

SALA Conference: Envisioning Black & South Asian Solidarity: History, Culture, Praxis

22nd Annual South Asian Literary Association (SALA) Conference

Apr. 1-2, 2023; Executive Committee Meeting on Mar. 31, 2023

Important Notice: This conference, formerly hybrid, is now 100% online.

In the 2023 annual meeting of SALA, we take seriously the call for collective action, coalition-building and solidarity between Black and South Asian peoples across the world in the aftermath of Black Lives Matter and new awareness about anti-Asian racism. The question of Black/African and South Asian solidarity has had many iterations across the globe. George Floyd's murder at the hands of the police in May 2020 catalyzed people in the US and around the world to attend to racial inequalities and injustice and to right historical wrongs. The Black Lives Matter protests that erupted at this time drew attention to the discrimination and racism rampant in the legal and judicial systems. Similar movements in South Asia taking place at the same time draw our attention to discrimination against historically marginalized groups.

We ask what this means for scholars of literature and culture in South Asian Studies, for historians and artists and writers in the field. We ask about moments of solidarity and connection in the past and present, about difficulties in building unity, and about South Asian complicity. Through these lenses we envision what is possible, in the present and future. Despite socio-economic, cultural, historical, and geographical differences between and within Black and South Asian groups, and despite differences in literatures and material cultures produced by them, scholars and activists in the past have found a series of commonalities: a sense of historical oppression and the need for collective struggle, an ethos of marginality within specific variations, a certain sense of loss or nostalgia, anxieties of historical and cultural dislocations, and storytelling techniques aimed at recovery of lost cultural forms. It is common knowledge that, historically, Ambedkar, DuBois, Gandhi, and King learnt from each other, and from the political movements of liberation going on at the same time in the United States, India, and elsewhere. Today, scholars and activists have unearthed feminist, queer, and working class histories of Black and South Asian identity, radicalization, and struggle. Black

leaders and writers have always questioned the set of assumptions on which white mainstream literary tradition is based. These narratives share commonalities in terms of both content and form to give voice to the marginalized people in the process of centering themselves. Additionally, the emergence of Dalit aesthetics which resonate with the African-American narratives of bondage and slavery has opened new ways of recast(e)ing South Asian histories. Reading literary, cultural, and historical narratives intersectionally opens possibilities to envision a politics of the possible in the 21st century.

We seek for this year's conference to analyze these intersections at multiple levels and contribute to the building of Black and South Asian solidarity. As scholars, artists, and activists we bring an awareness of history, literature, culture, and theory to illuminate the possibilities and difficulties of solidarity, in the past and around the world. We know, from experience and/or scholarship, that for South Asians a variety of possibilities exist: from embrace of whiteness to an assertion of solidarity with Black American and the larger decolonial projects. Given the very long history – and often forgotten history – of African and South Asian peoples, we seek to read these histories contrapuntally as well as extend our analyses out towards multiple Afro-Asian-diasporas spanning the globe. We encourage full panels and individual proposals that may be research-based scholarship, creative, pedagogical, or performative.

Themes may include, but are not limited to:

- Afro-Asian studies, including historical, literary, and political work
- Critical Race Theories, South Asian postcolonial studies, and/or Asian American Studies
- Dalit Studies and “Race and Caste” debates
- Gandhi/MLK or Ambedkar/DuBois?: Interrogating Solidarity
- Comparative Racialization: Whiteness/Blackness/Brownness
- Black feminism, Dalit feminism, and Third World feminism
- Black Lives Matter and South Asian progressive movements
- Black Internationalism, Militant Nationalism in South Asia, and Communism
- Islam and Black/South Asian Histories

- Capitalism, Slavery, and Colonialism
- Pan-Africanism and Asians diasporas in Africa
- Race, Caste, and Class in the Caribbean
- Black/Asian Representation in Film, Comics, Literature, Politics

You are invited to submit individual paper proposals of no more than 250 words or panel proposals that you pre-arrange with and among your colleagues of no more than 1000 words. Please submit your abstract to us no later than **Jan. 15, 2023**, via the portal on the South Asian Literary Association's webpage:

2023 SALA Annual Conference Paper and Panel Proposal Forms

Be sure to let us know if you need to participate online. We will do our best to accommodate requests.

If you have any questions, please contact us at sala2023am@gmail.com.

Conference Co-Chairs:

Dr. Priya Jha

Dr. Pranav Jani

Dr. Ayesha Irfan

Important Deadlines:

Jan. 15: submission deadline

Feb. 5: decision notification

Mar. 1: participants must be members of the South Asian Literary Association to be on the program

Mar. 15: participants must register for the conference to avail of the early registration rate