

SOUNDSCAPES/DEVON

Once heavily populated by Russian Orthodox Jewish families and now the center of the Chicago's South Asian community, the stretch of Devon Avenue between Western Avenue and California Avenue is peppered with storefronts like Kashmir Sweets, Jerusalem Kosher Restaurant, Bombay Video Palace, Bismillah Bakery, and Delhi Darbar Kabob House. Walking the street, the pulse of music from the latest Tamil film fuses strangely with the honeyed waft of Shabbat challah bread, and both are interrupted by the hip beats of DJ Rekha hoppin' off a passerby's P2P device. This year, South Asia Outreach partnered with this community to aurally capture the vitality of its cultures. The University of Chicago was uniquely positioned to offer technical and artistic expertise to drive a creative endeavor in collaboration with youth and community organizations who offered local competency. South Asia Outreach, the Department of Music, and the Arts Council at the University of Chicago teamed up with the Indo-American Center, the Indo-American Heritage Museum, and students of Mather and Lane Tech High Schools to create a bank of audio recordings. This audio bank, termed Soundscapes/Devon, includes oral histories, conversations, and ambient sounds that document and interpret the cultural vitality of Devon Avenue, one of North America's largest immigrant neighborhoods. Special thanks go to Ritwik Banerji, Karishma Desai, Kristina Wood, Lily Wohl, Monica Mays, Eric Usner, Kaley Mason, Sravan Kannan, and Eliza Wilson.

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We work with teachers at all levels to provide them educational resources and assist them in curriculum development. Some of our projects include:

- ~ Biannual newsletter for educators
- ~ Teachers' workshop every spring around a theme pertaining to South Asia
- ~ A large collection of educational materials available for loan, including books on a wide variety of topics, slide sets, curriculum units, comics, and interactive teaching kits
- ~ An ever-growing collection of films made in and about South Asia, ranging from popular Bollywood to rare historical fiction to contemporary documentaries. The film catalog is available online at:
<https://mahimahi.uchicago.edu/admin/salc/>
- ~ Bringing experts on South Asia and regional issues to K-12 classrooms
- ~ Special projects in service-learning and arts education

For anybody interested in finding out more about the region, publicizing South Asia-related events, or gaining access to the University of Chicago's excellent resources and expertise, South Asia Outreach is an invaluable point of contact.

SOUND- SCAPES/ DEVON

*An Aural Map of an
Immigrant Neighborhood*

PHOTO BY: CURRUN SINGH



Southern Asia
at Chicago

SOUNDSCAPES/DEVON: AN AUDIOWALK OF A CHICAGO NEIGHBORHOOD

1 A sound melange of street sounds, music heard in the neighborhood, the azan (Islamic call to prayer), and conversations with a 58 year old Indian man and the owner of a Jewish bookstore.

2 A conversation with a longtime Russian resident of Devon who enjoys people-watching along the street.

3 Two of the youth recount in translation the interview with the Indian man from the first track. He works at Patel Brothers, a popular grocery store where South Asians from the greater Chicago area come to shop for familiar foods.

4 A conversation with a manager of Sahil, a designer South Asian clothing store. Many wealthy South Asians in Chicago purchase their wedding attire in this one-of-a-kind store.

5 An Indian Christian man is interviewed about what he likes on Devon. He says he enjoys the community of "desis," or South Asians, and that he can find everything he needs on the street.

6 Several of the youth explore Jamia Masjid, the largest local mosque. On Friday afternoons, residents empty the streets for a special day of prayer.

7 One of the youth plays a game of Caram with his family at home. The game is similar to billiards, but played on a small, flat surface with one's fingers. Sinking the Queen is similar to sinking the 8 ball.

8 A news report about an accident at Western Avenue and Devon Avenue.

