ABOUT THE SYMPOSIUM

This symposium celebrates the life, work, and influence of the poet and teacher Agha Shahid Ali. A former Hamilton College professor, National Book Award nominee, and beloved poet of Kashmir and America, Shahid brought to our attention not only a global perspective on poetic language and forms, but also a profound respect for poetry's importance in the world. Like the English Romantic poet Percy B. Shelley, Shahid believed that poets were the world’s “unacknowledged legislators.” In this regard Shahid’s volume “The Country without a Post Office” stands as an exemplary volume of work in a brilliant career.

Along with an exhibition of materials from Special Collections in Burke Library and a chance to see and hear Shahid reading his poems in the Digital Humanities Center, the symposium includes a panel discussion on Shahid and Kashmir by distinguished artists and scholars.

The Beloved Witness Project would not have been possible without the generous donation of Shahid’s papers and manuscripts by his brother Iqbal Agha Ali and sisters Hena Ahmad and Sameetha Agha Murphy.

The events of this symposium are dedicated to them and the memory of their brother Shahid.

THANK YOU TO THE SPONSORS OF THIS SYMPOSIUM:

- The Office of the Dean of the Faculty
- Digital Humanities Initiative (DHi)
- English and Creative Writing Fund for International Writers
- Burke Library and Information Technology Services
- Asian Studies

The Beloved Witness Project:
Agha Shahid Ali and Kashmir
September 19 - 20, 2014
Hamilton College
The Beloved Witness project is a Mellon-funded digital archive of the video-taped readings, personal documents, letters, and manuscripts of Kashmiri-American poet Agha Shahid Ali (1949-2001). New technologies will organize, display, and allow interaction with the archive from multiple formats and devices, including materials for mobile devices. Our aim is to show how technology might be used to reveal what is unique in a poet’s oeuvre and how teaching and literary scholarship in a digital environment allow a new globalized approach to poetry and culture. Ali’s life and work offer an exemplary model for humanists to bear “witness” to a world of lost tribes, of political and ethnic conflicts, of the pain of exile and of the possibility for transformation and reconciliation.

The archive is a collaborative effort which will expand through contributions of letters, documents, critical perspectives and creative responses from colleagues, friends and readers of Shahid’s works. If you have any materials to contribute or if you would like more information, please contact the project directors:

Hena Ahmad (hahmad@truman.edu), or Patricia O’Neill (poneill@hamilton.edu)

The Beloved Witness Project is part of the Digital Humanities Initiative (DHi) at Hamilton College. For more information about DHi, please visit us on the web at: www.dhinitiative.org/about

http://asa.dhinitiative.org