A Reading and Talk by

Oonya Kempadoo

followed by discussion

Wednesday, April 4, 2012
4:15 pm
501 Cathedral of Learning

Oonya Kempadoo was born in England of Guyanese parents and raised in Guyana. She has lived briefly in Europe, St Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago, and currently resides in Grenada. Kempadoo began writing in 1997, producing *Buxton Spice*—a semi-autobiographical account of a rural coming of age. *Buxton Spice* was published in the UK in 1998 and in the US in 1999. It has also been published in six foreign language editions in Europe. Her second novel *Tide Running* is set in contemporary Tobago and is a vernacular account of a young Tobagonian's intimate, ultimately disastrous intersection with a wealthy interracial couple and the predicament of a young society looking to America for fantasies and heroes. It also raises unsettling questions about relationships, wealth and responsibility, racial, cultural and class differences. It was published in the UK in 2001 and won a Casa De Las Americas prize in 2002. It was well received on both sides of the Atlantic, and Oonya was named a "Great Talent for the 21st Century" by the Orange Prize judges. Kempadoo has just completed a screenplay adaptation of *Tide Running* for a feature film. Her “works-in-progress” include *All Decent Animals* (working title), a novel about loyalties, love, contrasting cultures and the Caribbean’s underworld of sexuality and HIV/AIDS, and a non-fiction narrative based on documenting and then voicing an eighteen year old Grenadian girl’s life story of sexual abuse, violence, rape, love, sexuality and motherhood. It reflects her own and local perceptions of what is considered abuse or normal, and contrasts these with institutional and foreign views. Oonya was awarded a fellowship for the International Writer’s Program at the University of Iowa in 2011.

Critical Praise for Kempadoo’s Work:

About *Buxton Spice*


‘Oonya Kempadoo has written a sexy, stirring, richly poetic semi-autobiographical first novel.’ **The Wall Street Journal**

‘As juicy and ripe as the fruits drooping from the Buxton Spice Mango tree . . . Kempadoo’s Caribbean argot is precise and fluid, enriching this debut with bawdiness, violence and raucous humor.’ **Los Angeles Times**

About *Tide Running*

“As with *Buxton Spice*, . . . what makes *Tide Running* really extraordinary is its style. Kempadoo draws her characters and settings with such vivid strokes that her language leaps off the page. . . .If she expands on the promise shown by *Tide Running*, it seems likely that Oonya Kempadoo will soon be joining their (Derek Walcott and Jean Rhys.) ranks.” **The Times (UK)**

"With a finely tuned ear for the cadences of the Caribbean, . . . Kempadoo succeeds in turning an unsettling tale into an exploration of the global politics of desire.” **The New Yorker**

"*Tide Running* is a decided leap forward, a tour-de-force of imagination in its inhabiting of the souls of the islands’ marginalized and dispossessed young men, it shares with its predecessor a fascination with the permutations of a spoken language.” **The Los Angeles Times**

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