Becoming South Asian: Formation of a Community in Canada

Purpose

to understand the formation of various South Asian identities within Canada through experiences and activism related to migration, borders, racism, Islamophobia, and nationalism.

Using archival & library research

1) to trace the emergence and influence of the term ‘South Asian’ in Canada
2) to explore how this shaped individual and collective ‘South Asian’ and ‘Canadian’ identities
3) to examine how race, ethnicity, religion, gender, class and other dynamics inform this process
4) to understand in what ways the deployment of ‘South Asian/ness’ as a mode of collective identification within the Canadian context may be problematic.

TO DECONSTRUCT STEREOTYPES.

- Uncivilized and undisciplined
- Can’t speak English
- Snake Charmers
- Do yoga and say namaste
- Taxi driver or store clerk
- Women wear sarees
- Uneducated
- Marriages are forced
- Worships multiple Gods

Key Findings

- South Asians of all cultures have greatly contributed to Canada despite systemic racism
- They are portrayed as uncivilized and barbaric
- Negative stereotypes continue to harm second and third generation South Asians
- As a result, many South Asians either strongly reaffirm their cultures, remain ambivalent or wholly reject it

EVERY COUNTRY IN SOUTH ASIA IS DIFFERENT.

BUT

WHEN YOU GROW UP IN THE [WEST] IT DOESN’T MATTER... BECAUSE YOU’RE STILL GOING TO BE CALLED APU.

Indian School Children in Vancouver B.C.

Wartime Propaganda Including Indians

Hari Kondabolu

Created by: Leroy Milton
In collaboration with Dr. Tania Das Gupta
Department of Equity Studies
Archival pictures from: https://www.southasiancanadianheritage.ca/archives/