

Le Frigo Vert: Electronic Newsletter, April 2007

This once-monthly digest consists of a compendium of Frigo collective news, social justice events, calls to action, healthy recipes, and articles related to Le Frigo Vert's social justice and anti-oppression mandate.

The purpose is to better inform and interact with Frigo Vert members. It is an attempt to better explain changes we make to the organization and to directly link Frigo members with local grassroots struggles.

If you do not wish to receive this newsletter, please email: shelly@lefrigovert.ca

Messages in this Digest:

1. Le Frigo Vert Updates/Events: April 10th - General Assembly of the Concordia Food Collective
2. Food Politics: "Locked Dumpsters Full of Mangoes"
3. Featured Anti-Oppression Articles: "Solidarity, Not Pity" & "Colonialism, Capitalism and the Making of the Apartheid System of Migration in Canada" (see: April 5th day of action in solidarity with Abdelkader Belaoui)
4. Recipes: Roasted Asparagus and Portabella Mushrooms with Horseradish Sauce, Fettuccine Alfredo with Broccoli and Sautéed Mushrooms & Coconut Chai Cake
5. Social Justice Calendar

1. Le Frigo Vert Updates/Events

On Tuesday April 10th, starting with a free dinner at 5:30pm in the People's Potato serving area (7th floor, Hall Building), the Concordia Food Collective will be holding a monumental General Assembly. Free childcare and translation are available. As you are probably aware, the Concordia Food Collective has been the umbrella registered non-profit and Board of Directors for Le Frigo Vert & the People's Potato for about 10 years now. This relationship has been a strong and healthy one. However, it is a legal relationship both organizations, and the Board have outgrown. At this General Assembly the Board, the Frigo and the Potato will be asking members to vote on splitting the Concordia Food Collective into two separate legal identities, which will have two separate Boards - Le Frigo Vert and the People's Potato.

This is an amical break-up we are proposing. We will remain the best friends with strong ties of solidarity. Thanks to your support, both organizations have just grown so much over the years that one legal entity to cover us both is no longer sustainable. For example, a legal requirement of being a non-profit is submitting our financial records to the government at the end of each year. At present, since it is the Concordia Food Collective who is the registered non-profit, the Frigo's and Potato's finances must be merged together for submission which is an enormous and costly task considering we have very different budget lines and different financial year-end dates. This is just not practical and very onerous on the Board who are legally responsible for the CFC finances.

Nor is a singular non-profit the best avenue for either organization's plans for future sustainability. For example, as separate entities Le Frigo Vert could pursue "Solidarity Cooperative" status, which is a non-profit status, plus some. As a Solidarity Coop we would be eligible for both non-profit and solidarity coop funding which

is readily available from the City especially for proposals regarding sustainability. The People's Potato could apply for charitable status if we split (but not if they remain with the Frigo because the Frigo sells stuff) and be able to secure donations that are eligible as tax write-offs.

The opening up of these options would mean both organizations would be able to offer more, to you, the members. So please come out and show your support at this monumental General Assembly. Constitutional changes will be available for you to read at both organizations.

Thank-you all,

Le Frigo Vert Collective

2. Food Politics

Locked Dumpsters Full of Mangoes: Hungry people, wasted food, and the politics of dumpster diving
From The Dominion (<http://www.dominionpaper.ca>)
dumpster_web.jpg

Food waste needs to be rethought, reduced and rerouted. photo: Fatty Tuna

Unappeasable customers, bitter bosses and deserted lunch shifts; it is no secret that restaurant work can be soul-crushing. However, the most painful moments in the food industry -- ask anyone who has worked in a café, restaurant, bar or food store -- are moments spent throwing away good food. Those who work in supermarkets, bakeries and delis know that tossing bags of fresh bread and pastries, cases of coffee, trays of uneaten lasagne, chicken and sautéed vegetables into the dumpster out back is part of the daily reality.

Less visible is the more shocking layer of food waste that occurs even before food gets to restaurants and grocery stores. On the outskirts of towns, distributors and wholesalers operate construction dumpsters, which are regularly filled with produce which is riper, fresher, and generally of better quality than what reaches the consumer. This is the fate of the truckload of Ecuadorian mangoes that ripened before making it to the supermarket and the flat of tomatoes from Ontario with a couple of bad fruit; thrown "away" for fear the decay would spread over the whole shipment.

Spencer Mann is sensitive to food waste and food security. He is a founding member of Co-op sur Genereux in Montreal: a housing co-op of 15 members. "These giant dumpsters full of beautiful food are not located near residential areas and are therefore more difficult to access for people who use dumpsters as a source of food," he explains. Part of the solution to the injustices of food waste, says Mann, is to become part of a society that is "okay with waste," but makes that "waste" accessible to those who will make use of it.

Mann's interest in the content of dumpsters is more than cerebral. Dumpsters are the main food source for Mann and the other members of Co-op sur Genereux. "The first time we started consciously dumpster diving," he explains, "was during harvest time, at the Jean Talon market. At first we were buying our produce; then we noticed the vendors throwing away perfectly good tomatoes and eggplants." There is one hour between the market's closing time and the time the truck comes to take away dumpster contents. Mann describes the sense of conviviality among the regular divers at the market -- elderly Italian women, young locals and new immigrant families -- getting "incredible hauls," and the swapping that follows.

Keeping the food industry's "waste" accessible means supporting food redistribution efforts, and also sorting out a clear sense of the politics of dumpster-diving. "It is an art to get to know the rhythm of a dumpster,"

explains Mann, “to learn when it is filled and when the food is taken to the dump. Part of the etiquette of dumpster-diving is to leave food for people who are regular visitors to that dumpster. There are many families who rely on that food. One strategy is to collect food only just before the truck comes, so you know you are not taking food from someone else’s mouth.”

Before embarking on an urban scavenging adventure, one must know the rules. Don’t rip bags; open them to look through them and then close them again. Be quiet; leave the dumpster cleaner than you found it. Be respectful in conversations with employees, managers and owners. “Eighty-five per cent of these interactions will be positive. Employees of a store tend to know only too well about the food that is being wasted in their store and tend to be supportive of that food being used instead of sent to the dump.” Owners and managers, who would prefer that customers pay for food, are less tolerant. That is why it is crucial to respect the rules: you don’t want to be responsible for a local dumpster -- upon which 10-15 people might depend for their daily bread -- becoming locked up.

“Sometimes it is unfathomable that things get thrown out.” Mann gives the examples of a 30-lb bag of organic Fair Trade sugar, unopened bags of organic figs and sun-dried tomatoes and huge bags of dried chickpeas. Co-op sur Genereux challenged its members to one month of surviving exclusively from dumpsters, and succeeded. However, Mann acknowledges the difference between benefiting from a wasteful system and the need for waste to be rethought, reduced and rerouted.

Distributors can participate in this change by ordering on demand instead of on speculation and by getting involved with local food redistribution organizations that take their ‘waste’ to food banks and soup kitchens. Local businesses can order responsibly to cut down on overstock. Consumers can demand local food that will not have to survive a trip across a continent and be less picky about blemishes and discoloration that does not impact the taste or nutritional value of the food.

Awareness events, such as Montreal’s “Etat d’Urgence,” organized by the “urban intervention” group ATSA, seek to encourage people to confront the reality of the waste-stream. Since 1995, ATSA has co-ordinated an annual five-day “urban refugee camp” in downtown Montreal, feeding, clothing and entertaining people of all social stripes. Each year, for the last meal of the event, Co-op sur Genereux has fed more than 200 people on spoils saved from Montreal dumpsters.

Why is good food thrown away?

1. Capitalism allows for a certain margin of waste. Food waste is written into many business plans and makes up a significant portion of food cost and inventory.
2. ‘Best before’ standards require merchants to toss food that has ‘expired.’ Restrictive health by-laws, which often prevent restaurants from giving food, turn such food into a liability for the restaurant.
3. Shelf-space has value, in its being a place for product. This means a merchant needs his or her product to be of the highest value possible, or it is not ‘worth’ the space it takes.
4. If a merchant were to sell blemished food for, let’s say, half-price, his clientele would change. He would lose rich clientele who do not want to shop alongside poorer clientele.
5. Branding. A business demands everything that leaves through its doors to be of high quality for the sake of its reputation.

Source: http://www.dominionpaper.ca/food/2006/12/04/locked_dum.html

3. Featured Anti-Oppression Articles

SOLIDARITY NOT PITY

Rethinking campaigns against deportation

by: steve cohen

Whose reality is it anyway?

“If a young person tells me they were raped, I say good! Tell me the details. The more sordid the better”

This quotation is not from a predatory male. It is from a feminist lawyer who has devoted two decades to fighting racism and preventing her clients being deported. In the article from which this quote is taken the lawyer says she “had become an unwitting party in the oppression of children and at the same time she felt that she had little option”.

There is obviously something strange and dubious happening here. And what is happening is the fighting of deportation/removal cases on so-called “compassionate” grounds. This practice has become so routine and unquestioned that it is possible to provide a league table of typical grounds. These are (1) adverse effect on welfare of children (2) ill-health (3) domestic violence (4) family separation. (5) old age

What is immediately clear from the above is that the people most vulnerable to immigration enforcement are the young, single, healthy and childless. What compassionate grounds remain open to them? None.

Compassionate grounds as spreading illusions - the legal and the political

The purpose of this debate initiated by the No One Is Illegal group is to stand present reality on its head. It is to challenge one of the central orthodoxies of resisting controls. It is to question ideologically one of the weapons used by all of us who are opposed in one way or another to immigration controls. It is to redefine as at the most problematic and at worst as reactionary something which is normally seen as unquestionably progressive

None of the issues raised here are easy. And up to a point, but not beyond it, a distinction has to be made. This is between the ways cases are presented by representatives to the Home Office (the “private”) and the way they are presented politically through campaigns (the “public”). Given the balance of forces – with the Home Office being immeasurably more powerful than the individual – it is clear that legal advocates will be obliged to present whatever grounds are deemed necessary to win a case. As Malcolm X said in a very different context – by any means necessary.

However political campaigns are different. Their purpose, or one of their purposes, is to make political points as part of the process of winning a victory. And the political point at issue here is the need to challenge at every step the legitimacy of controls themselves. Without challenging the very principle of controls then we are simply creating or reinforcing a vicious circle within which the undocumented remain trapped. Making compassionate grounds the basis of a public campaign is simply reducing the spurious argument that there can be “fair” controls to the individual case. It is spreading illusions that there can be “justice” within controls. As such it is contributing to the myth there can be “non-racist” controls.

Moreover there is absolutely no contradiction between fighting a case whilst at the same time making it clear that the basis of the fight is a principled opposition to all restrictions. Any suggestion that individuals under threat of deportation are being used as “guinea pigs” is misconceived and outrageous. Rather raising the issue of

controls in principle is an open and honest attempt to generalise the issue away from the individual and to show immigration restrictions are a political construct threatening the unwanted, the unchosen – the undocumented.. Indeed whatever is said in campaign literature the individual fighting deportation is inevitably taking a position against all controls. The very act of defiance is an overwhelming statement of disregard for the law.

Compassionate grounds as de-humanisation.

It is sometimes argued that raising compassionate grounds “humanises” a campaign – making it easier to win than one fought on some broad political abstractions which it is claimed may alienate potential supporters. However the reality is that these grounds actually dehumanise the individual. They patronise him or her – giving those threatened by controls the appearance of being passive victims and thus adding to the sum total of racism around immigration restrictions.. Emphasising issues of vulnerability (such as child abuse etc) and ignoring the political reasons for expulsions replaces real humanity with an accumulation of perceived weaknesses. It substitutes political explanation with a list of individual pathologies.

Compassionate grounds as pathologisation

This pathologisation is seen most clearly in the emphasis given to ill-health by campaigns. Sickness or disability are regularly transformed into arguments for the postponement or permanent lifting of the immigration threat. It is as though there exists some unacknowledged point-scoring system: one point for influenza briefly postponing an air flight, two points for a surgical operation delaying departure longer....five points for a nervous breakdown caused by fear of expulsion....eight points for risk of suicide.. ten points for terminal illness.

Many cases can be used to illustrate this pathologisation. In particular the case of a gay couple, one English and his partner threatened (because of the law’s homophobia as well as racism) with deportation. The English partner was diagnosed as having HIV and this became the “compassionate ground” on which the case was fought. However just before the case was to be heard in the High Court it was discovered that he did not have HIV. He had invented the condition by getting a friend who did have the illness to give blood in his name. He hadn’t even told his partner of this. This almost unbelievable scenario shows the lengths to which people are driven by immigration controls. It was prompted by the fact that he had been told that it was necessary to have “compassionate grounds” before his partner could remain here. So he pathologised himself as diseased.

Compassionate grounds as competitive and divisive

Raising compassionate grounds in this way produces and reproduces some sort of rat race. Each case has to show it is deserving of more “compassion” than the previous one.. There is a humiliating scramble with everyone under threat seeking to prove they are more ill, or abused, or vulnerable than others in the queue. Contesting removal, far from being a political response to a political attack, takes on the appearance of a pilgrimage to Lourdes. The saved are those who reach the holy waters first. . This has two consequences. First it is extremely divisive. It sets up a competition between all those threatened with expulsion. Second it continually raises the stakes as to the level of compassionate grounds required to convince the Home Office – an agency which is not in any event prone to sympathy.. So for a single gay man - or a gay couple to be allowed to remain together – it is insufficient to have HIV. Full blown AIDS is what is demanded.. Internal instructions to immigration officers issued in 1995 state “persons certified as having AIDS should be distinguished from those where the person concerned has been diagnosed as HIV positive. A person who has been diagnosed as HIV positive may still be well and a serious case for exceptional treatment is unlikely to arise. (Where a person) has only a few months to live...cases will be referred back”. So much for compassionate grounds! The criterion, the standard to be reached, for remaining is terminal disease and death.

Compassionate grounds as exceptionalism, as justifications for stay.

Fundamental to campaigning on compassionate grounds are the rotten politics of exceptionalism. The public message is clear - most people are or are destined for expulsion but others, the exceptional, the chosen, should be allowed to remain. The Victorian distinction between the worthy and unworthy poor is simply transferred to the twenty first century deportee. As we have seen unwarranted criticisms have been made about using and abusing individuals threatened by removal to make explicit political points – the point of opposition to all controls.. The reality is just the opposite. Whenever campaigns agitate on compassionate grounds then there is being made an implicit political point – that those without such grounds, should presumably be expelled..

Behind all this is another equally reactionary public message, namely that those who wish to stay are obliged to justify this wish. They are obliged to account for their presence here. It is only by arguing against controls in principle that it is possible to assert the contrary – that everyone has the absolute right to remain irrespective of personal circumstances..

Compassionate grounds as stereotyping

Pathologisation transcends the individual. It encompasses whole countries and indeed continents. These are regularly and grossly stereotyped by campaigns as part of the presentation of compassionate grounds. There is painted a picture of a world beyond Britain and Western Europe which is an uncivilised welfare and educational desert devoid of all order- where children do not have schooling, where mothers and children are kidnapped without restraint by uncontrollable males, where there are nil health facilities. It is true that the world beyond the imperial heartlands is hugely under-resourced – mainly as a result of imperial economic and military intervention. However this does not mean that these countries have lapsed into social barbarism and reverted to their supposedly natural state of primitive savagery. Anyhow imagine the boot on the other foot. Imagine an English person being deported from, for example, India (it happens). How would a hypothetical campaign depict the UK?

Compassionate grounds as transforming the bad into good, the undesirable into the desirable

Consider undesirable personal and social situations that everyone would wish to avoid – being abused as a child, being battered as a woman, being ill, being too old to be independent. All these undesirable attributes suddenly become desirable, treasured, the holy grail when it comes to contesting immigration cases. They are the hallowed compassionate grounds. Conversely campaigning on such grounds inevitably means that their absence – that is the absence of abuse, of being battered or terminal illness etc – becomes a positive disadvantage. This truly is a world turned upside down. A world where the bad becomes the good. A world where liberal and grotesque ideas have been allowed to dominate. A world where all that should be avoided or contested is welcomed and embraced A world where those fighting deportations can state “If a young person tells me they were raped, I say good! Tell me the details. The more sordid the better”

Restraining lawyers

We saw above that a distinction has to be made between the private presentation of a case to the Home Office and the public campaigning. We have also seen how at least one lawyer has said she has felt compromised in adding to the oppression of children by presenting “abuse” as something positive within immigration cases. There are several lessons here. First it is good to be conscious of what is happening politically here – many legal representatives simply do not have this political awareness. Second the distinction between the “private” and the “public” is not a static one. For instance what is left of the immigration appeal system takes place within the sphere of the public. Lawyers should be careful as to what is said ideologically at these hearings. Third legal representatives often go well beyond what is required in the presentation of “compassionate” grounds. Classic

examples of this appear in the realm of stereotyping. A typical example is the presentation of children as being too “westernised” to be deported. Implicit within this is the notion of the superiority of Western values, culture etc. Finally it is not beyond contemplation that lawyers can cross over from arguing cases on compassionate grounds to making a political case based on the racism of controls as such. This itself depends on the strength of the political campaign behind a case. But it is not inconceivable. An example can be taken from a case concerning racism but not immigration. In the early 1980s twelve youths in Bradford (the Bradford 12) were accused of making petrol bombs. They did not deny this. The bombs were made in case of fascist attack by the National Front which was rampant at the time. . There was a massive national campaign under the slogan “Self defence is no offence!”. This right to make bombs then became the core of the legal argument. And the verdict...not guilty!

The battle for ideas.

Immigration campaigns are about winning cases, about stopping expulsions. However they are not, or should not, simply, be about this.. They are inescapably and unavoidably part of a battle for ideas. This is a battle on three fronts which are really only one front. First is the ideological struggle to expose immigration controls as racist. Second is the struggle to show that controls are not inevitable. Third is the struggle to explain that there cannot be “fair” or “just” or “reasonable” or “non-racist” controls. Within this battle the reliance politically on compassionate grounds is spreading false ideas on all three fronts. It assumes, by not challenging, the very existence of controls as an unquestionable fact of life – rather than a political construct that can be fought. . It presents the idea that controls can indeed be compassionate - that is “fair” and devoid of racism. Every time it is argued that someone is in the camp of the “worthy” or the “exceptional” there is legitimised the whole ideology of immigration control which asserts its own authority on the backs of the “unworthy and “unexceptional” – that is the “bogus”, the “illegal”.Some people claim it is utopic to argue for the abolition of all controls – that this would require a revolution. It may well require a revolution. However the sanitisation of controls into their opposite, into something fair and non-racist, would require a miracle...

Compassionate grounds and the great leap

There is a particular miraculous quality behind this concentration on compassionate grounds. It assumes a leap of faith. It assumes that once people are won over on a case by case basis by a sense of pity then it will be possible to convince them to challenge controls in principle. History has shown that consciousness does not work like this. Thousands, tens of thousands, maybe hundreds of thousands of members of the public have over the last thirty years written letters or signed petitions or sent post cards protesting individual cases on compassionate grounds. In fact it is not at all difficult for a campaign to gain support on this level However it is quite clear that these vast numbers have not made the leap into opposing the totality of controls. And there is a political reason for this. Opposing controls per se requires more than a sense of pity. It requires resisting the idea that law is absolute and should always be obeyed It requires a recognition that what is at stake here is a battle against the state and the entire state machinery. The achievement of this recognition can only be helped by the honest advocacy of abolition of all controls. Conversely it can only be hindered through the false illusion of “fair” or compassionate controls.

The alternative

Campaigns against deportation are central in the struggle against controls. They have been responsible for building up a culture of resistance to restrictions. They refuse to go away. They are a testimony to the resilience of the oppressed. They have existed for a quarter of a century – the first significant campaign being that of Nasira Begum against deportation in the late 1970s. But as supporters we need to re-evaluate them and not over-romanticise them. In particular there is a need based on all the reasons given above to re-evaluate the constant presentation of compassionate grounds as somehow providing a basis for struggle. This then immediately

raises the question as to what is the alternative? How else can cases be fought if not on the basis of personal circumstances and personal stories? The almost absolute absence of experience of fighting in other ways does in itself make this a difficult question to answer. But there are answers.

Slogans don't win cases. But they show the way forward. And the relevant slogan here is Solidarity Not Pity! This encompasses two inter-locked points. First coming or remaining in the UK should not be a matter of charity – of compassion. It should be an absolute right. Second rights cannot be achieved through begging, through asking for pity – for compassion. They can only be obtained through struggle – through solidarity

Solidarity Not Pity! points the way in a particular political direction. This is the direction of the collectivisation of campaigns. Fighting campaigns one by one, on a serial basis reinforces the atomisation of those under threat of expulsion. This itself leads to a situation of weakness, of begging and pleading rather than demanding. Fighting together with others in the same or similar situation is one way out of this dead end. There are examples of this from the 1980s. One example was the Wives and Fiances Campaign. This fought collectively for the right of women to both have their overseas partners come to this country. or, if they themselves were from abroad, to be able to leave their partners without being deported.. It was a fight for immigration autonomy lead and directed by the women themselves.

Solidarity Not Pity! Is also making another political point. This is one of militancy. The more militant, the more imaginative, the more subversive, the more public – then the greater the possibility of politicising a campaign and of challenging the very existence of controls.. The reality is that most campaigns today do not aspire to this. There has been a huge shift since the 1980s – a shift backwards. From the struggle of Nasira Begum to that of Anwar Ditta (fighting to get her children here) to that of Viraj Mendis virtually all campaigns were characterised by their energy, by their public presence and by the variety of initiatives there were taken to build public support. They cultivated support within the labour movement. They organised lively anti-racist conferences. They produced informative and rebellious literature. They engaged in direct action. They organised spectacular events. They were energetic. They were in constant touch with each other. They often shared the same actions. They had a constant presence on the streets.. They were lead by the undocumented themselves. They rejected self-appointed so-called “community leaders” They .were based on the self-activity of those under threat – who spoke at meetings both locally and nationally. They were dangerous. They were a danger to the state machinery of controls.. Compare that with the situation today and building up over the last decade– where campaigns often appear to have simply a cyber-space existence (perhaps with petitions and standard letters) without any public presence .

There were occasional exceptions to this passivity. The slogan Solidarity Not Pity! was first raised in the successful campaign of the Rahman family in Bolton in the early 1990s.. The fact that the campaign attracted huge support and that it was successful answers those faint-hearts who suggest that fighting a case from a position of opposition to all controls will alienate potential supporters , will result in defeat and will see those under threat of deportation sacrificed on the alter of some abstract principle. Just the opposite was the case. It was the outspoken politics of the campaign which attracted the support.. The Rahman family itself was beset with serious illness. However within the public (as opposed to the legal) domain there was a serious and conscious effort not to make this the basis of the campaign. There was a significant effort to preserve the dignity of the family by not having their private lives made unnecessarily public. Instead there was raised the slogan Solidarity Not Pity! As a consequence it at least became possible, at least there were opportunities, to raise and challenge the existence of controls in principle. This lead to one major demonstration which took over the centre of Bolton and also to a major conference (“Communities of Resistance”) which brought together on a national basis all existing grassroots campaigns against racism. Within this activity it would have been a nonsense to raise the demand for “compassionate” immigration controls. The only demand worth raising in this context was for the abolition of controls.. And this was the demand that in essence became central to the campaign as the context became stronger and stronger.

Conclusion

Solidarity Not Pity! also provides one final political lesson. This is that unless campaigns are guided by the undocumented themselves then they simply become, at their best, high-powered social work.. Unless campaigns are built on the self-organisation of those threatened by controls then they are just another form of charity. Charity begs for compassion. Self-organisation demands rights and has a contempt for all controls whatever their legal form..Self-organisation is directed against controls in principle. The role of the documented is to provide solidarity with this self activity - not pity .

Colonialism, Capitalism and the Making of the Apartheid System of Migration in Canada

by Harsha Walia; March 04, 2006

Attention to national borders has figured prominently in the post-9-11 world and many have argued that 9/11 has created a new fortified world. The events of 9/11 certainly has reconfigured, but has not created, Canadian border policies, which has historically been distrustful of racialized migrants. A comprehensive history and analysis of Canadian immigration processes unearths how the quest for “security”- of borders, of the nation, and of those deemed Canadian- has been a prominent feature of immigration enforcement for the past century.

History and Shifting Discourses

Until the 1960s, the Canadian state explicitly chose its immigrants on the basis of racial categorization with preference for immigrants of Northern European (especially British) origin over the so-called “black and Asiatic races”. For example, when it came to Americans, the Immigration Branch solicited only white farmers while black agriculturalists were rejected through administrative processes such as imposing more stringent medical requirements. Although never proclaimed, a 1911 Order in Council prohibited “any immigrant belonging to the Negro race, which race is deemed unsuitable to the climate and requirements of Canada”.

The first wave of Japanese immigrants arrived between 1877-1928 and in 1907, at Canada’s insistence, Japan limited the number of males who could emigrate to 400 a year. This was largely in response to the riots of 1907, organized by racist lobby groups. The Vancouver Trades and Labour Council was involved in the formation of the Asiatic Exclusion League in response to reports that the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway was planning to import thousands of Japanese labourers. In 1928, Canada and Japan further revised the “gentlemen’s agreement” of 1907 to restrict Japanese immigration to Canada to 150 persons annually.

In order to discourage South Asian migration, the Laurier government amended the Immigration Act in 1908 with the “continuous-journey regulation”, under which travel to Canada required a continuous passage from country of origin. Since no shipping company provided direct service from India to Canada, this provision served to close the door to all Indian immigration and the Hawaii route for Japanese immigration. The continuous-journey regulation was dramatically challenged in May 1914, when 376 Indians arrived in Vancouver harbour on board the Komagata Maru, which lay in the harbour for weeks, deprived of food and water by Canadian authorities, and was eventually turned back. The regulation remained in effect until 1947.

In 1923, the government abolished the Chinese Head Tax (initially a \$50 head tax, later raised to \$500) that had been imposed on Chinese immigrants since 1885, only to replace it with a new Chinese Immigration Act virtually excluding all Chinese immigration. The new law went into effect on 1 July 1923, dubbed “Humiliation Day” by the Chinese community. From that date until it was repealed in 1947, less than 50 Chinese were

allowed to come to Canada

The assertion of Canada's sovereign right to be selective about whom it allows to enter and remain has always represented the bottom line in immigration law. To paraphrase Michael Walzer, membership is the primary good bestowed by the liberal nation; membership must be settled before questions of justice can be addressed. As stated by Prime Minister Mackenzie King in 1947, "I wish to make it quite clear that Canada is perfectly within her rights in selecting persons whom we regard as desirable future citizens. It is not a 'fundamental human right' of any alien to enter Canada, It is a privilege... The people of Canada do not wish, as a result of mass immigration, to make any fundamental alteration in the character of our population."

This statement is symptomatic of embedded sentiments to maintain Canada's purity, therefore undesirable and excluded migrants were those thought to be impure. The 1952 Immigration Act, conceived essentially as a gatekeeper's act, codified racial and moral bases of exclusion. For example the Act gave Cabinet the power to exclude people based on the grounds of those who had "peculiar customs, habits", those who were "unsuitable having regard to the climactic, economic, social, industrial, educational, labour, health, or other conditions" and those who are unable to become "readily assimilated".

Race officially ceased to be an overt factor with the introduction of the point system in the 1960s. However as Anna Pratt has written "over the past fifty years, as human rights doctrines became more consequential and legal rights talk more established, explicitly racist, moralistic, and ideological grounds for exclusion were delegitimized. Instead, the categories of crime and criminality proliferated and merged with a reconfigured and expanded understanding of national security." A mere reconstruction of the discourse and the three C's of multiculturalism (costume, cuisine, and craft) did not alter the racist foundations of immigration policies.

desirable/ undesirable

The border is a historically specific creation and state monopolization of the legitimate means of movement and migration contributes to the reification of the nation-state and its citizens. While certain government practices act upon those deemed worthy, coercive practices of state sovereignty ultimately expel others from the nation. Despite its name, the recently enacted Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA) is less about protecting refugees and more about protection of the Canadian public and nation. The protection of rights-bearing and deserving (genuine) immigrants and refugees has become contingent upon the identification and exclusion of others thought to be security threats, criminals, or system abusers.

"Genuine refugees" are seen as helpless victims forced to leave their country due to persecution and through no personal fault of their own, while "bogus refugee claimants" are regarded with suspicion as being system-abusers and "voluntary economic refugees". Ironically, economic migrants who immigrate through the point system as skilled workers- - the model minorities- are deeply valued. This contradictory notion of the "economic migrant" is better understood from a state perspective: the acceptable economic immigration of skilled workers benefits the national economy, while bogus economic refugees are seen as selfish and simply improving their own economic circumstance. Therefore it is only the genuine refugee and the independent immigrant, though not the bogus economic refugee, who deserves the benefits of Canadian citizenship, thus creating falsified legal boundaries for inclusion that control peoples right to self-determination.

The Realities of Refugee Protection and Migrant Detention

It is a myth that Canada accepts a large number of refugees. For every 443 Canadians born, 1 refugee is admitted. This number is further declining with the implementation of the Safe Third Country Agreement, signed between the Canada and the US. This agreement, which took effect on December 29 2004, will not allow (with minor exceptions) asylum-seekers into Canada if they first arrive in the U.S. Considering that

the route of most asylum-seekers involves migrating through the US, advocates estimated that this highly exclusionary Agreement would affect approximately 40% of claimants, thus creating a “Fortress North America”. Indeed, according to the Immigration and Refugee Board’s own statistics, the number of pending claims at the end of 2003 was 41,575, compared to 27,290 at the end of 2004. Simultaneously, removals from Canada have increased from 8946 removals in 2001 to over 10,000 removals in 2004. Racialized trends are further revealed through the statistics on government-assisted refugees: in 1998, 59% of government-assisted refugees came from Europe versus only 12% from Africa.

Contrary to public perception, there are not an infinite number of appeals that a refugee claimant can access in Canada. For the overwhelming majority of claimants, refugee determination is a one-step process because there is no full merit-based appeal, although provided for in IRPA in 2002 that previous Immigration Minister Denis Coderre promised would be implemented within one year. Currently, one of the limited avenues in the refugee process, the Pre-Removal Risk Assessment, had an overall national acceptance rate of less than 3% in the year 2004.

The assertion of absolute state sovereignty is nowhere more apparent than the detention regime. Unlike prisons, immigrant detention does not pretend to serve any purpose other than forcible confinement and control to ensure deportation. The detention center in Laval is officially designated the “Immigration Prevention Center”. There are two main grounds for detention: firstly, a likelihood that a person poses a danger to the public; or secondly, that the person is likely not to appear for removal. This second rationale creates a catch-22: those who express fear of deportation and a desire to remain in Canada are often considered flight risks and subject to continued detention. The new IRPA has increased the powers of detention based on identity which allows immigration officers to detain any “foreign national” if unsatisfied of the person’s identity. During 2002-2003, on any given day over 400 people were in immigration detention across Canada and over the year, over 11,000 people were detained for a total of approximately 165,000 days. Only a handful of these detentions were on security grounds, making the majority of detentions to be what many have termed “detention based on convenience”.

Imperialism, Globalization, and Migration

The reality of migration is one that reveals the asymmetrical relations between “rich” and “poor,” and between North and South, where the effects of colonialism and corporate globalization have created political economies that compel people to move. Such forces are the same forces that have perpetuated genocide and dispossession of indigenous peoples within the colonial project of “North America.” A salient example of the impact of capitalism and neo-colonialism on migration trends is the US-Mexico border. As part of its inclusion in NAFTA in 1994, Mexico was forced to adjust its constitution’s Article 27, which guaranteed rights to communal lands (ejidos). A symbolic illustration of NAFTA’s effects is the fate of Mexican corn: the Mexican government was forced to eliminate subsidies to corn, meanwhile corn produced in the US remained subsidized, thus making it cheaper to buy US corn inside Mexico than Mexican corn. Over 1.5 million Mexican farmers who subsequently lost their farms migrated North to work in low-paying sectors and maquila factories. Wages among California’s 700,000 farm workers, half of whom are undocumented, is approximately \$6.75 an hour.

Furthermore, the nature of the refugee determination system is far from being a simple exercise in humanitarianism. It can more accurately be labeled as a manifestation of Canada’s aggressive foreign policy. For example, Canada towed the ideological line of the US by being slow to react to the admission of Chilean refugees who were supporters of Salvador Allende after the violent US-backed coup of Allende’s socialist government in 1973. By comparison, Canada was far more “humanitarian” in accepting approximately 60,000 refugees from South-East Asians Vietnams and Laos who fled Communist regimes in the wake of Saigon’s fall in 1975.

Economics of the Immigration system and (Im)migrant labour

It is not a novel assertion that while free trade agreements open borders to capital, borders are increasingly tightening to those whom capital has displaced. In 2001, the Canadian government signed the Canada-US Smart Border Accord which ensures that border restrictions will not impair the economic necessity of ensuring free flow of goods and services. However, it is also important to note that while repressive immigration policies are intended to exclude those deemed undesirable, they are not intended to act as fortresses against all racialized people. It is not in the best interests of the Canadian economy to deport all non-status migrants. Instead, border controls serve to create a constantly internalized fear of instability and vulnerability. The legally-sanctioned right of the state to deny permanent legal status to most who migrate guarantees that a growing number of migrants will constitute a highly exploitable pool of labour.

Therefore the efforts to achieve a borderless capitalist global economy depends on securing territorial borders against undesirable outsiders while creating a pool of non-citizens whose hyper-exploitable labour free markets depend on. The notion of “illegals” is a constructed one that allows for the maintenance of social hierarchies based on race and class. The term “illegal” does not conjure up images of American students who have illegally overstayed their tourist visas. As Nandita Sharma argues, “Categories of legality and illegality are ... deeply ideological. They help to conceal the fact that both those represented as foreigners and those seen as Canadian work within the same labour market and live within the same society.”

In 1947, Canada established a contract-labour program under which potential employers in the mining, logging, or lumbering industries would forward applications to the Department of Labour requesting that a certain number of labourers be brought in under prearranged contracts covering minimal wages and living conditions of servitude. Shortly after its introduction, the program was expanded to include other industries and specialized agricultural workers.

This form of contract agricultural labour continues today under the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (SAWP). Approximately 18,000 migrant farm workers from the Caribbean and Mexico arrive in Canada to work the fields, orchards and greenhouses every year, typically for periods of 3 to 10 months. Temporary migrant workers are separated from their families performing rigorous rural labour that few Canadians choose to do. The low wages of migrant workers has contributed to the multi-million dollar agricultural industry, while the structure of the SAWP- particularly the lack of secure work and status- silences the struggles of the workers.

Migrant women of colour on temporary work visas most directly experience the hypocrisy of liberal democracies that promise opportunity while creating categories of exploited workers. The Foreign Domestic Movement Program came into effect in 1981, which allowed migrant women into Canada if they could find employment as a domestic worker, but the women were not granted citizenship. In 1992, the Live-In Caregiver Program (LCP) replaced the Foreign Domestic Movement Program. Under the Live-in Caregiver Program migrant women- predominantly Filipinas- enter Canada as temporary workers. Although the program calls for a 49-hour maximum workweek, the live-in aspect allows employers to call on the caregivers at any time and renders the women subject to labour rights violations and gross abuse. Women are required to work for two years within a window of 36 months in order to qualify for permanent residency. Many advocates have called for the abolition of the LCP and to allow women with domestic and caring work skills to immigrate and access full rights of residency.

Yet even immigrants with permanent residency rights face conditions of underemployment and inequities in income. For example under provincial employment standards in BC, it is possible for workers who are new to the labour force to be paid a \$6 per hour “training wage”, instead of the regular \$8 per hour minimum wage, for the first 500 hours of work. A more endemic issue is that immigrants who are trained within non-western educational or scientific traditions experience great difficulties in gaining recognition for their training and

skills. A Statistics Canada study indicates that even after 10 years in Canada, one-fifth of university-educated immigrants are still working in low-income jobs. Research by the National Organization of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women of Canada conducted over ten years reveals that the poverty rate amongst Canadian-born in the year 2000 was 14.3%, compared to a poverty rate of 20.2% amongst all immigrants, and 35.8% amongst recent immigrants. Therefore the oppression of migrants is inextricably linked to the systemic oppression of all racialized people.

White Nationalism and Racialization of the Enemy

Patriotic discourses emphasize the nation as a contained entity threatened by outside forces. The illusion of the nation as a place of safety and security is reified through state bureaucratic organizations, such as the military, federal intelligence organizations and immigration departments, which produce the sense that “The Enemy” is outside the realm of “us.” For example within days of the attack on Pearl Harbour, Japanese in North America were seen as enemy aliens. A Minister of Parliament in the British Columbian government announced, “Let our slogan be for British Columbia; no Japs from the Rockies to the seas.” And upon the enactment of the “War Measures Act” in 1942, about 22,000 Japanese were relocated, 75% of whom were naturalized Canadians.

With the “War on Terrorism” the identities of North Americans versus the terrorists are being re-imagined. Although “The Enemy” was Osama bin Laden, his image personified all Arabs in the Western imagination and the nation was reconfigured to exclude all Arabs. By comparison, the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing was considered to be the act of one lone man, therefore resulting in no mass profiling and there was no exclusion of the entire white race from social-political spaces. Borders and nation-states are historically specific systems that shape distinctive cultures and within this culture, terrorism is perceived as a Third World import (without any recognition of Western state-sponsored terrorism whose victims predominantly reside in the Third World and indigenous territories of the First World). Such imagery reinforces the normalization of whiteness in the Western imagination and renders racialized communities as hyphenated citizens- a colonial construction of identity and entitlement. The ability to control immigration reveals a deep-rooted system of apartheid whereby the Canadian state and all those entitled to make pronouncements on immigration (not racialized migrants themselves since they are too “biased” to weigh in) maintain the power to construct migrants as problems to be managed and contained. Thus phrases like “immigrants” do not actually reflect one’s legal status; rather the seemingly innocuous term is actually a euphemism for racialized migrants from the Third World.

Finally, it is worth noting that Canada’s Anti-terrorism Act, which amends the Criminal Code, is scarcely being used to combat “terrorism”. Instead IRPA, which gives the state the powers to charge, detain, and deport non-citizens, is being used through the provision of Security Certificates. While the Anti-Terrorism Act gives the police extraordinary investigative powers, it still requires that those accused are charged with some defined act. Under the Security Certificates regime, however, detainees can be held without charge. Much has been written about how security certificates violate principles of due process; however more significantly, security certificates are a form of legislated racism in only applying to non-citizens. Law professor Audrey Macklin points out, “immigration law has long done to non-citizens what the Anti-terrorism Act proposes to do to citizens—without public outcry and with judicial blessing.”

Although different eras have been dominated by different perceptions of threats to the nation-state, each era has formulated threats as being external to the nation-state thus justifying exclusionary immigration policies. Catherine Dauvergne has written, “one reason why the concept of ‘national interest’ is so vital to immigration law is because of the role this law plays in constituting the nation.” It is not enough to simply defend the “civil liberties and human rights” of immigrants and refugees- a demand that has come to dominate the leftist landscape. Human rights standards have not altered the reality of the immigration and refugee system. For example the UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, which came into force in 1954, sets standards of treatment for refugees yet does not alter the fundamental fact that states are not obligated to admit those who

are not their nationals. Sunera Thobani offers the challenge “What makes it alright for us to buy a t-shirt on the streets of Vancouver for \$3, which was made in China, then stand up all outraged as Canadian citizens when the woman who made that t-shirt tries to come here and live with us on a basis of equality?” Instead we must also confront and challenge the nationalistic processes and logic of racialized notions of belonging and entitlement.

- Harsha Walia is an activist and writer based in Vancouver, Coast Salish Territories. A shorter version of this article will appear in the New Socialist Magazine.

4. Recipes

Roasted Asparagus and Portabella Mushrooms with Horseradish Sauce

1 pound asparagus, trimmed
2 large portabella mushrooms, sliced
2 cloves garlic, minced or pressed
1 cup plain soymilk
1 tsp. chopped garlic
1 tbsp. nutritional yeast
1 tsp. salt
2 tbsp. pureed fresh horseradish (or prepared horseradish to taste)
1 tsp. dried basil
1/8 tsp. white pepper
1 1/2 tsp. cornstarch dissolved in 2 tbsp. water

Note: Be careful pureeing the horseradish because the fumes can be overpowering. If you use a food processor, turn your head away as you remove the top after processing.

Preheat the oven to 400F. Place the asparagus and mushrooms in a large, oiled baking dish and sprinkle with 2 cloves garlic. Roast, stirring every 5 minutes, for 10-15 minutes, until asparagus are just starting to brown. Remove to a serving dish.

While the vegetables are roasting, make the sauce: Heat the soymilk in a saucepan and add the 1 tsp. garlic, nutritional yeast, salt, horseradish, basil, and pepper. Cook, stirring, until mixture boils. Add the cornstarch/water mixture, and stir until thickened. Pour over asparagus and mushrooms to serve.

Fettuccine No-Fredo with Broccoli and Sautéed Mushrooms

Sauce:

1 head cauliflower, chopped into small pieces
4 cups water
4-6 cloves garlic
1-2 tsp. basil
1/2-2 tsp. oregano
pinch cayenne pepper
salt to taste
freshly ground black pepper
pinch nutmeg

1 1/2 tbsp. nutritional yeast

2 large Portabella mushrooms, sliced 1/4-inch thick

2 cloves garlic

1/8 cup wine (I used white, but red will do)

salt to taste

1 pound fettuccine

1 head broccoli, cut into florets

Sauce:

Using the lesser amounts of each seasoning, place all the sauce ingredients except nutritional yeast into a large saucepan and cook, covered, until the cauliflower is very soft, about 15 minutes. When it's completely tender, use a blender to puree the cauliflower to a smooth sauce. (If you have a hand blender, you can do this in the pot.)

Check the seasoning of the sauce, and add more to taste; add the nutritional yeast. Allow the sauce to simmer and thicken while you prepare the mushrooms and pasta.

Sautéed Mushrooms:

Heat pan brushed with a little olive oil. Add the garlic and mushrooms, and cook, stirring, until the mushrooms begin to exude their juices. You can prevent them from drying out by keeping the skillet covered between stirrings. When the mushrooms get juicy, add the wine and salt to taste. Cook just until the wine is absorbed and then set aside, covered, until ready to serve.

Pasta:

Bring a large pot of water to a boil, add the fettuccine and salt, cook for nine minutes, then add broccoli and cook for three minutes more. Drain the pasta and broccoli and return it to the pan. Stir in the cauliflower sauce and serve topped with sautéed mushrooms.

Coconut Chai Cake

Coconut Chai Breakfast Cake

1 cup strong chai tea

1/3 cup uncooked quick (not instant) oatmeal

1 cup whole wheat flour

1/2 cup unbleached white flour

1 tsp baking soda

1/2 tsp salt

1 tsp cinnamon

1/4 tsp ginger (use more for a spicier cake)

1/3 cup plus 2 tablespoons unsweetened applesauce

1 tbsp vinegar

1/2 tsp almond extract

1 tsp vanilla extract

1/2 cup flaked coconut, 2 tbsp reserved

3/4 tsp pure stevia extract

Prepare the chai ahead of time by steeping two teabags in one cup of boiling water until cool.

Preheat oven to 350 F. Grease an 8-inch square baking pan.

Combine the dry ingredients (oatmeal through ginger) in a medium-sized mixing bowl. Add the chai, applesauce, vinegar, extracts, and all but 2 tablespoons of the coconut. Mix well and add the stevia, adjusting it to taste.

Pour the batter into the prepared pan. Sprinkle with the reserved coconut and bake for about 25 minutes, or until a tester inserted into the center of the cake comes out clean. Serve warm or at room temperature.

5. Social Justice Calendar

Wednesday March 28th, 5:45 - 7:30 pm

“Hot Safer Sex for Everyone!”

What’s sexy and safe? Almost everything! Join us in a discussion about hot ways to play, sexy communication skills, and other ways of broadening your sexual horizons. Discussion will include information about sexually transmitted infections and how to protect yourself and your partners. At-cost safer sex products will be available, and free condoms will be distributed. Facilitated by Shelley Taylor, founder of Venus Envy. Sponsored by Union for Gender Empowerment

@ 3480 McTavish St. (Shatner Building) Lev Bukhman Council Room, 3rd floor

Thursday March 29th, 6-9pm

Racial Profiling and Police Brutality: Standing up and Speaking Out

Participants: Khadija Bennis, twin sister of Anas Bennis and spokesperson for the Justice for Anas Coalition; Jade, speaking on racial profiling of Natives in Montreal; Rodney Patricio, chairperson for UKPC and Kaabataang Montreal -a Filipino youth organisation based in Cote-des-Neiges. Hosted by author and journalist, Fimo R. Mitchell. Presentation by Collective Opposed to Police Brutality. Sponsored by QPIRG McGill, CKUT, SSMU’s Equity Commissioner and the Black Students’ Network

@ 3480 McTavish St. (Shatner Building) Room 302

Friday March 30th, 5 pm

Panel on Climate Change

Featuring McGill Professors Bruno Tremblay, Professor Ariel Fenster, and activist Cameron Stiff, panelists will be discussing the various dimensions of climate change from a scientific and political standpoint. Sponsored by Borderless World.

@ 3480 University street, McConnell Building, Room 204

Friday March 30th, 5:30 pm
Spring Critical Mass

Dear fellow cyclists and eco-mobilists, The time has come to celebrate spring and welcome the beautiful

biking days ahead of us. And what other way than to be a part of Critical Mass for a JOYFUL, FESTIVE, HAPPY urban bike ride on March 30th. Because bicycles are a fun, reliable alternative to cars, Because bicycles make people happy, Because biking feeds solidarity, friendship and sustainable social change,

Come to the spring Critical Mass!

@ AT SQUARE PHILIPS (corner Union and Ste-Catherine).

Friday March 30th, 6-9 pm

Re-think Dis/ability Film Series presents: "Murderball"

MURDERBALL documents the lives of some members of The Quad-Rugby Association's Team USA as they heat up the rugby court and smash some stereo- types along the way. The film will be followed by a

facilitated discussion with Montreal-based disabled activist Tara St Laurent. Tara is a multi-Dis/abled Dis/ability Activist who has worked on the Board's of the former Concordia Women's Centre, The DisAbled Women's Network (DAWN) Canada, and Montreal's ACTION des Femmes Handicappe -- born

with a congenital dis/ability she's spent most of her life wondering, reading, writing, talking... and sometimes raging about it.

@ 2110 Mackay *

Monday April 2nd, 7:30pm

Legacy of Torture: The War Against the Black Liberation Movement

Eight former Black Panthers were arrested January 23rd in California, New York and Florida on charges related to the 1971 killing of a San Francisco police officer. Similar charges were thrown out after it was

revealed that police used torture to extract confessions when some of these same men were arrested in

New Orleans in 1973. A short documentary, Legacy of Torture: The War Against the Black Liberation

Movement, as well as a film featuring former Black Panther political prisoner Herman Bell, will be screened, followed by presentations and discussion. Donations will be accepted for legal defense funds.

Presented by Certain Days, Kersplebedeb, 2110 Centre, and others TBA.

@ 1395 Rene Levesque west, Room VA-114, VA Building, Concordia University *

* All events are FREE and held in wheelchair accessible venues, unless otherwise noted. Free ASL interpretation and childcare are available for events hosted at the 2110 Centre (minimum 48hr advance request). Metro tickets and snacks are provided. For events held at the 2110, please avoid wearing perfumes or other scented products.

Thursday, April 5th 7 a.m. - 1 pm

DAY OF SOLIDARITY WITH ABDELKADER BELAOUNI

FIFTEEN MONTHS IN SANCTUARY IS TOO LONG!! TEN YEARS WITHOUT STATUS IS FAR, FAR TOO LONG!! Kader is a Canadian without status who is simply asking for legal recognition in order to live without fear and in dignity. His request for status was turned down in a decision which discriminates against Kader on the basis of his blindness. Kader's quest has strong popular support, but has met with closed doors on the part of the government. On his 460th day in sanctuary, join us for a speak-out and rally at Immigration Canada's Montreal office, where we will affirm our recognition of Kader as a member of our community, reject discrimination and demand official recognition of his status now!

@ Immigration Canada, 1010 St-Antoine West (corner Peel), Metro Bonaventure

General Assembly of the Concordia Food Collective

Board of the People's Potato
and the Frigo Vert
Tuesday April 10th
People's Potato Serving Area
Hall Building (1455 Demaisonneuve W) 7th Floor
5:30pm Supper
6pm Meeting
Free childcare and food will be provided!

All Members Welcome!