

Aal bady, waan bady

Guyana Folk Festival 2011 Symposium

“Arrivals, Encounters, and Exchanges”

Saturday, September 3, 2011

CALL FOR PARTICIPATION

On the 10th anniversary of GCA and the Guyana Folk Festival, the annual symposium will focus on the on-going process of (aal bady) becoming (waan bady)—Guyanese.

MISSION

There is a tendency among the dominant discourses on Guyanese life and society to emphasize differences among Guyanese root heritages. This nurtures mistrust and diverts attention from the cultural similarities, common experiences and traditions of solidarity and friendship that are evident in contemporary Guyanese culture.

The organizers of the 2011 symposium believe that the appreciation and the celebration of cultural similarities and common experiences among Guyana’s ethnic communities— at home and in the diaspora—are necessities in contemporary Guyanese life and society.

To this end, the symposium’s goal is to explore contemporary ideas about the state of Guyanese culture. To encourage this, the symposium has the following objectives:

- To share and encourage new knowledge related to the people of Guyana—**Arrivals;**
- To share and encourage new knowledge related to the conditions and contexts of the encounters and contacts in the peopling of Guyana [and its diaspora]—**Encounters;**
- To share and encourage new knowledge about the resulting cultural exchanges that emerged from the arrivals and encounters of our ancestors in Guyana and the current roles and future viability of those cultural developments—**Exchanges.**

Arrivals

To share new knowledge related to the peopling of Guyana.

Archeological and other scientific evidence indicate the populating of this region of the Americas can be traced back to between 9,000 and 12,000 years. The first

peoples of this era were parts of a wider civilization that had developed hybrids such as corn (maize) and potato—two globally important foods. Dr. Denis Williams' *Prehistoric Guyana* and Dr. George Mentore's *Of Passionate Curves and Desirable Cadences: Themes on Waiwai Social Being* and Dr. Desrey Caesar-Fox's dissertation *Variants of Akawaio Spoken at Waramadong* have been valuable contributions to the understanding of our Amerindian ancestors' engagement with life in Amazonia.

Through expanding access to international archives, new databases, and the application of more robust research designs interdisciplinary researchers, including Guyanese historiographers, are now offering sharper descriptions of the other people who have populated Guyana since Columbus's encounter with the Americas in 1492. These new works are beginning to humanize our ancestors who came from Europe, Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and the Middle East by giving them voice and context.

Publications such as Alvin Thompson's *Unprofitable Servants: Crown Slaves in Berbice, Guyana 1803 - 1831*; McGowan, Rose and Grainer's *Themes in African Guyanese History*; Maureen Walker-Lewis's *Central Africa in the Caribbean*; Clem Seecharran's *Sweetening Bitter Sugar*; Trevor Sue-A-Quan's *Cane Reapers and Cane Ripples*; and Sister Mary Noel's *The Portuguese of Guyana: A Study in Culture and Conflict*, among others are valuable sources of evidence about the arrivals of our ancestors.

To share and encourage new knowledge related to the conditions and contexts of the encounters and contacts in the peopling of Guyana [and its diaspora]—

Encounters

Recent scholarship by Guyanese academics has been providing increasing specificity and texture about the sites of and the nature of the encounters associated with the peopling of Guyana. Dr. Brenda Josiah has been doing pioneering work on the post-emancipation African Village movement and the pork-knocking heritage. Dr. Juanita DeBarros' *Order and Place in a Colonial City: Patterns of Struggle and Resistance on Georgetown, British Guiana, 1889 - 1924* is a ground-breaking exploration of the intersection of public health, and the exercise of colonial power in Georgetown.

The encounters of our ancestors have continued to inform the Guyanese literary imagination. These encounters are explored in multiple genres—including autobiography, biography, poetry, song, and science fiction. Contemporary exemplars of this tradition include Grace Agard's *I'se a Long Memored Woman*; Oonya Kempadoo's *Buxton Spice*; Dr. Brenda Do Harris's *Calabash Parkway*; Marina Budhos's *Ask Me No Questions*; and Nalo Hopkinson's *Brown Girl in the Ring and Midnight Robber*.

Exchanges

To share and encourage new knowledge about the resulting cultural exchanges that emerged from the arrivals and encounters of our ancestors in Guyana and the current roles and future viability of those cultural developments.

Interest in Guyanese heritage accelerated in the post-independence years. Out of the research on this aspect of Guyanese life piloted by John Rickford, Walter Edwards, Peter Kempadoo, Marc Mathews, Diazal Samad, Sister Rose Magdalene, Lakshmi Kalicharran, Kean Gibson, Desrey Fox, Brian Moore, Roy Brummel, Alan Fenty, and others, it is now possible to identify and celebrate several areas of cultural similarity—in language, cuisine, fashion, music, dance, spirituality, and aspirations, to name a few.

The Objectives

The objectives of the 2011 Symposium are to:

- Provide a platform for sharing recent academic knowledge on Guyanese life and society
- Offer an opportunity to explore the nature of the arrivals, encounters, and exchanges associated with the making of the modern Guyanese nation;
- Explore the expressive culture that have emerged as a result of the exchanges associated with the making of the modern Guyanese nation;
- Contribute to the eradication of persistent negative racial and ethnic stereotypes in Guyanese society;
- Contribute to the building of trust among Guyanese
- Contribute to the reinforcement of the bonds of solidarity and friendships,
- Encourage and sustain creativity and achievement;
- Support the visualization of contemporary Guyanese; and
- Facilitate the collecting of materials for dissemination in *Guyana Folk* magazine and the academic press; to support scholarly research, for depositing in the Guyana Collection, Ohio University Library, Caribbean Collection of the University of Guyana, and Guyana's National Library; and for immediate use in radio, television and on-line programming in the United States and Guyana.

Rationale

The symposium organizers invites paper proposals and panels to examine the cultural exchanges that have emerged in Guyana as a result to the arrivals and encounters

among our multiple ancestors. Starting with our Amerindian ancestors who arrived almost 12,000 years ago and since the early 15th century, our ancestors from Europe, African, Asia, the Americas and the Caribbean.

Potential topics include but are not limited to:

Arrivals

- Shipmates and Jhaji Bhais
- Sociological/psychological effects of arrival
- Neo-arrivants and the creation of the Guyanese diaspora

Encounters

- Encountering nature
- Religious encounters
- Business encounters
- Solidarity and friendships
- Rituals and identity
- Education resolutions

Exchanges

- Name Changing
- Literature
- Food
- Fashion/Clothes
- Festivals
- Music
- Dance
- Marriage—Kwe Kwe and Dig Dutty
- Spirituality
- Ethnic enclaves and global Guyana

THE PROCESS

Persons interested in submitting papers are invited to register by proposing a provisional topic by May 30, 2011. Paper abstracts are due by June 30, 2011. Abstracts should not exceed 300 words in length and should be sent in electronic form or hard copy to Dr. Vibert C. Cambridge cambridg@ohio.edu or School of Media Arts and Studies, RTVC 213, Ohio University, Athens, OH 45701.

This symposium is scheduled for Saturday, September 3, 2011 at EdZone, Teacher's College/Columbia University, New York, NY.