

# PROFILE of The Week

By Dr. DHANPAUL NARINE

## QUEENS BOOK FAIR Promotes Youth Literacy

The recently concluded Book Fair and Literary Festival in Queens attracted a wide cross-section of the community. There were participants from several countries that included Guyana, Trinidad, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, India, Pakistan, Puerto Rico, and the United States, among others. It was the first time that such a diverse population had entered Richmond Hill to celebrate books and the local culture.

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We live in an age in which books are published at a rapid rate but the readership is shrinking. People get their information from the two-minute videos on social media, than from a long read in a quality newspaper, or journal. It was heartening then to see hundreds at the Book Fair celebrating the written and spoken word. It was also great to see many students from the local schools read their poems, make speeches and pay tributes to the writers of yore.

Amelia Persaud 9, mesmerized the audience with Maya Angelou's poem 'Still I Rise' that she recited from memory and for which she received a standing ovation. Amelia definitely has a far way to go and can't wait to be part of the next Book Fair. Fati-

ma Razvi came from Brooklyn and read a poem for peace while Merisalyn Roberts, also from Brooklyn, read from a poem that she wrote.

Nayana Chetram spoke impressively about the importance

of literature, also from memory. Then there were Yogini Gayadin who spoke about DACA while her sister Uma, Sashi Singh, and Tanuja Ramphul that paid tributes to the writers that have left us. Who can forget

young Pandit Neval and his sister Saryn who read heartily and impressed the packed audience? Pandit Neval Ramdass read a poem written by Vashti Capildeo while Saryn Ramdass recited the popular Tagore poem 'Where the mind is without fear.' Usha Sookai, who recently turned sixteen, recited beautifully 'Bob's Old Prophets' and called for 'One Love.'

One of the most enthralling presentations was made by 8 year old Gowrie Ramkissoon, daughter of Dr. Keshwar Ramkissoon and Mrs. Pretima Ramkissoon. She read a poem that was written by her grandfather Jai Lal entitled 'Motivate me to Graduate' that was well received. Kavita Mahabir read a poem from Corine Wilson from Barbados while Renuka Surujnarain read from Vidya Sircar's novel 'A Traveler's Tale.'

Urvashie Kissoon thrilled the audience with a breathtaking classical dance; Santosh Balkarran gave a dazzling display on the tabla and showed why he is in the top notch of young tabla players.

The Book Fair and Literary Festival showed that Richmond Hill, in Queens, appreciates literature and will turn up to a well-planned event. It was great to have the University of Guyana support group AFOUG present and its president Allison Skeete introduced the members at the Fair.

The next Book Fair is planned for early 2019.



Pandit Neval Ramdass reads a poem from Trinidadian poet Vashti Capildeo



Saryn Ramdass reads a Tagore poem



Gowrie Ramkissoon reads a poem 'Motivate me to Graduate' written by her grandfather Jai Lal



Santosh Balkarran is a young wizard on the tabla



Nayana Chetram speaks brilliantly on the importance of literature



Merisalyn Roberts reads a poem that she composed herself



Kavita Mahabir reads from a Barbadian poet Corine Wilson



Usha Sookai recites a poem 'Bob's Old Prophets' and calls for One Love



Sashi Singh pays tribute to poet and writer Churaumanie Bissundyal



Tanuja Ramphul pays tribute to novelist Edgar Mittelholzer



Uma Gayadin pays tribute to educator Dr. Harold Drayton



Renuka Surujnarain reads from Vidya Sircar's book 'A Traveler's Tale.'



Anjali Mohan pays tribute to novelist Sir Wilson Harris



Veena Bedasie pays tributes to novelist E. R. Brathwaite



Amelia Persaud recites 'Still I Rise' by Maya Angelou from memory and receives a standing ovation



Yogini Gayadin speaks about the latest on DACA.