

## IACCGH "Women Mean Business"

### Chitra Divakaruni

Celebrity Novelist, Writer, Educator



Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is an award-winning and bestselling author, poet, activist and teacher of writing. Her work has been published in over 50 magazines, including the Atlantic Monthly and The New Yorker, and her writing has been included in over 50 anthologies, including The Best American Short Stories, the O. Henry Prize Stories and the Pushcart Prize Anthology. Her books have been translated into 29 languages, including Dutch, Hebrew, Bengali, Russian and Japanese, and many of them have been used for campus-wide and city-wide reads. Several of her works have been made into films and plays. She lives in Houston with her husband Murthy and has two sons, Anand and Abhay, who are in college. She loves to connect with readers on her Facebook page.

Born in Kolkata, India, she came to the United States for her graduate studies, receiving a Master's degree in English from Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio, and a Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley.

To earn money for her education, she held many odd jobs, including babysitting, selling merchandise in an Indian boutique, slicing bread in a bakery, and washing instruments in a science lab. At Berkeley, she lived in the International House and worked in the dining hall. She briefly lived in Illinois and Ohio, but has spent most of her life in Northern California, which she often writes about. She currently lives in Houston, Texas, which has begun to appear in her writing.

Divakaruni teaches in the nationally ranked Creative Writing program at the University of Houston, where she is the Betty and Gene McDavid Professor of Creative Writing. She serves on the Advisory board of Maitri in the San Francisco Bay Area and Daya in Houston. Both are organizations that help South Asian or South Asian American women who find themselves in abusive or domestic violence situations. She served on the board of Pratham, an organization that helps educate underprivileged children in India, for many years and is currently on their emeritus board.

Divakaruni has judged several prestigious awards, such as the National Book Award and the PEN Faulkner Award. She is, herself, the winner of a number of awards, including the American Book Award.

Two of her books, The Mistress of Spices and Sister of My Heart, have been made into movies by filmmakers Gurinder Chadha and Paul Berges (an English film) and Suhasini Mani Ratnam (a Tamil TV serial) respectively. A short story, "The Word Love," from her collection Arranged Marriage, was made into a bilingual short film in Bengali and English, titled Ammar Ma. All the films have won awards.

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### Neeta Sane

HCC Board Chair, HCC Trustee - District VII



Having established an impressive record of public service, Neeta Sane continues to dedicate herself to causes that make a difference in the growth of the community. In 2007, Neeta was elected to serve on the Board of Trustees of Houston Community College. In 2013, she was re-elected to serve her second six-year term on the HCC Board. In 2014, the HCC Board elected her to serve as the Board Chair. She is an entrepreneur, wife and mother who brings a unique blend of energy, ideas and fervor to serve the community with universal values. She is committed to "Student Success" and she works tirelessly on behalf of the constituents of the Houston Community College.

Neeta grew up in India with tremendous respect for America. To give back some of the blessings and opportunities that this country gave, Neeta combined her academic training with her passion to help her fellow citizens become well prepared and productive members of society. Neeta holds an M.S. in Chemistry and an MBA in Finance.

Neeta has received congressional recognition and she was honored by the State of Texas House of Representatives for her leadership and service to the community and Houston Community College. The Texas Legislature commended Neeta for her efforts to strengthen college's capacity to serve as a pathway to higher education and workforce training. She has served in several organizations ranging from American Association of University Women to Super Neighborhood Council to YMCA and has received recognitions for her caring and effective leadership. As a member of National Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi, Neeta is committed to advancing educational opportunities for students to succeed in the 21st century. She has hosted regional workforce summits, Youth Leadership Summit for Early College High Schools students and has launched scholarship programs to inspire students to excel in education. She has also been leading initiatives to help foster diversity and inclusion for people from all walks of life. In 2009, Neeta received DiversityFirst award from an established nonprofit organization, Texas Diversity Council, and she continues to serve as VP – Youth Outreach for National Diversity Council.

Today, as a business owner, Neeta leads a management consulting firm. Her business acumen as well as her extensive experience makes her prepared to forge a meaningful role in workforce development. She is committed to establishing stronger business partnerships for a mutually beneficial educational and workforce environment in the community.

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## IACCGH WOMEN MEAN BUSINESS FEBRUARY 24, 2015



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**Neeta Sane**  
Former Chair, HCC Board of Trustees

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