

# Life, Labor and the Picturesque: A Colonial Imaginary of East Indians in the West Indies

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## **Keynote Address**

**Abstract:** The keynote address examines the race-gendering of Indian indentured workers in the colonial imaginary through which Jamaica was remade as a tourist destination during the late nineteenth century. It specifically examines the visual portfolio created by photographers of tropical fecundity and idyllic rural life that would dispel the perception of Jamaican plantations being ruined by the emancipation of slaves. While scholars are critical of the Oriental picturesque projected by these photographs, Professor Sharpe makes a case for a “coolie picturesque” depicting Asian Indians as an uprooted people who do not belong in the New World. This colonial imaginary continues to haunt the perception of Indo-Caribbeans as outsiders to the region even until today.