

# EDUCATOR GUIDE

**We've Always Been Here: South Asian Queer Activism in '90s NYC**

# A NOTE FROM THE YOUTH RESEARCHER: WHY TEACH THIS HISTORY

The spring of my junior year of high school, my friends and I participated in our school's National History Day project. While brainstorming ways to celebrate and engage with our local history, our topic became clear: gay activism. That year, we made a documentary on the true origins of the Stonewall Uprising. And then the year after, we centered queer history again — Allen Ginsberg and queer literature. Queer history called to us, not only because it related to the communities we were a part of but because of the rich dialogue between activists — the letters, interviews, and art — that captured queer life and culture in every aspect, from blunt truth to the overlapping of trauma and resistance. The archival research and the community-networking felt rewarding and affirming; speaking with historians like Eric Marcus of Making Gay History emphasized the recency and durability of the network of queer activists that still exists today.

Still, during that time, I became increasingly aware of how my early research overlooked queer Asian/South Asian perspectives— I was complicit in queer media discourse that neglected Asian-American history in favor of dominant, mainstream narratives. When I heard about the Localized History Project, I knew I wanted my project to continue to contribute to this journey of archiving queer networks of solidarity and dialogue, but this time I wanted to investigate an intersectional community closer to my identity as a Bengali-American living in Queens.

I stumbled across this topic when I learned about Urvashi Vaid, a key figure highlighted in this exhibit, and her fight against the exclusionary politics of the NYC India Day Parade. What interested me about this topic was the persistence of the SALGA demonstrations against the FIA, and the wide range of actors who had stakes in this call for visibility in the India Day Parade. I wanted to highlight the ethnic and religious complexities of the queer South Asian identity, the solidarity between different activist groups within the diaspora and queer community, and the role queer South Asians — especially queer South Asian women who continue to lead organizing in the city. I found my research process for this SALGA exhibit incredible rewarding; learning about queer South Asian film as a documentary maker interested in digital media, or about the networks of leadership between various organizations from SALGA to DRUM as a member of these organizations brought visibility to the aspects of my interests and identity that I thought existed in a void.

# A NOTE FROM THE YOUTH RESEARCHER: WHY TEACH THIS HISTORY

My research process relied heavily on archival materials like the SALGA materials in NYU's Fales Library and Special Collections, as well as the collections of queer art, community events, and news in SAADA's digital archive. Primary sources like flyers promoting spaces of South Asian queer joy or newspapers covering discourse within the community helped highlight the different entry points into the South Asian queer community, and the various means of resistance and visibility being organized and protected by means that highlight the duality of community care and network.

With this project, I aim to bring visibility to the struggles we've already overcome, the fights we continue to lead today, and the nature of solidarity and care that keeps the fight going. NYC has a rich legacy of queer South Asian activism, maybe unlike anywhere else in the world, and that legacy still lives on today. I want students — like my friends and I when we were making our National History Day projects — to stumble onto the unique and authentically queer South Asian dialogue and media preserved through various community archives as compiled and analyzed here, and realize that there is a network of support and strength that reflects who they are.

**Thank you for engaging with my work!**

**Subah Sumaiyyat began this exhibit as a high school student at Brooklyn Tech, where she studied in the Law and Society major. She is currently a student at Harvard concentrating in government. She is interested in the digital humanities and archival history, with experience in making historical documentaries for National History Day.**



# PEDAGOGICAL REVOLUTIONS

## HOW TO TEACH THIS HISTORY

tktktktk



**THE LOCALIZED  
HISTORY PROJECT**

@AAARI-CUNY

# RESOURCES FOR THE CLASSROOM

# primary sources:



**Members of Youth Solidarity Summer protesting 1999's India Day Parade.**

**Photos taken by and permissions granted by Sangeeta Kumat.**

Now  
in our 10th  
year

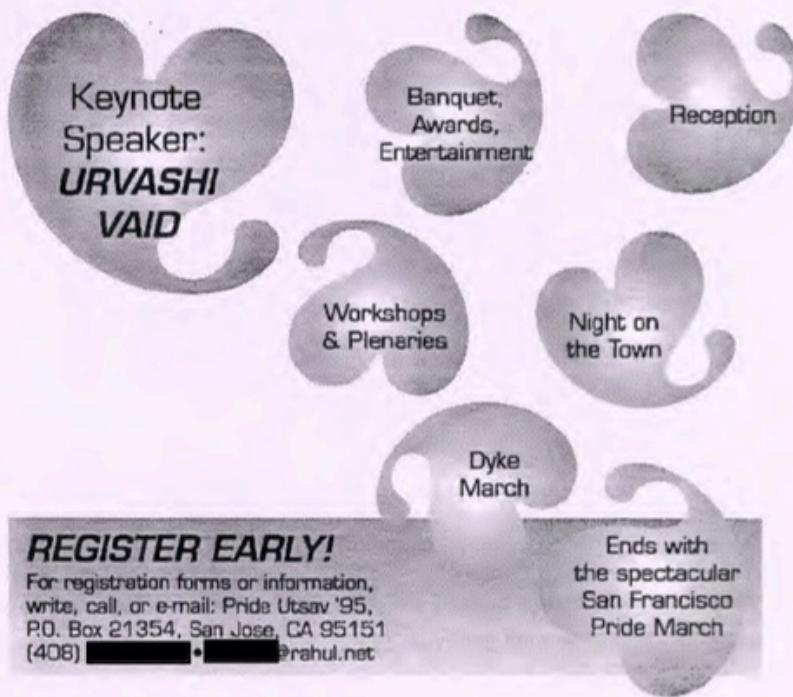
TRIKONE: GAY & LESBIAN SOUTH ASIANS  
presents



# PRIDE Utsav '95

THE SECOND  
ANNUAL  
SOUTH  
ASIAN  
LESBIAN  
& GAY  
CONFERENCE

June 15-18, 1995  
San Francisco, California



CO-SPONSORS:  
(a partial list)

- SALGA-NY
- SANGAT-CHICAGO
- SHAMAKAMI
- TRIKONE-ATLANTA
- TRIKONE-LOS ANGELES

## REGISTER EARLY!

For registration forms or information,  
write, call, or e-mail: Pride Utsav '95,  
P.O. Box 21354, San Jose, CA 95151  
(408) [REDACTED] • [REDACTED]@rahul.net

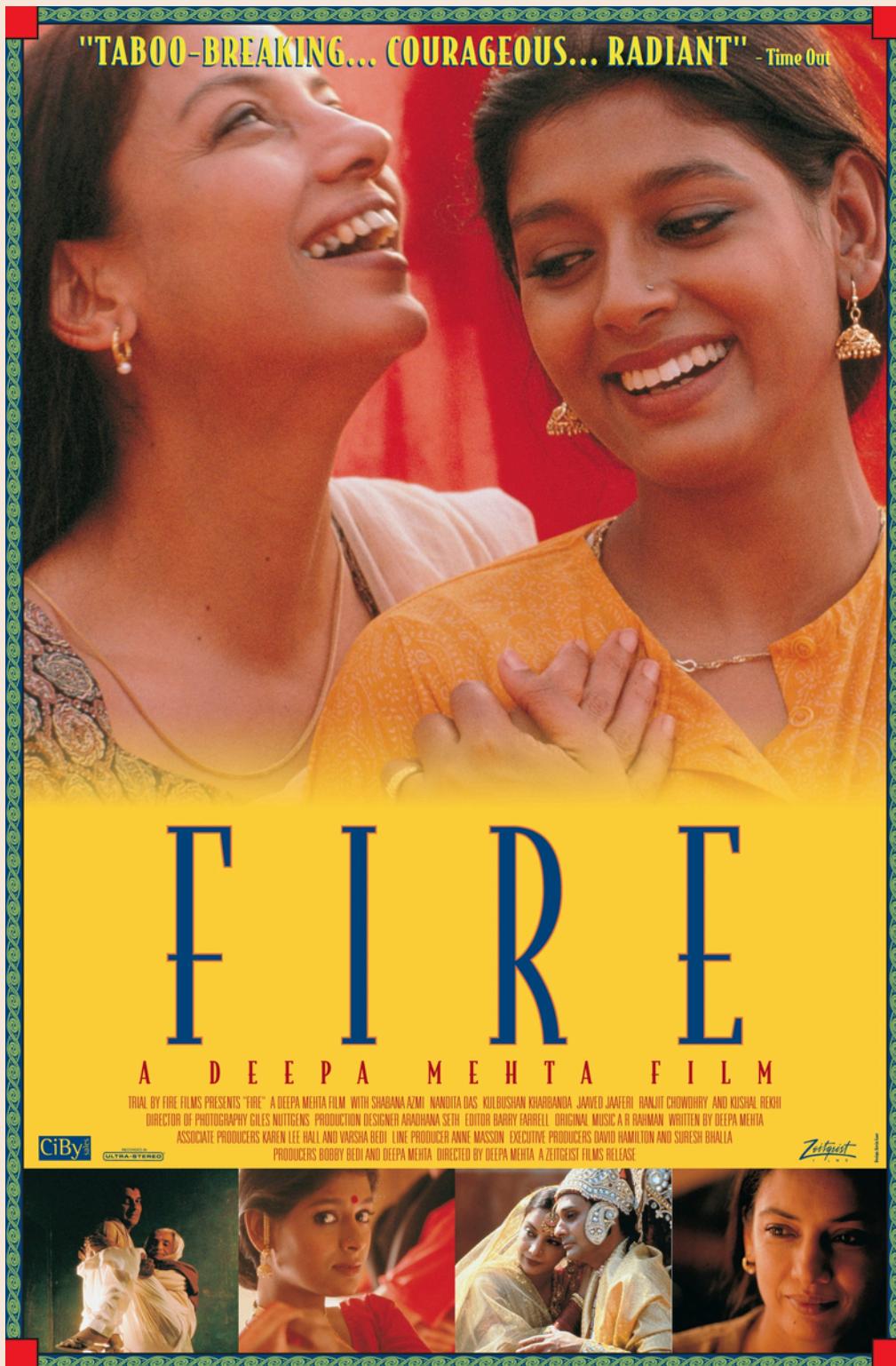
**"Pride Utsav '95" flyer, organized and presented by Trikone: Gay and Lesbian South Asians.**

**Image courtesy of The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center, and published via the Digital Transgender Archive.**



**"Gender Mischief," Trikone Magazine, Vol. 14, No. 3. July, 1999.**

**Image courtesy of The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center, and published via the Digital Transgender Archive.**



Poster for Deepa Mehta's *Fire* (1996).

Poster image created by Zeitgeist Films, courtesy of IMDb (Internet Movie Database).

THE SOUTH ASIAN LESBIAN & GAY ASSOCIATION AND THE AUDRE LORDE PROJECT PRESENT

# COLOR ME QUEER ON THE PIER

Please contact archive@saada.org for permission

OUR 6TH ANNUAL QUEER PEOPLE OF COLOR PRIDE DANCE | 6.23.01 | 10PM | THE FRYING PAN @ PIER 63

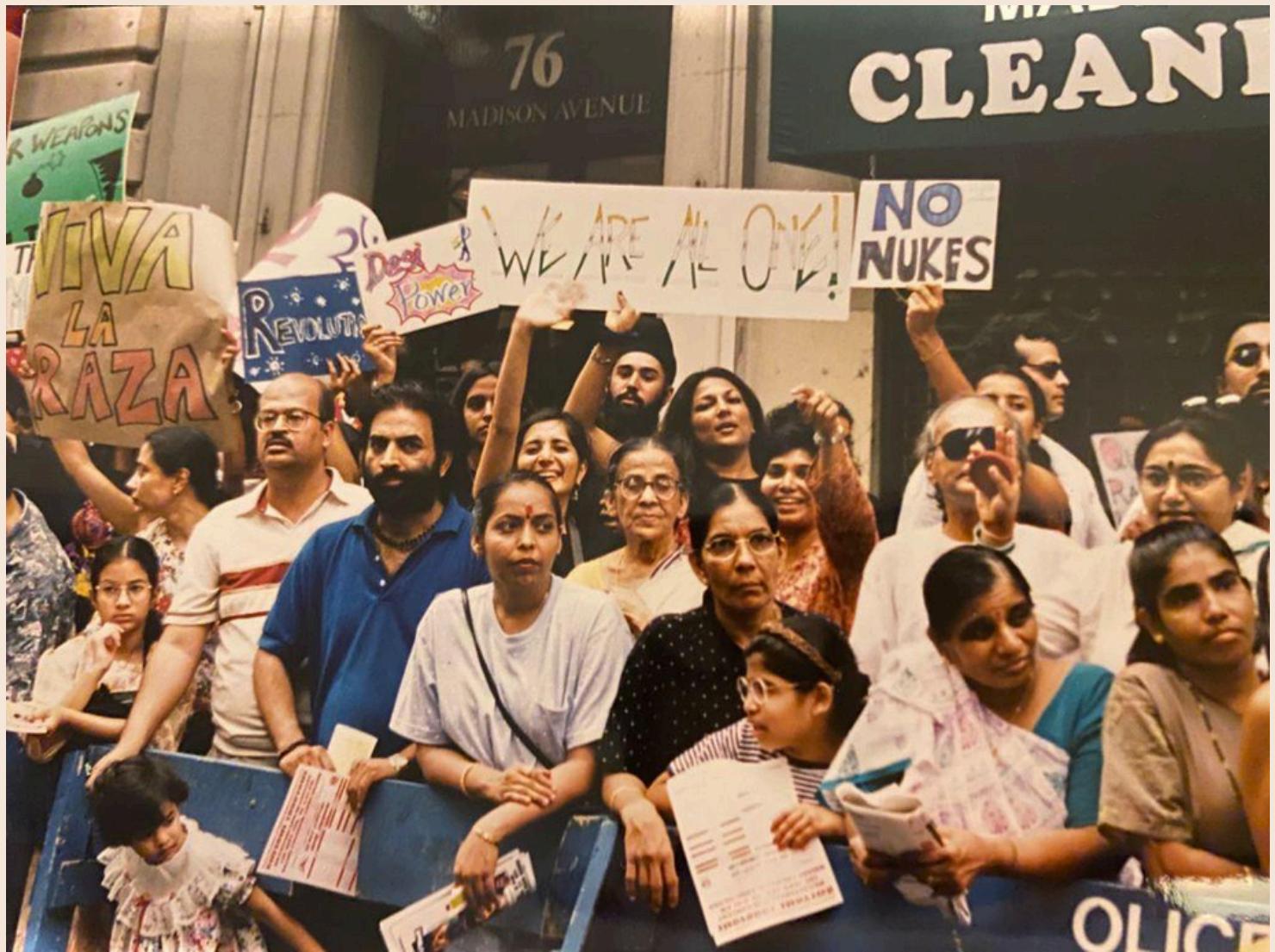
**A promotional flyer for “Color Me Queer on the Pier.”**

**Flyer jointly created by SALGA/Audre Lorde Project, image courtesy of and  
licensed through SAADA.**



**Members of Youth Solidarity Summer on their way to protest 1999's India Day Parade.**

**Photos taken by and permissions granted by Sangeeta Kumat.**



**Members of Youth Solidarity Summer holding signs and protesting  
1999's India Day Parade.**

**Photos taken by and permissions granted by Sangeeta Kumat.**

## TAKE A STAND AGAINST HOMOPHOBIA, SEXISM, AND CLASS BIAS

The South Asian Lesbian and Gay Association (SALGA) will hold a press conference/community education panel to address the Federation of Indian Association's (FIA) refusal to allow SALGA to participate in the 1997 India Day Parade. Panelists will include members of SALGA, Workers Awaaz (a women's organization working on domestic violence and domestic workers issues), Asian and Pacific Islander Coalition on HIV/AIDS, Inc. (APICHA), and the South Asian Women's Creative Collective.

Since 1993, the FIA has excluded SALGA from participating in the India Day Parade. Over the years, FIA has used various spurious excuses to disguise their homophobic exclusionary policies. Despite the official positions that SALGA cannot march because it is not an FIA member organizations or because it is South Asian and not specifically Indian identified, the FIA's underlying homophobia is evident in the inconsistency of their stance. While refusing SALGA permission, FIA made allowances for other South Asian Identified and non-FIA member groups. Over the years, the FIA's ban has expanded to exclude feminist and HIV/AIDS activist groups that have supported SALGA's right to march.

Join the South Asian Progressive task force, a coalition of South Asian activists counteracting the FIA's perpetuation of homophobia, sexism and class bias by attending the press conference/community education panel at:

**The Brecht Forum**  
**122 W27th St, 10th Flr (btwn 6th and 7th Ave.)**

**Saturday August 16th, 6:30pm.**

**The panel will be followed by an alternative celebration/protest at the India Day Parade on Sunday, August 17th.**

**SALGA-NY** is a social and political group for lesbians, gay men, bisexual and transgendered people who trace their origin from countries such as Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Burma, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Tibet. For more info call: 212-358-5132

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**"Take a Stand Against Homophobia, Sexism, and Class Bias"**

**Flyer created by South Asian Progressive Task Force/SALGA-NY,  
image distributed by and licensed through SAADA.**



**Urvashi Vaid, then-executive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, protests a speech by President Bush on Thursday, March 29, 1990 in Arlington, Virginia, to the National Leadership Coalition on AIDS.**

**Image licensed via Associated Press/Dennis Cook.**

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**Thank you for  
reading!**

