



Pacific History Association

The Pacific History Association mourns the loss of its former president Brij V. Lal.

Brij Lal (1952-2021), was a respected Pacific historian who specialised in the history of Indian indentured labour and the broader Pacific region. He was born on 21 August 1952 in Labasa in Fiji, and passed away on 25 December 2021 in Brisbane, Australia at the age of 69 years.

Brij was educated at the University of the South Pacific, the University of British Columbia and the Australian National University. He went on to teach history at USP, the University of Papua New Guinea, the University of Hawai'i and the ANU where he was appointed Professor of Pacific and Asian History before eventually retiring in 2016.

Significantly, Brij was a member of the Fiji Constitution Review Commission in the mid-1990s. He was the founding editor of *The Contemporary Pacific* (Honolulu), *Conversations* (Canberra) and a long-term member of *The Journal of Pacific History's* editorial board. Brij was the founding Director of The Centre for the Contemporary Pacific at ANU.

He published prolifically, producing more than 17 books, multiple book chapters and journal articles. His many honours and awards include being made a Fellow of the Australian Humanities Academy in 1996, and receiving the Centenary Medal of the Government of Australia for contribution to humanities in 2001 and the Pacific Distinguished Scholar Medal in 2005. He was made an Officer of the Order of Fiji, and a Member of the Order of Australia in 2015.

As well as being a friend, colleague, mentor/supervisor, editor and source of inspiration to many Pacific historians, Brij served as the PHA's President from 2000 to 2004. His first PHA conference was in 1982. One of his most recent involvements was to deliver one of the PHA's 2020 "Across Covid Seas" seminars, "'A Time Bomb Lies Buried': The Road to and From Fijian Independence' (published by the *Journal of Pacific History* in 2021 as 'Of Ruptures and Recuperations: Fiji's Fifty Years of Independence').

In their 2017 book, *Bearing Witness: Essays in honour of Brij V. Lal*, editors Doug Munro and Jack Corbett write that 'Brij's work, always contemporary in its outlook, always pungent with political overtones, captured the ideas, individuals and events who were at the heart of a particular postcolonial moment' (p.3). Brij will be dearly remembered by multiple communities for his 'massive contribution to scholarship, for your friendship, and for the memories' (p.7).

Brij is survived by his dear wife Padma and two children.

The PHA Executive
28 December 2021