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Transient servitude: migrant labour in Canada and the apartheid of citizenship

HARSHA WALIA

Abstract: Shifts in Canada's immigration policy, most recently linked to the Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP) with the US and Mexico, have created an increased reliance on temporary migrant workers, who constitute a disposable workforce, driven from their own countries by the same forces of neoliberal capitalism which foster their super-exploitation in the Canadian labour market. In this article, the operation of two migrant worker programmes, the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (SAWP) and Live-in Caregiver Program (LCP), are considered in the context of the province of British Columbia. The various means by which migrant workers are maintained in a state of vulnerability, available as a pool of cheap labour but excluded from belonging to the nation, are discussed. The article concludes by examining examples and further possibilities of alliances across social movements in BC in order to advance the struggle for human dignity.

Keywords: borders, Live-in Caregiver Program, migrant rights, Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program, Security and Prosperity Partnership

The number of migrant workers in the Canadian province of British Columbia (BC) has doubled over the past five years, spurred on by the province's construction boom, the 2010 Olympics, trans-provincial transport of the Alberta Tar Sands,

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as well as growth in extractive and mining industries. In Canada, migrant worker programmes involve being tied to the importing employer; low wages, often below the official minimum, and long hours with no overtime pay; dangerous working conditions; crowded and unhealthy accommodation; denial of access to public healthcare and employment insurance, despite paying into the programmes; and being virtually held captive by employers or contractors who seize identification documents.¹ It is their temporary legal status that makes migrant workers extremely vulnerable to abuse; any assertion of their rights leads not only to contract termination but also deportation. Migrant workers thus represent the 'perfect workforce' in an era of evolving global capital-labour relations: commodified and exploitable; flexible and expendable. The exceptional freedom of globalised capital stands in stark contrast to the restrictions on those migrant workers whose precarious labour secures corporate profits. And the absence in Canada's media of sensationalised stories of workplace raids, massive round-ups or overflowing detention centres does not point to the country's having a humane immigration policy; rather, Canadian migration policy is the result of a perfected system of social control, containment and expulsion.

Canada formally institutionalised its foreign contract labour programmes through the Non-Immigrant Employment Authorization Program (NIEAP) in 1973. Shortly after the NIEAP was introduced, most workers began to enter Canada as 'unfree' wage workers.² In Canada today, more people are admitted annually under Temporary Employment Authorizations (238,093 in 2004) than as permanent residents (235,708 in 2004). In 2006, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) reported admitting 112,658 new migrant workers, representing a 13 per cent increase from 2005.³

Migrant worker programmes are the flip side of the transnational phenomenon of capitalist outsourcing. Adriana Paz argues that such programmes depend on huge surpluses of labour from the South that free-trade capitalism has itself displaced.⁴ That the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) has displaced over one million Mexican farmers and forced over fifteen million Mexicans into poverty has been extensively documented; many of these displaced people now work as undocumented workers in the low-paying sectors of the US and Canadian economies. As William Robinson puts it, 'the transnational circulation of capital and the disruption and deprivation it causes, in turn, generates the transnational circulation of labor. In other words, global capitalism creates immigrant workers ... In a sense, this must be seen as a coerced or forced migration, since global capitalism exerts a structural violence over whole populations and makes it impossible for them to survive in their homeland.'⁵ Similarly, McKenzie Wark writes that: 'Migration is globalisation from below. If the "overdeveloped" world refuses to trade with the underdeveloped world on fair terms, to forgive debt, to extend loans, to lift trade barriers against food and basic manufactured goods, then there can only be an increase in the flow of people.'⁶ And Canadian corporations are among the most aggressive foreign investors in Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. From Guatemala to India, Canadian corporations, especially mining firms, have been responsible for environmental

destruction, human and labour rights violations and forced displacement of surrounding communities.⁷

Those *displaced* by Canadian trade and foreign policy are made perpetually *displace-able* by Canadian immigration and labour policy. Border controls are deployed against those whose recourse to migration results from the free licence afforded to capital to ravage entire economies and communities in the global South. While borders were essential to unify national markets in nascent capitalism, today they are used to create differential zones of labour and surplus capital, in which cheap, temporary workforces are used to attract investments. Harold Troper notes that the denial of legal citizenship to migrant workers allows states to accumulate domestic capital by 'in-gathering of off-shore labour' in order to compete in the global market.⁸ Despite its rhetoric, global capital does not aim at the elimination of national borders; rather, the border regime legalises 'foreign and temporary' worker programmes for the benefit of capital interests. The role of the nation state remains pivotal in a globalised economy, providing the principal means for disciplining the workforce.

The relationship between *exploitable* and *disposable* labour in Canada has developed over the past century. Up until the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, indentured servants working off debt bondages from England accompanied White settlers. The enslavement of Indigenous and Black people soon replaced indentured servitude as a preferred form of permanent bonded labour. With the growing abolition sentiment, transient servitude as a profitable form of labour began to develop. Transient servitude, especially in the form of (im)migrant labour, had many of the advantages of slave labour, as employers maintained control of both the labour *as well as* the labourer.⁹

One example of indentureship in Canada was the estimated 17,000 Chinese railway workers, who, during the late 1800s, risked death and starvation on boats from China to come to BC to build the Trans-Canada Railways; they were forced to work in dangerous and deplorable working conditions. Chinese coal miners earned \$1 a day compared to the \$2.50 earned by White workers and an estimated 1,000–3,500 died during the railway's construction.¹⁰ And these workers were not allowed to bring families, because the Canadian government and contractor expected the workers to return upon the end of the contract.

Today, the denial of legal citizenship through temporary migrant worker programmes ensures legal control over the disposability of labourers, which, in turn, embeds exploitability of labour as an inherent feature of such programmes. Migrant worker programmes allow for capital to access cheap labour that exists under precarious conditions, the most severe of which is the condition of being deportable. This assures a pool of highly exploitable labour, excluded from the minimal protections of the welfare state, and readily disposed of without consequences.

The Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program

Historically, Canada's agricultural sector has relied on marginalised groups to supply labour. Farm work is one of the top five most dangerous sectors of work

in Canada, with an overall annual rate of 11.6 deaths per 100,000 farmers.¹¹ Around 1900, as family farms expanded to larger commercial operations, the federal government began accepting British orphaned boys to provide farm labour. From 1942–6, many German prisoners of war, conscientious objectors from the Doukhobour and Mennonite faiths, and interned Japanese Canadians were forced to work on farms. In the 1960s and 1970s, the Canadian and BC agricultural labour force included Indigenous peoples, Québécois migrants, and Portuguese and Caribbean immigrants.¹²

In 1966, the federal government implemented the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (SAWP), which has come to be seen as a model for migrant worker programmes across North America. Under the SAWP, the federal government issues temporary employment visas which allow workers to stay in Canada for up to eight months but entitling them to work only for the designated employer. A 2006 study by the North-South Institute concluded that, while Canadian law theoretically protects migrant workers, in practice it is difficult for investigations of labour abuse to occur, given the workers' temporary status.¹³ Documented abuses in the SAWP include wages lower than Canadian counterparts and up to sixteen-hour workdays during peak season, without receiving overtime or vacation pay. Many migrant farm workers are required to work with pesticides without proper training or safety equipment. Accommodation may be attached to greenhouses with seepage of chemicals and pesticides. Some employers retain passports, health cards, social insurance cards and work permits. The labourers' plight is exacerbated by the fact that, since 2004, all farm workers have been excluded from various provisions of the provincial Employment Standards Act. Furthermore, workers can be sent home for filing complaints; and a negative report from an employer at the end of a season can result in suspension from the programme for future seasons. Finally, for SAWP workers, there is no option of permanent residency, regardless of the number of years – and sometimes decades – they continue to toil in the fields of Canada.

BC did not join the SAWP until 2004. This late adoption was largely due to the arrival in BC in the 1970s and 1980s of South Asian immigrants from working-class/farming backgrounds in Punjab; most of these immigrants had little knowledge of English and were primarily elders and women. Often enduring fourteen-hour workdays, making \$1 per hour and living in converted chicken coops, South Asian farm workers carried forward a momentous struggle, including the historic founding of the Canadian Farm Workers Union. A gruelling fifteen-month strike at the Jensen Mushroom farms resulted in the first labour contract for farm workers in BC. And the Money's Mushroom strike initiated by five Punjabi women effectively shut down the sale and distribution of mushrooms across BC. Despite limited English skills and support networks, the workers were able to exert, through community action, significant pressure on the agricultural industry.¹⁴ Currently, the Progressive Intercultural Community Services (PICS) organisation continues to provide workshops, training, advocacy, language classes and general resources to farm workers.

The shift from South Asian immigrant farm labour to the SAWP was due to the need for even more vulnerable labour. Although a perceived labour shortage was cited by BC farm owners, a report by the BC Federation of Labour found that 'the number of employees bonded by the Farm Labour Contractors is virtually the same in 2003 (5,915) as it was in 1999 (6,000)'.¹⁵ Across Canada, the number of SAWP workers has increased from 264 in 1966 to over 19,000 in 2004, with exponential growth in the past few years. In BC, the number of workers has grown from 50 workers from Mexico in the first year of implementation in 2004 to over 3,000 workers – primarily Mexicans – in 2008.¹⁶

While the organising by South Asian immigrant farm workers had significant consequences, including firings, intimidation and death threats, the overall consequences were not as severe as those faced by SAWP workers. This is of course intentional. Stasiulis and Bakan observe that: '[T]he First World state's ability to deny Third World migrants access to naturalization becomes a legal and internationally sanctioned means of discrimination and withholding many basic human rights, and increasing oppression based on race and gender. Denial of citizenship guarantees also intensifies class exploitation, creating pools of labour cheapened and made vulnerable to abuse by threats of deportation, and by pitting recent immigrants against poor and working class citizens.'¹⁷ Unlike in other provinces, migrant farm workers are allowed to unionise in BC but attempts to collectively organise have led to deportations. In 2005, a group of thirty-two migrant Mexican workers at Golden Eagle Farms in BC wrote a letter that was released to the media, which expressed concerns about their working and living conditions, including lack of access to sheltered eating spaces and toilet facilities; violation of safety codes in the transportation vehicle, including removal of seats to cram workers in; and violation of their employment contract for not being provided with appropriate work gear and for being forced to work outdoors in a blueberry field, instead of an indoor greenhouse. A few months later, one of the workers faced contract termination and forced repatriation. He believed that his removal was a reprisal for the letter and was supported by allies including Justicia for Migrant Workers, No One Is Illegal and BC Federation of Labour.¹⁸

Despite such setbacks, the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) run migrant support centres across the country and have won rights for SAWP workers to access Employment Insurance parental benefits that they were required to pay into but could not collect. In August 2008, they celebrated the first union certification of SAWP workers in BC at Greenway Farms.¹⁹ In September 2008, a group of fourteen Mexican farm workers at the Floralia Plant Growers in Abbotsford, BC, were sent back to Mexico after filing papers to unionise through the UFCW. Nonetheless, despite much fear, the remaining workers went ahead with the vote and overwhelmingly voted to unionise. In response to these two historic certifications, the British Columbia Agriculture Council has launched a legal challenge, stating that the provincial labour board cannot legally grant SAWP workers the right to unionise, since the workers come under a federally negotiated programme.

Simultaneously, increased community group outreach efforts with migrant workers aim to empower them to lead their own struggles, recognising that any long-term change must be directed by those who are most directly affected. In a move that greatly embarrassed Canada's international image, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants, Jorge Bustamante, stated in a newspaper interview that he had received letters of complaint directly from Mexican SAWP workers.²⁰ Labour unions, community groups and migrant workers in BC continue to tirelessly advocate for full labour and permanent residency rights for SAWP workers.

Live-in Caregiver Program

It is migrant women of colour on temporary work visas who most directly experience the hypocrisy of liberal democracies that promise opportunity while creating categories of exploited workers. Unlike earlier Nanny Recruitment Programs involving primarily White British women who were able to gain permanent residency in Canada, under the Live-in Caregiver Program (LCP), migrant women – since the 1980s, predominantly Filipinas – enter Canada as temporary workers. Although the programme calls for a maximum forty-nine-hour work week, the mandatory live-in aspect allows employers to call on the caregivers at any time. Reports by the Philippines Women's Centre of BC demonstrate that women endure unpaid or excessive work hours, additional job responsibilities, an expectation to be on call at all times, forced confiscation of travel documents, gross violations of privacy, and sexual harassment and assault.²¹ CIC explicitly states that it does not bear any responsibility for enforcement of contracts between the worker and employer.²²

Women are required to work for twenty-four months within a window of thirty-six months in order to qualify for permanent residency. During this period, the woman must work only in the home of the employer whose name appears on the work permit. If she wants to change employers, she must find a new employer and obtain a new work permit, the time frame for which is used against the twenty-four-month requirement. Even though LCP workers pay into Employment Insurance, they cannot take advantage of it and must always be employed or face removal. As one domestic worker remarked: 'We know that, under the LCP, we are like modern slaves who have to wait for at least two years to get our freedom.'²³ CIC maintains that there is no abuse inherent to the programme as there are avenues for formal complaints against employers. But, such a statement obviously ignores the precarious immigration status of these women, which makes many of them reluctant to report employer or agency abuse. It becomes, as intended, a seeming 'choice' that the women make to suffer daily indignities.

Since LCP workers are not able to bring their families until they become permanent residents, a significant impact of the LCP is intergenerational family separation, which ranges from four to ten years. According to a statement by the Filipino Canadian Youth Alliance of BC, 'Most newly-arrived Filipino youth

face the trauma of migration, family separation and reunification. A recent study at the University of British Columbia found that Filipino youth experience an average of five-year separation from their parents who come to Canada under the LCP ... When youth finally are able to enter Canada to be reunited with their parents, they are reunited as strangers – the result of many years of separation.²⁴ Conversely, LCP workers who spend years building a life in Canada but cannot complete their work requirements are faced with deportation, sometimes with their Canadian-born children. In a recent, highly-publicised case, Vancouver-based Lilibeth Agoncillo and her one-year-old Canadian-born baby are facing deportation because, despite living and working in Vancouver for three years, Lilibeth did not meet the twenty-four-months live-in requirement due to her pregnancy and bureaucratic delays with her work permit as a result of changes in her employers.²⁵

In addition to the supply of cheap labour, the LCP serves other functions. One of the main justifications for the LCP is that there is a labour shortage of Canadians who want to perform domestic work. However, one could readily argue that the reason there are so few willing Canadians is the devaluation of domestic work in a gendered economy. The LCP also masks the critical need for a universal childcare programme in Canada. For rich and middle-class women, there are tax exemptions and the luxury of replacement domestic labour in the private sphere, while poor and working-class women are forced to earn a living while juggling their household and childcare responsibilities. Similarly, the LCP facilitates the entry of foreign-trained nurses to provide quasi-privatised healthcare for those who can afford it, while abrogating the state's responsibility to enhance public and universal healthcare services. In fact, the programme prefers workers who have undergone formal training in the healthcare field as, since 1992, there has been a requirement that women have at least two years of college education.

With nearly 100,000 Filipinas having entered Canada under the LCP, groups like the Philippines Women's Centre of BC and SIKLAB-Overseas Filipino Migrant Worker Support Group have been advocating and mobilising for the abolition of the 'racist and anti-woman' LCP. On International Migrants Day in 2008, these groups – along with others in the Filipino Migrant BC Coalition – wrote that: 'As part of a growing and marginalized Filipino community, Migrant BC affirms today our commitment to uphold and advance the rights and welfare of migrant workers ... We unite with migrants of other nationalities locally and internationally as part of our effort to mount the broadest front against the brutal dictates of neo-liberal globalization.'²⁶

The Security and Prosperity Partnership

The Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP) has further entrenched Canada's reliance on migrant worker programmes. The SPP has quietly turned into official policy since it was founded in March 2005 at a summit of the heads of state of Canada, the US and Mexico, with the backing of powerful lobby groups, including

the US Council on Foreign Relations, the Canadian Council of Chief Executives and the Mexican Council on Foreign Relations. The SPP calls for maximising North American economic competitiveness in the face of growing exports from India and China through: expedited means of resource extraction, particularly oil, natural gas, water and forest products from the Canadian provinces of BC and Alberta; secure borders against 'international terrorism and illegal migration'; standardised regulatory regimes for health, food safety and the environment; integrated energy supply through a comprehensive resource security pact, which ensures that the US receives guaranteed flows of oil from the Alberta Tar Sands, as Middle Eastern and Latin American sources become more insecure; and coordination of defence forces.²⁷ In short, the SPP is a NAFTA-plus-homeland-security model. But unlike NAFTA and other continental free trade agreements, the SPP is not an official treaty. Made operational through nineteen working groups that are outside the legislative process, over 300 policies and agreements are being implemented to realise the stated priorities. The North American Competitiveness Council (NACC) is the only formal advisory board to the SPP and is made up exclusively of corporate CEOs.²⁸

A central goal of the SPP is to ensure increased mobility of capital flows, through biometric pre-clearance programmes, the liberalisation of rules-of-origins under NAFTA and the development of trilateral policy frameworks to enhance the freer movement of goods, capital and electronic commerce.²⁹ To facilitate the transport of goods, the NAFTA Superhighway is being built, a 700m-wide corridor including railways and pipelines from Mexico to the Western Canadian border. Preferred citizens who represent capital are ensured border mobility through initiatives such as the Business Resumption and Partners in Protection Program and the Fast and Secure Trade Pass.

Simultaneously, in the post-9/11 climate with its never-ending 'war on terror' and accompanying array of imminent threats, the SPP calls for the fortification of the border security apparatus. Canada and the US have signed the joint Smart Border Declaration, a thirty-point plan which includes adoption of coordinated border surveillance technologies; increasing arming of border guards; implementation of biometric programmes; and increased tracking of foreign nationals. The legislation of the 2004 Safe Third Country Agreement, which denies, with some exceptions, entry to refugee claimants arriving in Canada through the US border, is, according to CIC's own statistics, disallowing up to 40 per cent of potential asylum seekers to Canada.³⁰

In these ways, the SPP intensifies the practices of both state selection and state expulsion. As the number of permanent residents and asylum seekers both drastically decrease, removals have also increased: CIC has reported an increase in deportations from approximately 9,000 in 2001 to 12,517 in 2006.³¹ From 2006 to 2007, over 12,000 people were detained, with renewed calls by the Minister for Public Safety for tighter exit controls and increased detention to ensure deportation. The extolled multiculturalism of the hand-picked diaspora exists in parallel to what Peter Nyers has termed the 'deport-spora'.³² The introduction of recent

policies such as Bill C-50 and the Canadian Experience Class create an increasingly hostile climate to family-class immigrants, refugees and working-class permanent residents. Such programmes favour those who can pay a high price for citizenship: either through the investment of foreign capital or as bonded labour in migrant worker programmes.

Migrant worker programmes are central to the SPP, resolving the seeming contradiction between the state's interests in tightening border controls and immigration crackdowns, on the one hand, and the corporate lobby's demands for freer border crossings to facilitate the secure movement of goods and capital, on the other (the NACC, for example, has stressed that: 'Every measure that adds to the cost or time to cross borders within North America is in effect a tax on enterprise.'³³) Thus, the aim of the Canadian state is not to deport all non-status migrants or to close down the border to all racialised immigrants. Rather, as David McNally observes: 'It simply wants this labour on its own terms: frightened, oppressed, vulnerable.'³⁴ The condition of being deportable assures that migrant workers can be super-exploited, as well as being readily disposable, especially during moments of labour unrest or economic recession. And the state is able to exercise repressive social control through the denial of basic rights and access to services afforded to citizens.

Additionally, by denying any level of citizenship to migrant workers and enshrining their inherent 'foreign-ness', the sanctity of racialised cultural identities and the purity of national identity can be maintained. Their racial dehumanisation as 'illegal' or 'undesirable' (and, post-9/11, as 'potential terrorists') then becomes possible and legitimises their deplorable working conditions and the state securitisation processes that disproportionately target them. As 'temporary' workers, they can be relied on as a pool of exploitable labour without their threatening to 'colour' Canada.³⁵ In this context, it is worth noting that words such as 'immigrant' do not actually denote one's legal citizenship status; they function rather as codes for racialised migrants from the Third World. This reinforces the normalisation of Whiteness as 'Canadian-ness' and indicates another critical connection between tightening immigration controls and the expansion of migrant worker programmes. The political purpose of tightened immigration and security measures is to demobilise racialised populations within Canada, to ensure collective social discipline and an internalised sense of non-belonging, by arbitrating who legitimately constitutes the nation.

Apartheid of citizenship

Canadian nationalism has consistently emphasised the nation as an entity threatened by outside forces. Anna Pratt traces the portrayal of immigrants to Canada as floods of disease-ridden people, criminals, frauds or security threats, thus fostering waves of moral panic about the 'border'.³⁶ As Prime Minister Mackenzie King declared in 1947: 'I wish to make it quite clear that Canada is perfectly within her rights in selecting persons whom we regards as desirable future

citizens ... The people of Canada do not wish, as a result of mass immigration, to make any fundamental alteration in the character of our population.³⁷ Notions of 'Canadian-ness' thus maintain the power of the state to define who belongs and who do not. Temporary foreign workers are perceived not only as not Canadian but also as not working alongside Canadians and in some way working in opposition to Canadian workers. Similarly, the term 'illegal' does not conjure up images of US citizens who illegally overstay their tourist visas or Australian students illegally working without work permits. Rather, the phrase references social hierarchies of race and class; and regardless of their contribution or length of residence, they are not seen as members of the nation but as an infringement of Canadian sovereignty.³⁸

Given that the very foundation of Canadian nationhood involves the legislating of an apartheid system of reservations, residential schools and other measures directed at Indigenous peoples, discussions of citizenship are always far more than a legal exercise. The denial of Indigenous self-determination is closely linked with the exclusion of racialised immigrants, migrant workers and refugees. And the granting or withholding of citizenship rights – both immigrant status and registered Indian status – is part of the way in which the state determines and regulates who is part of the national community.³⁹ Many movements in Canada have focused on the concept of full equality of citizenship rights as a strategy for social justice; however, such attempts to mobilise a discourse of citizenship are deeply problematic.

Moreover, formal citizenship status has, by and large, not been sufficient to lift immigrant women of colour and Indigenous women out of extreme poverty and dependency on dangerous and precarious labour in garment factories, domestic work, the sex trade and the general service sector. Alongside them are those without citizenship, the numbers of whom are growing exponentially. Migrant and undocumented workers fall between the cracks of legal protection due to their very status as non-citizens; common law doctrines, for example, hold that an employment contract will not be binding since the worker is considered illegal to begin with.⁴⁰ This makes it even more critical to avoid organising social movements on nationalist lines and instead focus on exercising our sovereignties differently, thinking of human interconnectedness and configuring our alliances and solidarities on shared experiences and visions.

Solidarity and alliances

In the past three years, BC's organised labour sector has undertaken a courageous drive for unionisation, legal challenges and advocacy in order to win permanent status for migrant workers. In addition to the work of the UFCW with SAWP workers, the British Columbia and Yukon Territory Building and Construction Trades Council has been supporting migrant workers employed in the construction industry. The Council has won a BC Human Rights Tribunal complaint against an employer accused of intimidating workers and been successful in a

discrimination suit against companies paying Canadian workers \$10 an hour more than Latin American migrant workers. And it was involved in labour negotiations regarding poor working conditions, such as wages of \$5 per hour and fifty-four to sixty-six hour work weeks without overtime pay.⁴¹

However, the current labour leadership, including the BC Federation of Labour, does employ the rhetoric of protecting Canadian jobs, while it ignores the ways in which global capitalism and neocolonialism have created and maintained a global pool of migrant workers. The danger here is that foreign workers are viewed as a threat to Canadian labour, thus destroying potential solidarities that cross the boundaries of exclusionary nationalism. In addition, concerns are being raised about the character of union organising, with its hierarchical structure and a predominately White, middle-class leadership that is seen as perpetuating patterns of paternalism, rather than facilitating the independent formation of migrant worker unions.⁴² The slogan, 'Good enough to work, good enough to stay', which has been adopted by the BC Federation of Labour, encourages permanent residency rights for migrant workers. But it can also be seen as begging questions about the right of human beings to migrate and to not simply be viewed as economic units that serve market forces.

What of the potential for solidarity between migrants of colour and Indigenous peoples? After all, they face similar issues of low pay, high rates of incarceration and surveillance, denial of equal access to social services, gross health inequalities and the daily reality of systemic poverty and racism. And Canada's state and corporate wealth is largely based on the subsidies provided by cheap migrant labour and the theft of Indigenous resources. In fact, there are many factors preventing this shared terrain of struggle from developing into genuine solidarity, especially the tangible role of immigrant and migrant workers in facilitating the removal and theft of Indigenous land and resources. As Indigenous activists called for the cancellation of the 2010 Olympic Games in BC under the banner of 'No Olympics on stolen Native land', an increasing number of migrant workers were being employed in those same industries that were expediting the rate of sport tourism and mining on Native lands. Of course, migrant workers are not themselves responsible for the devastation of Indigenous lands but, as the Native Youth Movement has asked, how can one be a miner or a logger and still support Indigenous peoples' defence of the Earth?⁴³

Nevertheless, anti-colonial and anti-capitalist migrant justice groups like No One is Illegal have prioritised solidarity with Indigenous struggles and acknowledged that demands of migrant communities will be short-lived if gained at the expense of Indigenous self-determination. While alert to trivialising the differences within and between these communities, strong alliances have been built amongst grassroots Indigenous and migrant justice groups.⁴⁴ In BC, immigrants and refugees have participated in several delegations to Indigenous blockades, while Indigenous communities have extended their solidarity through rally slogans such as, 'No one is illegal, Canada is illegal' and the offering of protection and refuge for migrants facing deportation. This on-the-ground organising has

gone a long way to developing trust and breaking down divisions between Indigenous and racialised migrant communities that are mediated by White settler colonialism.

While the oppression of various generations and categories of immigrants and migrants is linked, the dynamics between recent migrants and older migrant generations, or Canadian-born people of colour, has revealed many divisions. One major tension is the 'model minority' syndrome, in which certain categories of successful immigrants are used as symbols to discipline ghettoised communities of colour, such as undocumented migrants.⁴⁵ The ability of the state to determine who is worthy of citizenship creates barriers between some immigrants, who believe they have met this test of worthiness and are grateful for being accepted into the colonial nation, and others who are subverting the system in order to exert the right to reside in Canada. This is perpetuated by the fact that many mainstream immigrant groups have become focused on multicultural issues, isolating themselves from more radical anti-racist struggles. However, grassroots community activists, such as Sid Tan of the BC Coalition of Chinese Headtax Payers, have made the links between historic injustices against Chinese immigrants and today's migrant worker programmes and focus on the need to stand in solidarity with current generations of migrants.⁴⁶ Similarly, writing in the *Indo-Canadian Voice* about an unprecedented direct action at Vancouver airport to physically prevent the deportation of a paralysed migrant, Laibar Singh, I have argued that: 'Instead of making declarations on what others are entitled to simply by virtue of the fact that we happen to already have immigrated to Canada or have inherited the privilege of Canadian citizenship by birth, let us support one another in being able to live a life of well-being and dignity.'⁴⁷

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