

Rutgers Annual Conference on South Asia

BEYOND NATION--STATES: NETWORKS, COMMUNITIES AND DIASPORAS

March 24th & 25th, 2011

All events to take place in Traves Hall A, Douglas Campus Center, Rutgers University, 100 George Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901

Program Details for Thursday, March 24th Panels

11:00 a.m.

Screening of award-winning movie **'Man Push Cart'** by Ramin Bahrani

1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Council of South Asian Ambassadors

Panel Organizer: Zain Ahmad is a junior in the School of Arts and Science and currently serving as the Chair of the Council of South Asian Ambassadors and as the Secretary of the Pakistani Students Association. Zain was the first Pakistani student to serve on the board of the Association of Indians at Rutgers in 2009-2010.

Panelists: 1) Zain Ahmed 2) Akanksha Karwar (Vice president, Association of Indians at Rutgers), 3) Haroon Mian, (President, Rutgers Pakistani Students Association).

Panel Theme

The panel will be focused on how South Asian students (in undergrad) are helping to bring about the change necessary for advancing our societies forward. Whether that is by having cultural shows that not only promote the beauty and dance portion of our culture but also helps to educate the audience on certain topics within South Asia. For example, AIR has its annual show in the fall at the State Theatre in NJ. AIR has a ton of Rutgers dance troupes perform but they also tie a significant message with it. Whether that is women's rights, lack of water, or family issues. AIR's cultural shows are tied in with an overall message that helps to educate a broad audience. PSA also does similar things by holding community service events focused on disasters in the region. For example, PSA mobilized the largest fundraising drive for the Pakistan flood relief this past fall. PSA partnered with multiple organizations to send relief boxes from Rutgers to Pakistan. PSA set an ambitious 1,000 boxes of Hope for Pakistan and came very close to hitting that goal.

Both AIR and PSA are working extremely hard to appeal to the broad demographics of the South Asian student body at Rutgers (Punjabis, Gujaritis, South Indians, Bengalis, Marathi, UP, Pashtun/Pathaan, Memon, Persian, Sindhi, Muslim, Hindu, Christian, First generation American, recent immigrants from India/Pakistan, second generation American, and many many more). For the panel, we will discuss how we are changing things; how we are inspiring other students to become leaders and how those same students go on to shine the light on so many problems within our societies and how we are going to fix them. We can also discuss how we do our outreach through social networking and smart marketing strategies. We will also talk about the Council of South Asian Ambassadors and how we make decisions and collaborate.

2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

The South Asian-American Identity: Translations and Transformations

Panelists: Radhika Patel (Swadhayay), Meet Shah, Haroon Mian (President of PSA), Paul Roy (President of BSA), Naji'a Tameez

Moderators: Prital Patel and Sonal Thawani

What actually is South Asian-American culture?

Is it participating in bhangra shows or attending the mandir? Is it hiding nights out from our parents, even at age 25? Is it understanding political actors and decisions in the region? How have these things become South Asian-American culture and why is it these things over other things? Does it differ amongst the sub-regions? How dependent is it, if at all, on how the culture of the actual South Asian subcontinent evolves? How is it that we present South Asian culture and how it it actually different?

Conflicts between the clashing cultures:

Interdependence vs. independence. How do these things materialize in everyday life (joint families vs. nuclear families; maybe commuting vs. dorming, etc.) How, if at all, does this affect the kinds of friends you make and the way you interact with different groups of friends?

Gender roles: South Asian demands on the culture vs. American demands; how is it different for each and do they conflict? Does it matter? How are gender roles played out with each? consider conflicting dressing styles (modesty vs. immodesty), roles at home, etc.

What's expected & perceived by parents and non-South Asians vs. what's reality

Transforming identities:

Given these ideas, how do you think South Asian-American culture will evolve? What will be passed on? What will be lost? What isn't being passed on and is it a conscious decision? Why or why not? How, if at all, is this benefiting our 'globalizing' culture? And, going forward is this for better or worse or neither?

3:15pm-4:45pm

From Behind the Wheel to the Front Lines of Struggle: The History of the New York Taxi Workers Alliance

Organizers will talk about building the largest organization of South Asian workers in the United States, with a membership of 15,000 drivers primarily from Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, and Afghanistan. NYTWA holds a multi-ethnic unity among drivers representing 100 different countries and remains an independent, growing force of labor at a time of union decline and despite being outside of traditional labor laws. Co-founder and Executive Director Bhairavi Desai, co-founder and Organizing Committee Member Javaid Tariq and Staff Community Health Worker Mohammad Asim Akhtar will present on the taxi industry, which NYTWA coined as the sweatshop on wheels, NYTWA's history from inception to today, organizing challenges and current campaigns.

Moderator: **Sonja Thomas**

Panelists: 1) **Bhairavi Desai, Co-founder and Executive Director NYTWA** 2) **Javaid Tariq, Co-founder and Organizing Committee Member** 3) **Mohammad Asim Akhtar, Staff Community Health Worker**

5:00pm-6:00pm

Opening Keynote: **Kashmir's Forever War**

Basharat Peer will also read excerpts from his book *Curfewed Night*

6:00pm-7:30pm

Evening Reception at the venue