



# AMERICAN CENTER NEWSLETTER

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The American Center

Colombo

August 2013

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## Smithsonian Curator Motivates Museum Communities in Sri Lanka and the Maldives



Karen Lee talked to museum professionals in Sri Lanka at the National Museum Auditorium.

Museum professionals in Sri Lanka and the Maldives engaged in professional development workshops conducted by Smithsonian Curator Karen Lee. The Public Affairs Section of the Embassy sponsored Ms. Lee's visit to help build capacity in the field of museum management.

The American Center, together with the Department of National Museums, organized a three day workshop from July 23 to 26 for museum professionals from across the island, including the Department of National Museums, the Department of Archeology, the Central Cultural Fund, the Central Bank, and the Numismatic Association. The workshop covered all aspects of museum management, including collection management, exhibition planning, and fund raising. Karen also conducted a public lecture on "Power of Curating: Making Museums Come Alive" at the National Museum Auditorium.

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## Upcoming Events . . . . .

### August 12, 2013, 4:00 pm

Public lecture on "My Life as a Photographer in America and Sri Lanka" by Mr. Michael Sarnacki @ the American Center Auditorium. <http://goo.gl/shZk69>

### August 14, 2013, 5:30 pm

Public lecture on "Right to Information in the Age of Instant Communication" by Mr. Kevin Goldberg @ the Kadrigamar Institute, Colombo. <http://goo.gl/WOvmC>.

### August 16, 2013, 9:00 am

Public lecture on "My Life as a Photographer in America and Sri Lanka" by Mr. Michael Sarnacki @ St. John's College, Jaffna. For more details call 021 2220665.

### August 17, 2013, 4:15 pm

Public lecture on "My Life as a Photographer in America and Sri Lanka" by Mr. Michael Sarnacki @ the American Corner in Kandy. For more details call 081 2203944.

### August 17, 2013, 10:00 am

Free screening of the movie "2001: A Space Odyssey" @ the American Corner in Jaffna.

### August 24, 2013, 10:00 am

Free screening of the movie "The Hunt for Red October" @ the American Corner in Jaffna.

### August 31, 2013, 10:00 am

Free screening of the movie "Inception" @ the American Corner in Jaffna.

## Iftar Events Hosted by the U.S. Embassy Colombo



Ambassador Sison and Deputy Chief of Mission William Weinstein delivered the welcome remarks at the Iftar event.

Deputy Chief of Mission William Weinstein hosted an Iftar meal at his official residence in Colombo on August 6. Many eminent Muslims from the Sri Lankan community attended the event, as well as religious leaders of other faiths.

Along with Mr. Weinstein, Ambassador Michele J. Sison welcomed the guests and gave brief remarks on the U.S. tradition of celebrating Iftar.

Meanwhile on July 23, U.S. Embassy Colombo organized an Iftar meal at the Islamia Home in Ratmalana.

The home has fifty children, all boys from 5 - 18 years, and have either no parents or a single parent. Public Affairs Officer Christopher Teal attended the event and engaged in conversation with the boys, along with other Embassy officials and their children. The staff at Islamia Home did a tour of the facility to show how the children study, work and live together in a caring environment. Following the tour, Embassy staff joined the group for an Iftar meal along with the boys.



Embassy officials and their children joined with the Islamia Home children for an Iftar meal.

## Award Winning Documentary "Our School" on Ethnic Segregation



Hana Kulhankova talked to the audience about the documentary film 'Our School'

On July 30<sup>th</sup> the American Center screened award-winning documentary film "Our School" to a packed audience, followed by a discussion led by Hana Kulhankova, Director of the *One World*

*International Human Rights Documentary Film Festival* in Prague. *One World* is currently the biggest human rights film festival in the world, organized by Czech NGO *People in Need*. Christopher Teal, Director of the American Center, welcomed the audience and introduced the speaker Hana Kulhankova. The audience included many university students, faculty, NGOs staff, activists, media and the public.

"Our School" is a captivating story about hope and race, touching on issues ranging from racism to public education and poverty, and the struggle to protect human rights. This documentary film follows three Roma (Gypsy) children in a rural Transylvanian village who are among the pioneer participants in an initiative to integrate the ethnically segregated Romanian schools. The screening ended with an interactive Q&A session on the right to education without discrimination and segregation.

## Presentation on Disaster Management - "Mapping the Last Mile"



Chris Elms, Information and Press Officer, introduced the speaker Sarah Stodder, Fulbright Research Scholar on her presentation 'Mapping the Last Mile'.

The American Center Colombo hosted a presentation on "Mapping the Last Mile" by Sarah Stodder, Fulbright researcher on July 1<sup>st</sup>. Her research was conducted in East Sri Lanka and explored how tsunami-affected villages and local

government officials interact to forge sustainable disaster resilience. Disaster preparedness at the village level--referred to in this study as the "last mile"--is a nexus of top-down strategies, such as nationwide Disaster Management Centre (DMC) programs, as well as bottom-up strategies, such as locally-designed flood resistance plans. Sarah shared her narrative piece of the stories of her field research in *From Bitter Lemons: A Journey Toward Disaster Resilience in Sri Lanka*, her first attempt at creative nonfiction writing. The presentation ended with an interactive discussion on Sarah's research. Participants included officials from the Disaster Management office, the NGO sector, students and the public.

## "Shooting Fish in a Barrel" – issues faced by Northern Fish Workers

The American Center Colombo hosted a public lecture on "Shooting Fish in Barrel" by Fulbright Research Scholar-Economic Development Ruth Canagarajah on July 18<sup>th</sup>. Her presentation was based on research carried out in the North where the region still has the lowest GDP in the country. The research analyzed the livelihoods of the most vulnerable in the sector, fish workers who are day-to-day laborers and depend on others for equipment. It specifically explored the ways in which self-employment has been used as a strategy among fishing families to augment family income. The program was well attended and concluded with a lively discussion.



Ruth Canagarajah, Fulbright Research Scholar presenting her research of Northern Fish Workers at the American Center, Colombo.

## Smithsonian Curator . . . . .

In Kandy, Ms. Lee conducted a program at the Dalada Maligava Museum for officers of the National and the International Museums focused on using technology in exhibitions. In Sigiriya, she worked with museum officials and site conservation and exploration officers to help them plan methods of marketing the UNESCO World Heritage Site to attract more visitors.

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The participants reported that they were inspired to apply the ideas they learned to create museums where people have fun while exploring cultural heritage.

## Open Mic Competitive Poetry Slam – ‘Season XII’



Section of the contestants of the season XII competition.

The American Center Colombo hosted “Poetry Slam - Season XII” on July 25, 2013. Twenty five poets enthralled the audience with emotional presentations of their original works. They covered various themes ranging from love to protecting natural resources, and the agony of loss. The

poets competed in two categories, 12 & under and 13 & above. “Judges' Choice” and “Audience Choice” winners were selected from both age categories. U.S. Embassy Colombo’s Cultural Affairs Officer Dawn Suni emceed the event. On behalf of the American Center, she presented certificates and gifts to the winners at the end of the program. Winners and runners-up received free lifetime membership to the American Center Library in Colombo and to American Corners in Kandy and Jaffna.

The American Center Colombo will continue to serve as a platform for talented young Sri Lankans to express themselves freely and creatively by hosting an ongoing series of poetry slam competitions every other month. Youth are encouraged to participate in these events. The American Center will hold the next Poetry Slam - Season XIII on September 27th.

A video clip of the poetry slam season XII will be posted soon on U.S. Embassy Colombo’s YouTube and Facebook pages.

## “Kick Like a Girl”

On August 2, 2013, the American Center Colombo hosted a basic soccer coaching for students of Ramanathan Hindu Ladies College. Dawn Suni, U.S. Embassy Colombo’s Cultural Affairs Officer, along with her children, engaged in an on-field basic coaching on Soccer. Mrs. Suni explained how girls sports are popular in the United States and screened the documentary video “Kick Like a Girl,” which shows how girls are empowered through sports. Then, students joined Mrs. Suni and her kids on the playing field for an hour of soccer coaching American style. Nearly 200 students participated and got to see first-hand how this popular American game should be played. Students and teachers expressed their gratitude to Mrs. Suni, her kids and the U.S. Embassy for arranging this

event to encourage girls to pursue athletics for fun and empowerment.



Students were trained on the basics.



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<http://www.facebook.com/usembassycolombosl>

## Public Lecture on Sea Turtle Conservation and Management in Sri Lanka



Christopher Elms, Information and Press Officer, welcomed the guests and introduced the speaker.

On June 27, the American Center Colombo hosted a presentation on "Sea Turtle Conservation and Management in Sri Lanka" by Thushan

Kapurusinghe, project leader and co-founder of the Turtle Conservation Project (TCP) in Rekawa, Tangalle. Mr. Kapurusinghe, who has extensive experience in marine and coastal resource management with community participation in Sri Lanka, gave a lecture and hosted a discussion covering various aspects of sea turtles, current threats, their conservation, and management. The U.S. Embassy-funded TCP is a project aimed at involving youth in environmental conservation through sports and culture.

A large number of participants including NGO representatives, school students and teachers participated in the presentation and discussion. Posters reading "Let's Protect Coral Reefs and Sea Turtles" were distributed to the school students who participated at the event as a follow up.

## Open Mic Competitive Poetry Slam at Zahira College

The American Center Colombo hosted a Poetry Slam on July 08, 2013 at Zahira College Colombo. Thirty students of Zahira College recited poetry on various themes, mostly in English and some in Tamil and Sinhala. The young poets enthralled the audience with readings of their original works. U.S. Embassy Colombo's Cultural Affairs Officer Dawn Suni emceed the event. At the end of the program, a "Judges Choice" and an "Audience Choice" winner were selected. Certificates and gifts were presented to the winners by Dawn Suni and Mr. Trizviiy Marikkar, the principal of Zahira College.

In addition to the awards, the winners received a free lifetime membership to the American Center

Library in Colombo and to American Corners in Kandy and Jaffna.



A student reciting a poem during the competition.

## English Teacher Training Workshops



On June 24-25th at the Royal College in Colombo, the American Center Colombo, together with Royal College, organized a two-day English Teacher Training workshop on "New Learning Environments: Activities and Techniques for Teaching English in the 21st Century" conducted by Jenise Rowekamp, a State Department English Language Fellow attached to the University of Ruhuna. Over 50 teachers from different schools participated in the workshop.

A similar workshop organized by the American Center for Access teachers was held on June 26<sup>th</sup> at the American Center Auditorium.

## American Center Photography Competition

U.S. Embassy Colombo conducts monthly photography competitions for students between 12-18 years of age. Winning entries will show creativity, skill, and an ability to capture a subject based on a monthly theme. Both electronic and hard copies of photographs will be accepted. First, second and third place awards will be given in the following age categories:



- 12-14 years
- 15-16 years
- 17-18 years

### Photography Competition – June–August 2013

If interested, please submit photographs on the theme **“Celebrate World Environment Day.”** Along with the photograph, entries must include a brief explanation of the subject and why it was selected. Please send your photograph, with your details certified by your school principal or class teacher to the below address:

Photography Competition: June–August 2013  
American Center, 44, Galle Road  
Colombo 03

You may also send your photograph electronically to the email address [amcentersl@state.gov](mailto:amcentersl@state.gov) Please include your Name, Age Category, Address, Contact Details, School and Name of the School Principal.

Our panel of judges will assess all entries and then select first, second, and third place photographs for

each age category. Winners will receive a collection of American literature, a life-time membership to the American Center Library, and a certificate signed by the U. S. Ambassador. Winners will be invited to attend an award ceremony at the American Center in Colombo.

### Rules and Conditions

1. Submitted electronic images must be no larger than 1024 pixels width & 720 pixels in height and are not to exceed 500kb in size.
2. Photographs can be either black and white or color.
3. If sending printed photographs, the size should be at least 4”x 6”.
4. All entries must be submitted on or before August 31, 2013.
5. You may enter a maximum of 3 photographs in the competition.
6. Please do not post any photographs that are obscene, discriminatory, or which otherwise violate any local or international laws.
7. The photographer must be the sole author and owner of the photo’s copyright entered in the competition.
8. By entering this contest, the photographer agrees that any winning photograph submitted may be used by the American Center/U.S. Embassy Colombo solely for the purposes of this competition or future contests and no other purpose. These uses include: displaying the entries in the American Center lobby, on the official website, on the U.S. Embassy Colombo Facebook page, and cropping and re-sizing the image as necessary to fit pre-defined formats for the competition.

### Information Officer reads to Children at “Readers are Leaders” Reading Club



In an effort to develop English reading skills for young adults, the American Center Colombo library has been holding monthly reading clubs named “Readers Are Leaders” since January 2010. On July 27, 2013, Juliana Spaven, Information Officer at the U. S. Embassy Colombo, read passages from the book, “The Borrowers” to children aged 10-15 years, while a reader from the Asia Foundation read from “The Mystery of the Gold Pen” to children 10 years and under. Following the readings, the movie version of the “Borrowers” was screened. Children were also invited to share their reading experiences, during the reading hour. According to parents of the reading club members, “Readers are Leaders” creates a personal experience while strengthening language skills. Come join!

# Film Screenings at the American Center

## August 2013

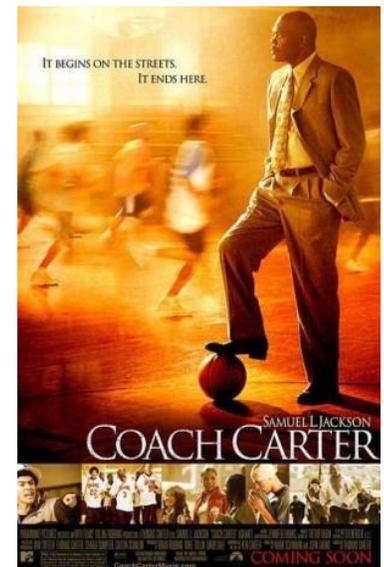
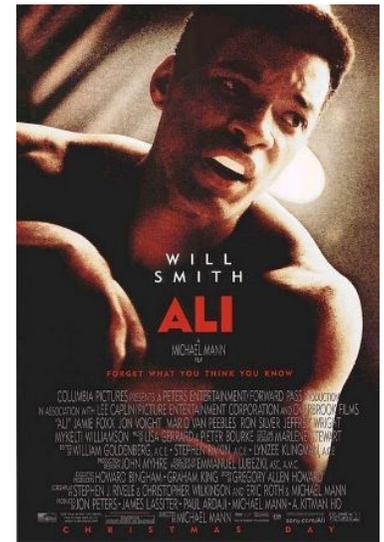
### August 13 - Ali (157 minutes)

Notoriously obsessive director Michael Mann and star Will Smith devoted nearly two years and over \$100 million dollars from the coffers of Columbia Pictures and other financiers to create this biography of boxing great Muhammad Ali, which focuses on the ten-year period of 1964-1974. In that time, the brash, motor-mouthed athlete quickly dominates his sport, meets and marries his first wife, converts to Islam, and defies the United States government by refusing the draft for duty in Vietnam. His world heavyweight champion title thus stripped from him entirely for political reasons, the champ sets about to win back his crown, culminating in a legendary unification bout against George Foreman in Zaire, dubbed the "Rumble in the Jungle."

### August 27 - Coach Carter (136 minutes)

*Coach Carter* tells the inspiring true story of controversial high school basketball coach Ken Carter (Samuel L. Jackson). Making headlines for his emphasis on the importance of academics over athletics, Carter requests all the members of the team to sign contracts, promising to maintain a certain grade point average. When the players fail to live up to this agreement, Carter benches the entire team, locking the gym and forfeiting games to prove his point. This infuriates the community who sees this as a hindrance to the future professional athletic careers of the players. Through hard work and dedication, Carter eventually gets his point across to his team and the community, going above and beyond to ensure a solid academic future for his team.

Movies start promptly at 6:00pm every Tuesday. Seating is limited and is first-come, first-served. Please contact the American Center at [amcentersl@state.gov](mailto:amcentersl@state.gov) or at (11) 249-8146 with any questions. Entrance free !

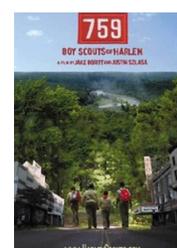
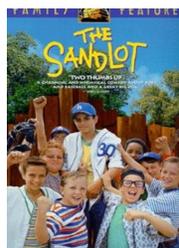


## Film Screenings for Youth @ the American Center

August 17, 3:30 pm - **The Sandlot**

August 24, 3:30 pm - **Diary of a Wimpy Kid**

August 31, 3:30 pm - **Boy Scouts of Harlem**



Every Saturday at 3:30 pm