

Queens Book Fair Celebrates Women as Trailblazers!

By Dr. DHANPAUL NARINE

It was a magical afternoon. A number of distinguished women shared their experiences with the community to celebrate Women's History Month. The packed audience at Hillside Library, Richmond Hill Branch, was treated to presentations of the highest quality as the women discussed a wide range of topics that included mental health, Maya Angelou's 'Phenomenal Woman', the experiences of a young attorney in Queens and gender bias in the legal system. Janelle Allong, a graduate of West Point, crowned the afternoon's proceedings with a riveting presentation of women in the military.

The offerings of these professionals were preceded by the narration of the children. They chose a variety of stories to highlight the resilience of women and their poise and confidence shone like stars on a clear night. The afternoon began with Tafazool Baksh from the Indian Hot Shots in Guyana playing tunes of yesteryear. The National Anthem was sung by Ariana Narine and Melissa and Daniel Deokie. Ariana reminded all about the importance of women's rights and praised her family for looking after her so well.

Tarika Shionarain spoke about the struggles of Rosa Parks for an equal and just society while Ambika Chandra reminded us about the role of Susan B. Anthony and her campaign to get women the right to vote. She was followed by Ambika Persaud who pointed out the challenges that Malala Yousufzai had to overcome to get an education in her native Pakistan. Malala went to win the Nobel Peace Prize. Ranjeeta was most persuasive in

her call for women's education and for mental health to be high on the agenda. Amelia Persaud recited a poem that was dedicated to Harriet Tubman, whose heroism

freed many slaves on the Underground Railroad. Veena Bedasie highlighted the career of Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard. Veena gave reasons as to why Tulsi Gabbard has inspired her. Dr. Karen Cort

does wonderful work as a psychologist in the Queens Family Court in New York. She sought to demystify the notion that there are crazy people out there. She argued in favor of normalizing mental health and one way of

doing so is for persons to seek help. Vonita Semple spoke with passion about overcoming her shyness and proceeded to read Maya Angelou's poem 'Phenomenal Woman' with great gusto and pizzazz, of which the

theater would be proud. Aminta Kilawan Narine described her early experiences in New York and her education in a primarily white neighborhood and left a message of resilience and determination. Aminta, and her hus-

band Rohan, are in the forefront in performing selfless community work in the New York area. Andrea Ogle will make a great judge. She is performing exceptional service in the community. An-

drea addressed gender inequality in the justice system and offered possible solutions. Her paper will be published in due course. Bibi Alli released her book 'The power of the soil' and recounted her life stories in Guyana and Venezuela.

The session ended with Janelle Allong, a soldier from West Point. She recalled her experiences in the army, especially as they related to women. There was a musical interlude as Vashti Persaud played beautifully on the flute.

Her mom Swarti Seeram accompanied her and was impressed with the proceedings. Tafazool Baksh ended with a patriotic song and Aminta Kilawan Narine moved the vote of thanks. There were many persons to thank, includ-

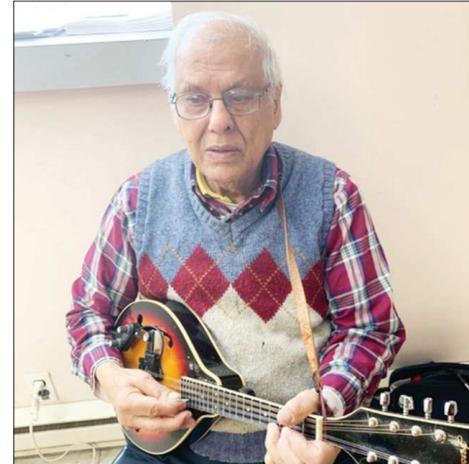
ing the Queens Library, Richmond Hill Branch, for its generosity. Participants remarked that the Queens Book Fair reflected the diversity of the community, and that it stayed on the topic and showcased the talents of children and



Dr. Dhanpaul Narine adults alike. Our next offering will be in the summer of 2019.



Ariana Narine and Melissa Deokie sang the National Anthem



Maestro Tafazool Baksh entertained the audience with classic songs



Tarika Shionarain spoke of the struggles of Rosa Parks



Ambika Chandra recounted the role of Susan B. Anthony in the right of women to vote



Ambika Persaud used Malala Yousufzai to remind all about the importance of literacy for girls



Ranjeeta spoke about the need for more mental health services to be made available for women



Amelia Persaud dedicated a poem to Harriet Tubman who made famous the Underground Railroad



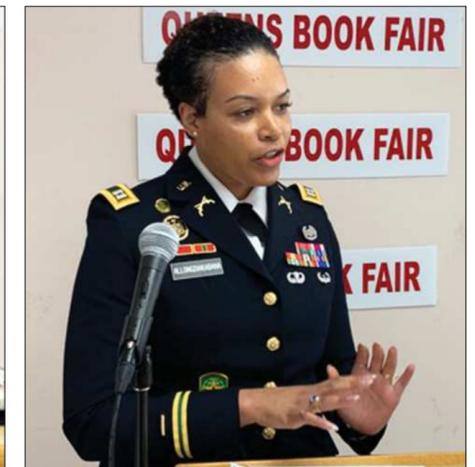
Dr. Karen Cort gave a stirring presentation on the normalization of mental health



Vonita Semple recited Maya Angelou's poem 'Phenomenal Woman' with pizzazz



Aminta Kilawan Narine stated that hard work and determination can overcome the odds



Janelle Allong, a graduate at West Point, discussed the policy towards women in the US Army.



Andrea Ogle looked at the inequities in the judicial system and how they affect minorities



Vashti Persaud played beautifully on the flute to entertain the audience



Veena Bedasie spoke eloquently about the life of Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard



Bibi Alli released her book 'The Power of the Soil.'



The Trailblazers!