

Dr. Afua Cooper Presents

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As part of their contribution to Black History month, Simon Fraser University's Tech Gallery has an exhibition entitled Black Communities of British Columbia that covers the period from 1858 to 2008. The curator of the show Dr. Afua Cooper gave the opening presentation to an overflowing audience. Dr. Cooper brings with her an extensive background in studies and published works related to Black History in Canada. She currently holds the Ruth Wynn Woodward Endowed Chair in the Women's Studies Department of SFU. Dr. Cooper is also known for her poetry that includes five published books, the latest, Copper Women and other Poems.

After this lecture, we come to know that the first migrants that escaped to Canada from the United States settled in Nova Scotia, did not have the freedom that they had hoped for. In fact in 1792 a floata of 15 ships carrying 1200 loyalists migrated to Sierra Leone due to the discrimination. Governor Douglas invited blacks from California to Vancouver Island before confederation. He was able to successfully argue that there were loyalists that wanted to join the confederation of Canada.

Dr. Cooper commented that the interviewers regarding her show kept asking the same question: Why do we not know much about Black History? Dr. Cooper offers that in our Canadian history books the black history is erased and that most Canadians think of themselves as being white and when we do celebrate multiculturalism it is on a superficial basis of experiencing the food, clothing and drink but not the depth of the different cultures. Dr. Cooper would like it if we could progress to have a polycentric approach to history, that our history books should reflect the black history and that research projects through universities be continued.

The Black Communities of British Columbia: 1959 to 2008 will be displayed until May 10, 2009.