

# The Immigration Museum Project – CHARM Vic EXHIBITION DETAILS –UPDATE NOV2005 “Beyond the postcard image...”

The exhibition is starting to take shape, the following information should give you an idea of what the look and feel is about. Please note that our original submission has been refined and streamlined to focus on pertinent, unique and common issues within our community. This has been done after careful consultation with the Immigration Museum, basically these are the themes they would like to see us focus on for a successful and interesting, to some extent “controversial” exhibition.

We want to give the community another opportunity to have their say and input before the detailed research and writing starts. If you have any questions, concerns or suggestions we would like to hear from you by the 20<sup>th</sup> December 2005.

## **Exhibition details:**

### **INTRO PANEL (Entrance corridor wall- 20 words only)**

- Overview/brief about exhibition focus

**Text panel 1: Brief history of settlement; the roots of the population; the language diversity**

**Photo collage: Mauritians’ many faces, Use Lindsay photos and other photos available and put forward by community members**

**Use various illustrations – Ideas & suggestions are welcome?**

## **Themes:**

### **The background**

In a process lasting almost 400 years, the colonisation of the once-uninhabited Indian Ocean island of Mauritius brought together in one society people from Europe (mainly but not only France), West and East Africa, Madagascar, India, China, and the European colonies of the East and West Indies — Mauritius has been, from its very beginnings, an immigrant society and an example of an evolving multiethnic and multilingual society.

Today, migrants from Mauritius make up sizeable communities in Melbourne (c.8000) and Sydney (c.5000) with smaller groups in other part of Australia. From their experience all Australians can learn something about the benefits

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to be gained and the challenges and dangers to be faced by those living in a multicultural society.

**From ‘Too dark, won’t fit in’ to ‘Where are you from?’ early Mauritian immigrants’ experience of the White Australia policy; and the still common experience of Australian Mauritians of being ‘hard to place’**

## **The benefits (of growing up in a multicultural society)**

### ***Social***

People born in Mauritius necessarily learn from a young age to accommodate and manage ‘difference’, and they understand the importance and the benefits of getting on with people from different ethnic and religious backgrounds. These attitudes and skills have probably helped Mauritians to adjust quickly to life in Australia and to fit in. Mauritians have been quick to recognise the policy of ‘multiculturalism’ as practised in Australia.

### **The “Downside” of migration:**

Include the views/opinions of those who after migrating to Aust returned to M for various reasons such as:

Life too hard, weather too hot/cold, wife didn't want to work, husband still had his job waiting for him in M, children became sick, etc.

### **Briefly introduce themes on other panels:**

**Language spoken, traditional food, sega and dance here then address in detail on next panels**

### ***DID YOU KNOW THAT? Use TBC***

- *Before sugar was grown in Queensland, Australia obtained its sugar from Mauritius*
- *At one time the Catholic Church in Australia was administered from Mauritius*
- *Matthew Flinders, the man who named Australia, was imprisoned in Mauritius for seven years*
- *Mauritians dug for gold in Victoria in the 1850s*
- *A Mauritian served with the AIF at Gallipoli during World War 1*

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## **Text Panel 2**

### **The challenges and dangers (of putting ethnicity first/of organising around ethnicity?)**

Most migration to Australia from Mauritius took place from the mid-1960s to the mid-1980s for very specific economic and political reasons. Explore underlying motivations such as better opportunities in education and employment, uncertainty and fear arising from racial tensions and racially motivated violence, particularly around Independence, from the late 1960s into the early 1970s.

Before 1948, only a small proportion of the Mauritian population could vote in elections. In 1948 a new Constitution was adopted which gave virtually all Mauritians the vote. The Mauritian political map changed immediately, with the status quo and vested interests challenged, new voices being heard, new political parties and new alliances formed. Then, in 1968, the country moved from being a British colony to becoming an independent nation.

In the 20 years between the advent of the vote for all and independence, Mauritius experienced a population explosion, with the growth rate moving from a stable 0.5% per annum before 1948 to almost 3% per annum by 1977. Competition for resources and jobs, which had always been tough, became even tougher. Many felt, reluctantly, that it was time to leave.

Although the many groups who had settled Mauritius all contributed to a unique Mauritian culture, in many ways they had resisted taking up a single national ‘Mauritian’ identity, preferring to maintain separate communal identities, based around religion (Catholicism, Hinduism and Islam) and ancestry (French, Creole and Indian primarily), coming together at school and at work, but being less willing to mix socially or to intermarry.

In a context of increasing economic and political uncertainty it is always possible, as we have seen in Australia both in the 1970s and recently, for ethnic and religious differences to be exploited and to become the focus of anxieties, and for minority groups either to be blamed for social ills or to perceive themselves as under threat. This is what happened in Mauritius as Independence approached, with political parties and alliances forming around ethnic allegiances, and competition, resentment and conflict between groups blowing up and eventually flaring into violence (on the eve of Independence –confirm details This set off a

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### “Beyond the postcard image...”

series of immediate panic-driven departures from the island, but also contributed to the emigration over the following 10 years of many Mauritians [CHECK %], mostly from the Franco-Mauritian and Creole communities, to Australia and other countries.

Include details of events around Independence, use photos/scanning of footage

Photos: Departures-

- reproduce departure scenes using Lindsay’s photos with his permission of course,
- seek photos/newspaper article about riots around that time, migration around that time

(use sound effects, people chatting, saying good bye, crying, laughing- cannot be used if using audio visual (AV) with young people and language) TBC

- Set the scene/what happened on that day based on stories of community members.- could include extract of these on panel
- Balance using visual effects- photos/footage
- **SEEK FOOTAGE FROM MBC OR GOVT ARCHIVES IF AVAIL**
- Collage/images: Contemporary newspaper reports of riots and violence
- A/V interviews: recollections and interpretations (could use extract on panels and keep for CD Rom/book project)
- **Important reminder:**

All scanning to be done at high resolution, 300 DPI no less than 600 (TBC)

By the end of the 1970s, the situation in Mauritius had stabilised and the economy had strengthened. By the 1990s, emigration to Australia had slowed to a trickle and many Australian Mauritians return to Mauritius regularly to visit family and friends. But many also have painful memories of how quickly ethnic differences can become the basis, even in a normally tolerant society, for division and conflict.

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**Text Panel 3 – Focus on food**

**Text Panel 4 – Focus on Dance**

**Text panel 5 – focus on music, traditional sega.**

**Text Panel 6 – Languages used**

**Also include A/V interviews – up to 8 mins maximum**

- **Focus on language use, cultural tradition, the old and the new. Young people talking about their identity. Interview young people re language use, have a discussion about this, use subtitles to translate (Can you help with this?)**
- **Could use studio recording (Radio station suggested by Maria, or perhaps various venues, community activities. Could sue sega background music when rolling credits eg Ti Marmites songs (including jeux de mots)**

## **Cultural and linguistic**

A number of hybrid cultural forms unique to Mauritius developed out of the encounter between the cultures of Europe, Asia and Africa, in particular:

- **Mauritian cuisine, showing a dominant Indian influence but also influenced by the culinary traditions of France, (Madagascar?), Africa and China and shaped by island reliance on seafood (and feral/introduced game?), a scarcity of local staples, dependence on a limited range of food imports, and exposure to the Indian Ocean spice trade routes**
- **Sega, both a musical form on a 6/8 beat and a dance form. Developed by the slaves, the modern dance is also influenced by the country and court dances of other countries, and makes use of colourful and distinctive costumes.**
- **Mauritian Creole a language specific to Mauritius and spoken by almost all Mauritians as either their first, second or third language.**

## **Creole, how is it used here?**

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**The facts and the myths about Creole; the linguistic debates and theories; Mauritians’ ‘cultural cringe’**

**The use of other languages: French, English, any others used here???**  
**Issues to explore:**

- Last time we had a talk back radio some people were for and others against the use of Creole & French in public. Seems this may not stem from the language medium itself, which is debatable, but all the other things/ issues/ perceptions (race, social status, education level etc) that is implied & applied when either language is spoken.
- We hear things like ‘li croire li trop blanc li cause francais or ‘li ene creole misere li pas con cause francais’. Things like you can’t/can join certain clubs /groups if you are this/that or if you’re not.
- We think we have left this type of bigotry behind in Mauritius, but have we really??
- **These vibrant cultural forms show what can happen when cultural traditions cross-fertilise, a process that is underway in multicultural Australia**

**Display objects:** Mother-and-baby grinding rocks, tawa, rechaud, pilon/mortier

- Segua costumes (Kristina’s flag colours costume, need another four to select from )
- Traditional instruments: ravane, maravane, others

**Do you have anything else to offer for these displays?**

**Sound track:** Segua music (tbc, can’t have whilst audiovisual is going, only have option to use one or the other, double check/ask again to confirm)

**Photos:** Segua performances, photos of traditional dishes/food

**Sirandanes/Jeux de mots** (Creole/French; Creole/English)

Could use extracts in text panel, when talking about language, give examples with translations. Could also include some on AV recording.

**RECIPE BOOKLETS (NEED TO BE COSTED) TBC THERE WILL BE SOME STRICT GUIDELINES TO FOLLOW, PERHAPS A LITTLE BOOKLET WE COULD PUT TOGETHER, 2 TO 4 pages. TBC**

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**EXHIBITION DETAILS –UPDATE NOV2005**  
“Beyond the postcard image...”

**Text Panel 6/7 (link to language panel TBC)**

**Australian Mauritians— a new identity?**

**Who and what is a Mauritian? Le ‘vrai mauricien’: is there such a thing? Is there such a thing as a ‘real Australian’? When do you become one? Who decides**

Muritians have embraced their Australian identities, taking out citizenship at a higher than average rate, and readily marrying Australians from other backgrounds

Some Mauritian immigrants still identify strongly with their ancestral identities, and some attempt to assert distinctions between those who are ‘true Mauritians’ and those who are not, based on ancestry and culture. But for many others—the majority?— migration to Australia has given them a chance to move beyond the restrictiveness of labels such as Franco-Mauritian, Indo-Mauritian, Sino-Mauritian, Creole, and instead to identify themselves in the Australian context as simply ‘Mauritian’ or ‘Rodriguan’.

**Other suggestions:**

- **For some former Mauritians the close sense of community is a positive, and so they continue to belong to Mauritian clubs or attend social functions.**
- **For some former Mauritians the small island community was seen as a negative because of obtrusiveness and gossiping that they experienced. They have chosen to leave that behind in their new country.**
- **The offspring of Mauritian migrants differ in their attitudes. Some embrace their parents’ cultural background, and take interest in Mauritian music, dancing, costumes and food. Others relate only to mainstream Australian culture, and show no interest in their Mauritian heritage.**
- **Some young people embracing the culture, their involvement and participation at community events on the increase, more groups forming. They are certainly being encouraged and supported by many community “elders”. Creating synergy, breaking down some of the barriers perhaps!!**

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(Discussed and suggested we could include the above in Audio Visual to be done)

- Include something here about cultural cringe: e.g. *:In the process many, particularly in the 2nd and 3rd generation, are reassessing the traditional view that older educated Mauritians have been taught to hold, of Mauritian culture and language as ‘vulgar’ and inferior*

## Issues already mentioned in earlier panel:

Last we had a talk back radio some people were for and against the use of Creole & French in public. It seems that it's not the language medium itself, which is debatable, but all the other things/ issues/ perceptions (race, social status, education level etc) that is implied & applied when either language is spoken.

We hear things like 'li croire li trop blanc li cause francais or 'li ene creole misere li pas con cause francais'. Things like you can't/can join certain clubs /groups if you are this/that or if you're not.

We think we have left this type of bigotry behind in Mauritius, but have we really??

**A/V interviews with young people? What they think about culture, ethnic identity. multiculturalism?**

**Display objects: Photos of community functions, involvement here of young and old.**

## Conclusion:

Despite differences we have managed to coexist more or less harmoniously. At the end of the day we have common links and bonds, whether it is the food we eat, the dances and songs we enjoy, the language we speak! We are all born in Mauritius or Rodrigues, this gives us the right to call ourselves Mauritians or Rodriguans. Our children born here are of Mauritian/Rodriguan descent and ancestry...

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**EXHIBITION DETAILS –UPDATE NOV2005**  
“Beyond the postcard image...”

**Other ideas (as proposed in original application):**

- Display/mini exhibition of Mauritian artists' paintings and sculptures (see La Faya DVD for more info). Clearly depict colours of Mauritius and would complement themes. **Not yet confirmed, is anyone interested?**
- Mini Festival, opening weekend/closing weekend: showcase of traditional dances, songs, sega, authentic Mauritian food tastings, etc  
Discovery day
- Sega/traditional instrument workshops, cooking workshops/demos over certain days

**Important Dates and upcoming tasks/commitments (as per meeting/  
Timeline Draft as at July 2005 provided by Maria and copies distributed  
to all 31 July 2005**

**Please note that 9 Dec 2005 meeting has been cancelled**

**Monday 16.1.06 @ 10.30 am - Next Scheduled meeting date**

Focus of meeting:

- Text development/review
- Discuss research
- Object gathering
- More about look and feel of exhibition

**By then we will need to provide:**

- Initial research based on decision made for each panels at meeting in Nov 05
- Draft text for each panel- panel development/review
- Complete and final list of objects, photos, images, articles, artefacts
- Also need clear photographs of these if not easily transportable
- AV

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**EXHIBITION DETAILS –UPDATE NOV2005**  
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**Friday 14 April 2006: Reviewed draft Text due to Maria (TBC at meeting in January 2006)**

**Friday 21 April 2006: Next scheduled meeting date, time and date to be confirmed at meeting in January or after.**

Focus of meeting:

- Discuss first draft submitted
- text panels and room brochure
- select and allocate images
- select signature images and confirm invitation text
- list of invitees
- PR Plan

**Friday 26 May 2006: Second draft exhibition Brochure text and text panels due to Maria**

**Friday 11 August 2006: Next scheduled meeting date, time, date and place TBC**

Focus of meeting:

- Discussion of Second draft (reviewed version of 1<sup>st</sup> draft as required in previous meeting)
- Exhibition brochure
- Text panels
- Meet with PR to discuss media plan and storylines

**Other Important Dates to remember:**

**Friday 18 August: all selected objects to be delivered to The Museum.** This is to be coordinated and arranged with interested parties prior to the date. All required authorisation forms, and paperwork to be completed and agreed beforehand. Make set time for delivery- clarify this with Maria

**Friday 1 September 2006: Final Draft exhibition Text due then**

**Monday 25 September 2006: 1<sup>st</sup> proof read of Exhibition Brochure and Text Panels**

**Fri 26 Oct 2006: 2<sup>nd</sup> proof read Exhibition brochure and text panels**

**OTHER:**

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The Immigration Museum Project – CHARM Vic  
**EXHIBITION DETAILS –UPDATE NOV2005**  
“Beyond the postcard image...”

**Between now and Nov 2006 CHARM will:**

- **seek sponsorships – Deadline 31 January 2006**
- **continue media campaign to increase awareness about the project and encourage community’s involvement, various options and aspects will be explored**
- **This will be an ongoing effort until the exhibition is up and running**
- **continue to liaise with community groups and individuals to encourage their involvement and gain their support**
- **This will be an ongoing effort until the exhibition is up and running**

**Do you have any suggestions? Can you assist? Interested to become a sponsor?**

**We also proposed to carry out associated activities at the museum, these are:**

- lectures
- demonstrations (cooking traditional dishes/traditional dance and songs)
- performances
- screening of videos/films about life here and in our country of origin – to show what aspects of the culture we have preserved
- Proposed Play and Book Launch

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The Immigration Museum Project – CHARM Vic  
**EXHIBITION DETAILS –UPDATE NOV2005**  
“Beyond the postcard image...”

In addition to an exhibition, we proposed to present the findings from the research in other ways:

- **Oral history book: as this will help unravel the mystery that has surrounded our integrated but shy community. We want to share our experience and contribution to the cultural landscape of this country with all Australians of today and tomorrow. The books will be available in paperback and on CD Rom (for younger generation/interactive and educational)**
- **a play that will epitomise this part of our history as migrants in our new homeland**

**These will only be pursued if**

- **time allows**
- **funding and sponsorships applied for are granted**
- **The community shows interest and supports this project**

**We can hold an exhibition in the Community Gallery from Wed 1 Nov 2006 until Sunday 11 Feb 2007, as long as**

- **we work within and meet strict deadlines set by the Immigration Museum Exhibition Manager (Copy available for your perusal)**
- **we follow the guidelines specified by the museum (copy available for your perusal)**

The Immigration Museum Project – CHARM Vic  
**EXHIBITION DETAILS –UPDATE NOV2005**  
“Beyond the postcard image...”

**So far we have had a few interested community members approach us.**

**However, we can't say that the response has been overwhelming since the July consultation. We appreciate that everyone has their own goals to achieve and life is so hectic for all of us these days. However we should not be too laid back, the clock is ticking, the countdown continues, before you know it time will run out and important deadlines could be missed. So ask yourselves**

**How can you contribute to your community project?**

**You can do so by providing the following (subject to terms and conditions as per Museum guidelines):**

- Artefacts
- Photographs capturing historical moments can include Independence Day celebrations, mass migration departure to Australia from Port-Louis, people boarding the tug boats with their belongings to join the ship such as Frederika, Patris and others, boarding the planes, family photos, life in Mauritius, Rodrigues and Seychelles and life here in Australia for the newly arrived migrants
- Textiles
- Can include costumes and embroidery: Traditional folkloric dance costumes including costumes that encompass our diverse identity
- Documents
- Shipping lists, tickets, boarding passes, British, Mauritian, Seychelles passports, testimonials, and oral histories
- Artworks
- Mauritian, Rodriguan and Seychellois cultures depicted through painting and sculpture

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The Immigration Museum Project – CHARM Vic  
**EXHIBITION DETAILS –UPDATE NOV2005**  
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**Other**

- **Your stories and experiences**
- Books about migration from these places of origin
- newspaper articles relevant to the exhibition theme
- old suitcases, crates used by you for your journey across
- home movies about family life, social, sporting and cultural events
- community achievers making major contribution to the Victorian community
- mementos that were taken on the journey to remind us of home
- You can also join the sub committee who will be working on this project

**What else?**

**You can also help us during the project in the following ways:**

- Carry out research and interviews in all states
- Raise funds for the project
- Review material and information collected
- Coordinate collection of exhibits
- Showcase your talents in art, music and dance
- **Playwriting and performing in a play**
- **Assist with the writing of a book and producing an oral history book- CD ROM**
- **Production of multimedia presentation**

The Immigration Museum Project – CHARM Vic  
**EXHIBITION DETAILS –UPDATE NOV2005**  
“Beyond the postcard image...”

**If you are interested to contribute in any way, now is the time!**

**If you know anyone who could help pass on our details and ask them to contact us by that date too**

- **Have you got any questions?**
- **Have you got any suggestions?**
- **Have you got any concerns?**

**We are here to listen and to answer these, please make the most of this opportunity.**

**This is your chance to have a say and to make a significant contribution to your community project.**

**This is your chance to:**

- **promote our community and our rich cultural heritage**
- **make our voices heard**
- **preserve our cultural heritage for future generations**

***“Together we can continue to make a difference & achieve more”***

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**Thank you for joining us today  
Have a pleasant afternoon  
and take these thoughts with  
you**

***“Yesterday is gone. Tomorrow  
has not yet come.  
We have only today.  
Let us begin”***

***“It is not how much we do,  
but how much love we put in  
the doing.  
It is not how much we give, but  
how much love  
we put in the giving”  
Mother Teresa***