of the *S.S. Komagata Maru*, a British-built and Japanese owned steamship, oriented towards a global and maritime legal history.

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#### **Satwinder Bains**

Satwinder Bains is the Director of the South Asian Studies Institute at the University of the Fraser Valley, Associate Professor in Social Cultural Media Studies, College of Arts, and Principal of UFV-India. Her work has appeared in *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, *Brill*, and *Women’s Studies International Forum*, and books such as *Diverse Spaces: Examining Identity, Heritage and Community within Canadian Public Culture and Interpreting Ghadar: Echoes of Voices Past* as well as in other public spaces.