



Beyond Bias: GU-Q Book Launch Event Sheds Light on Racism and Family Generational Discord

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What happens when entrenched biases are confronted in families, can they grow and survive, or will they be destroyed? This was the heart of a riveting discussion between award-winning novelist Kamila Shamsie and esteemed writer and academic Dr. Carol Becker at Georgetown University in Qatar (GU-Q).

While spending time at GU-Q as a visiting fellow teaching a course on *Arts and Artists in Society*, Dr. Becker discussed her new book *George's Daughter* with Shamsie, GU-Q's Writer-in-Residence.

A deeply personal and evocative memoir set in the diverse neighborhood of Crown Heights, Brooklyn, populated with concentration camp and famine survivors immigrants following World

War II, *George's Daughter* details a generational rupture along racial and religious lines that threatens to break apart a family, offering a poignant meditation on inheritance, disillusionment, and reconciliation.

Shamsie, known for her incisive storytelling and exploration of historical and social themes, guided the discussion to uncover the book's resonant messages about the long process of reconciliation between opposing positions, finding the universal in the personal, and what it is to be an American.

The book's core message is about reconciling with family members when racism tears them apart. Disowned by her father for her romantic interest in a Black composer, Dr. Becker shared how her storytelling presents her father first as a beloved figure. "I didn't want people to meet my father as the racist person that he was, because that was just one aspect of the person he was," she shared, adding: "I wanted them to understand why I loved him, and why it was so devastating that we couldn't agree."

The deeply personal story found resonance with audiences, who positively responded to Dr. Becker's emotional bravery and complex characters. "If you are willing to go deep enough into your emotions, other people will connect to those emotions...people just put their own stories into the narrative," she shared.

Dr. Becker, a scholar and former Dean of Columbia University School of the Arts, also drew from her memoir of growing up and being educated in America to reflect on the importance of diversity and protecting educational access for all. “Education is the key to everything,” she said, adding: “The way we move civilization forward is through consciousness and learning how to think well,” she said

Acclaimed for her thought-provoking literary works, Dr. Becker has an extensive body of writing, including *Losing Helen*, *The Invisible Drama: Women and the Anxiety of Change*, and *Thinking in Place: Art, Action, and Cultural Production*. Becker’s reflections on art, culture, and personal history continue to inspire global audiences.

Now celebrating 20 years in Qatar, GU-Q is committed to providing opportunities for timely and thought-provoking dialogue with thought leaders such as Dr. Becker for students, faculty, and the wider community.