

# **Racialization and Marginalization of Immigrants** **A New Wave of Xenophobia in Canada**

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## REVIEW ESSAY / NOTE CRITIQUE

# Racialization and Marginalization of Immigrants: A New Wave of Xenophobia in Canada

**Habiba Zaman**

Agnew, Vijay, ed., *Racialized Migrant Women in Canada: Essays on Health, Violence, and Equity* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 2009)

Choudry, Aziz, Jill Hanley, Steve Jordan, Eric Shragge, and Martha Stiegman, *Fight Back: Workplace Justice for Immigrants* (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing 2009)

Das Gupta, Tania, *Real Nurses and Others: Racism in Nursing* (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing 2009)

Dossa, Parin, *Racialized Bodies, Disabling Worlds: Storied Lives of Immigrant Muslim Women* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 2009)

THE FOUR BOOKS REVIEWED in this essay share a common theme: exploring the links between immigrants, especially women immigrants, and race/racism in Canada. The titles of three of the books – those by Agnew, Das Gupta, and Dossa – reveal racialization as a process embedded in the labour market and in socio-economic-legal-political sectors in Canada. Most current anti-racist scholars<sup>1</sup> use the term “racialized women,” although the concepts of “visible

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1. Himani Bannerji, ed., *Returning the Gaze: Essays on Racism, Feminism and Politics* (Toronto 1993); George Dei, *Theory and Practice: Anti-Racism Education* (Halifax 1996); Enakshi Dua and Angela Robertson, *Scratching the Surface: Canadian Anti-Racist Feminist Thought* (Toronto 1999); Genevieve Fuji Johnson and Randy Enomoto, eds., *Race, Racialization, and Antiracism in Canada and Beyond* (Toronto 2007); Sherene Razack, ed., *Race, Space, and the Law: Unmapping a White Settler Society* (Toronto 2002); Edith Samuel, *Integrative Racism: South Asians in Canadian Academe* (Toronto 2005); Carol Tator and Frances Henry, *Racial Profiling in Canada: Challenging the Myth of 'A Few Bad Apples'* (Toronto 2006); Sunera Thobani, *Exalted Subjects: Studies in the Making of Race and Nation in Canada* (Toronto

minority," "women of colour," "black women," and "immigrant women" are often used interchangeably. Racialization refers to systemic and structural processes – social, economic, cultural, and political – that exclude, marginalize, inferiorize, and disadvantage certain groups and populations based on the categorization of biological features.

Choudry *et al.*'s book title portrays immigrants as active agents in the workplace, fighting for social justice through myriad strategies. Undoubtedly, Canada is a country of immigrants, and its capitalist development and economic growth are inextricably connected not only with the history of colonization and subjugation of the First Nations population who are the original settlers, but also with the labour of immigrants. After the colonization of the First Nations people, which began happening with the arrival of the first Europeans, immigration policies developed as a significant tool for building Canada as a nation. About fifteen million people have immigrated to Canada since 1867, and Canada has adopted numerous immigration laws and policies. In the past as well as in the 21st century, immigrants and migrants' labour have been deemed necessary in Canada in order to address shortages of labour and stimulate demographic growth. At this time, Canada has an Annual Immigration Plan through which 225,000 people and more enter the country each year as permanent residents. Currently, more than 50 per cent of these immigrants are from Asia. Despite the orchestrated annual plan, more labourers are brought in as migrant workers due to shortages of labour in agriculture, restaurants, tourist industries, construction, and so on, even during this current world-wide economic recession.

A number of scholars have argued effectively that Canada's immigration policies have been discriminatory in nature and that these policies perpetuate gender inequity, racism, and class-based social divisions.<sup>2</sup> For example, during the second half of the nineteenth century, hundreds of Chinese male labourers were admitted for the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway. Once the railroad, a vital link in Canada's economic-political unification, was completed in 1885, Chinese labour was deemed disposable. The head tax on Chinese immigrants that was then imposed and continuously raised severely limited Chinese immigration, which was then stopped completely with the passage of the Chinese Immigration Act of 1923, allowing only diplomats, merchants and

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2007).

2. For example, Sedef Arat-Koc, "Neo-liberalism, State Restructuring and Immigration: Changes in Canadian Policies in the 1990s," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 34, 2 (1999/2000), 31–56; Agnes Calliste, "Race, Gender and Canadian Immigration Policy: Blacks from the Caribbean, 1900–1932," in Joy Parr and Mark Rosenfield, eds., *Gender and History in Canada* (Toronto 1996), 70–87; Lisa Jakubowski, *Immigration and the Legalization of Racism* (Halifax 1997); Valerie Knowles, *Strangers at Our Gates: Canadian Immigration and Immigration Policy, 1540–1997* (Toronto 1997); Sunera Thobani, "Globalization and Racialization of Citizenship in Late 20th Century Canada," Unpublished PhD dissertation, Simon Fraser University, 1998.

students even temporary status in Canada. Similarly, the Immigration Act of 1908, commonly known as the Continuous Journey Act, controlled the entry of immigrants from the Indian sub-continent and resulted in a steep decline in the number of South Asian immigrants. Further, the First Domestic Scheme that recruited about 100 female domestics from the Caribbean countries was introduced in 1910–1911. Later on, in the 1950s, the Second Domestic Scheme was introduced to bring in more Caribbean domestics. Unlike domestics from Europe, Black domestics from Caribbean countries – mostly from Jamaica and Barbados – faced discriminatory requirements for acquiring permanent residence, including being tested for venereal disease or being returned to their countries of origin if considered unsuited for the job. Historically, as these examples illustrate, Canada's immigration policy and structured labour market have reinforced the exploitation of racialized women and black women within an already existing gendered and racialized labour force.

*Real Nurses and Others: Racism in Nursing* is Tania Das Gupta's sequel to her earlier book, *Racism and Paid Work* (1996), in which she argued that the capitalist workplace not only searches for cheap labour, but also promotes and sustains racism and sexism to gain profit. *Real Nurses and Others* demonstrates that structural and systemic racism and sexism continue and are being sustained in the labour market even in the 21st century. In this book, which is based on a survey of 593 Ontario Nursing Association members, Das Gupta investigates how heterosexist familial ideologies display doctors as "father" figures and nurses as "mother" figures, and racialization organizes the health-care workforce where blackness positions a nurse or a supervisor or even a manager as an aide to white nurses, who are perceived as "real" nurses. This ideology of "real" nurses perpetuates racialized nurses as subordinate, inferior, less valued, and thus "Other" in the healthcare system.

Devoting two of the chapters to development of a theoretical framework, Das Gupta contextualizes racism within the wider socio-economic-political relationships in healthcare, more specifically in nursing, in Canada. Using an anti-racist feminist political economy approach, Das Gupta poignantly examines how race continuously interacts and weaves together with gender and class. Providing a larger historical context, Das Gupta's framework touches on varied discourses on the nature of women's work, including women's care-giving work, as a "labour of love." Although nurses are commonly labelled as a middle-class, professional group of women, Das Gupta eloquently points out the existence of various categories of nurses, each category requiring different levels of education, skills, training, and experience. This results in different forms of autonomy, income, and location within the healthcare structure.

Delving into manifestations of racism in the labour market and in the workplace, Das Gupta problematizes racism by illustrating debates in the theorizing of race, racism, and racialization, and examines how the process of racialization constantly intersects with gender and class relations. According to Das Gupta, although skin-colour racism is the harshest kind of racism, other forms

of racism based on culture, language, nationalism, and religion – rightfully identified as neo-racism – also exist in Canada. Indeed, these forms of racism, such as anti-Black, anti-Sikh, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, and Orientalism, co-exist side by side and are interconnected. Providing a comprehensive overview of racism, Das Gupta explains attitudinal and behavioural racism, systemic and institutional racism, racist discourse and racism as an ideology, intersections of race, gender, and class in the formation of the nationhood of Canada. Her use of anti-Black racism deserves attention as she navigates briefly the history of the slave trade in order to shed light on the dehumanization of slaves and the perpetuation of racist ideology afterwards. Anti-Black racism has continued in the forms of material conditions, images, and ideologies. One example is Africville, a Black settlement in Halifax that was bulldozed in the late 1960s. Another example is the disenfranchisement of Black youth from socio-economic-political entitlements. The unemployment rate among this group is currently as high as 80 per cent in Nova Scotia. Citing the well-publicized case of *Regina v. R.D.S* in 1995 and a 2002 *Toronto Star* report on racial profiling by police officers, Das Gupta demonstrates how anti-Black racism is embedded in the criminal justice system and in institutions – in this case, law enforcement agencies. In brief, racism is institutionalized from the police force to the criminal justice system to the healthcare system.

Das Gupta broadly uses five research techniques: (i) content and discourse analysis of arbitration proceedings and reports (these are public documents; thus, individual cases are not allowed to be used); (ii) a short survey to procure an overall picture of racism in nursing, which, according to her, did not prove very effective for investigation; (iii) in-depth interviews to solicit information pertinent to both individual and systemic and structural racism; (iv) statistical data; and (v) a review of published literature. After discussing each research technique, Das Gupta outlines its limitations, indicating distinctly how qualitative data, i.e., in-depth interviews, can complement survey data to unfold systemic racism within an institution. It is worth mentioning that Das Gupta was approached by the Ontario Nurses' Association (ONA) to conduct research and to write a report on systemic racism in nursing. Das Gupta not only accepted this offer that linked her to the nursing community, but also successfully delivered both a report and a book.

Of all forms of racism, systemic racism is the most difficult to pinpoint. Personal experiences or observations are not enough to reveal it. Since contemporary racism is generally not based on historical, biological, or cultural inferiority, a conceptual endeavour is essential to locate how racism functions in the workplace. Referring to the story of Evelyn, a Black nurse who filed several grievances in the 1990s, Das Gupta passionately argues that some workers are subjected to "infantilization," a process in which someone's work is continuously devalued. This devaluation eventually erodes the worker's dignity and self-worth. Needless to say, this process of infantilization has an adverse effect on a worker's ability to function effectively in a workplace.

Infantilized workers are often terminated or forced to resign. In Evelyn's case, the infantilization was based on racism. Evelyn's story demonstrates that the daily behaviour and actions of management in a workplace can, in fact, be linked to systemic racism.

The greatest strength of *Real Nurses and Others* is Das Gupta's meticulous attention to the often complex workplace trajectories of the participants and to their voices as they unfold various forms of racism, their journeys in the profession, and their identities as Blacks and as women. With both quantitative and qualitative information, Das Gupta reveals how the experiences of racialized nurses differ from those of non-racialized nurses, although there are variations based on ethnic origin. Interestingly, one-fourth of the participants in Das Gupta's research mentioned they were "put down" by their colleagues in front of patients, a symptom of what Das Gupta identifies as a "poisoned environment." Racial segregation in the workplace, differential treatment of racialized nurses, various layers of exclusion – all are indicators of systemic racism. For example, Black nurses were largely concentrated in obstetrics, and were least present in more desirable units such as the intensive care unit, the operating room, and the emergency department. Distinguishing between individual racism in the forms of behaviour, acts, and attitudes, on the one hand, and systematic forms of racism such as policies, procedures, and institutions, on the other, Das Gupta, throughout Chapters Four, Five, and Six reveals an astonishing finding: that the most reported racism was in relationship with managers, patients, and colleagues more than with how nurses had been hired, trained, accommodated due to disability, received performance reviews, and received disciplinary actions.

Das Gupta's survey results reveal a quantitative aspect of diversity in nursing while simultaneously securing anonymity. This anonymity facilitated the generating of an array of candid comments ranging from denial of racism to reverse racism to playing the "race" card. According to Das Gupta, racial meanings not only shift over time and place, but the use of "Othering" is always relational. For example, a French-Canadian nurse said that she was "put down" whenever she spoke in French as she was expected to speak English. Similarly, a Jewish nurse found that she was "put down" because of her religion. Racialization occurs due to one's identity, social class, and ethnicity. Through citing several narrations, Das Gupta reveals the racialization process and how it can promote "Othering" on the basis of accent, language, religion, and ethnicity. However, Das Gupta reminds readers that in all the cases involved in her research, the scale of racism based on accent, language, religion, and ethnicity is much smaller relative to racism based on race, especially Blackness. That is, when compared with all other groups, Black nurses faced both systemic and structural racism embedded in the healthcare system.

Das Gupta passionately presents racism as a multi-dimensional problem that requires addressing through multi-method strategies including public education, worker support, community alliances, union grievance procedures,

equity legislation, and the courts. Of all the problems, co-worker harassment is one of the most cited in Das Gupta's research, and according to her, one pro-labour and anti-racist strategy would be to build a diverse union. Das Gupta's research clearly demonstrates that fighting racism through grievances and arbitration hearings is not as effective as has been perceived. A major reason is that the Ontario Nurses Association allies with management rather than with its own workers, including Black nurses. Indeed, Black nurses too often face reprisal for taking action against individual experiences of racism and moreover experience psychological stress, loss of material support, and physical ailments. The list could no doubt go on.

One of the major drawbacks of Das Gupta's book is its use of fourteen tables based on the survey of the nurses. Several percentages in the tables make the significant issues and main message of the book fragmented and less appealing. Another drawback, and the most disappointing, is the use of language and labelling throughout the book. White and non-white are used as categories, so that white appears as the norm and pivotal point of any discussion. As this book clearly belongs to anti-racist work, racialized people should be the central point of discourse and reference. A further point: contemporary anti-racist literature refers to racialized women rather than to women of colour. Finally, Das Gupta's recommendations for fighting against racism are brief and modest and will work best in a liberal democratic structure, the very structure that produces racialization.

Those who have read Das Gupta's previous work may find that her current book, consisting of seven chapters, is an extension of Chapter Four of *Racism and Paid Work*, revealing systemic racism in nursing that unfolds in complexity as it cross-cuts gender and class discrimination. In the current book, her selected and careful use of the nurses' narrations is noteworthy. By citing narrations, Das Gupta successfully demonstrates the processes and structures that sustain racism in healthcare. Overall, *Real Nurses and Others* is a superb book that reveals multi-faceted racism and sexism in the healthcare system. It is clearly written, persuasive, and polyphonic, and focuses on naming racism when it occurs even in subtle forms. The book is an important contribution to anti-racist works.

Visible racial segregation in the labour market reveals complex social, political, and economic inequalities. To eradicate racism and sexism in the labour market, the Canadian federal government has introduced employment equity policy targeting four designated marginalized groups, including "Visible Minorities." Those who oppose this policy both argue that racialized groups receive unfair benefits in the workplace and identify a series of discourses like "white victimization" and "reverse racism," terms that both Das Gupta and Agnew, the editor of *Racialized Migrant Women in Canada*, mention. The federal government's policies and programs, including multiculturalism and employment equity, aim at eradicating racism while marketing neo-liberal achievements within a liberal democratic welfare state. Canada has been hailed

internationally as a forerunner of multicultural policy embracing diversity among immigrants. Canada's approach has been admired by many countries and has even been adopted by Australia, another major immigrant-receiving country. Despite Canada's progressive policies, the inherent contradictions of the welfare state in dealing with workplace rights, racialized bodies, violence, disability, health, and the narratives of racialized experiences have been documented well in all four books being discussed here. The new racism that deems a racialized group as "Other" – currently targeting Muslims in the form of Muslimophobia – has every potential to be extended to broader racialized groups in due course.

Reviewing an array of literature, Vijay Agnew in *Racialized Migrant Women in Canada* eloquently argues that: "... racialization is a process that occurs in the context of power relations, whether it is in discourses, systemic to structures and institutions, or merely a matter of everyday encounters." (8) For example, the Montréal Police Department identified five racial groups – Jamaican, Haitian, Asiatic, extreme right, and Latino – who initiate street gangs. Since 9/11, Muslims, more specifically Arabs and Pakistanis, have been systematically scrutinized and consistently suspected of being connected with terrorist activities. This portrayal in the media, discourses, and law-enforcing agencies connects racialized groups to criminalization and scrutiny that consequently reinforces these groups as "Other" and "deviant."

Agnew's edited collection brings together a number of topics pertinent to racialized immigrant women, such as violence, health, racist social construction of Muslim and Haitian-Canadian women, and activism at the local level. The studies discussed in the book convey an interdisciplinary perspective as well as the perspectives of health studies, law, nursing, political science, and sociology. Most of the book's authors are academics, although some are community activists. In the introduction, Agnew provides an overview of the intersections of race, gender, and class biases in immigration policies and the vulnerabilities of racialized immigrants due to religion, skin colour, and perceived societal assumptions, despite these immigrants achieving citizenship status. The premise of this book is to draw attention to three major issues: discrimination immigrant women face based on country of origin, race, and gender; biases embedded in public policies and social structures; and the agency that immigrant women demonstrate through resistance.

Agnew's book contains ten chapters, excluding the introduction and conclusion, and is divided into three sections pertinent to immigrant women: violence, health, and equity. In the beginning of each section, Agnew lays out a brief summary of each issue in published literature, in policy, and in lives in immigrant communities. Rather than either presenting a discourse analysis on the form and nature of inequality or focusing on identity politics, these chapters document racialized immigrant women's experiences of economic, legal, political, and social inequalities. These experiences are presented in specific contexts ranging from family/home to local community to institution,



from the urge for violence-free home situations to equity in healthcare and in the workplace. Although in her introduction Agnew delineates feminist and anti-racist analysis, she shies away from pinpointing the book's overall theoretical framework. In fact, most of the chapters lack any apparent theoretical framework. The ten chapters focus mainly on two major immigrant-populated cities, Toronto and Montréal, although another major city, Halifax, where the immigrant population is sparse, is also included. Inclusion of smaller cities and rural and remote areas could have provided another dimension to the book. It is possible that in smaller places, the experiences of racialized immigrants in terms of equity and justice would be even more negative than in the major cities.

The first chapter, by Janet E. Mosher, explores immigrant women's experiences of domestic violence, and how these experiences are constituted not only by an individual's action, but by social structures that reinforce violence and power. Basing her exploration on interviews with 64 women in Ontario, Mosher examines male violence against women in their homes and how the welfare state and immigration policies condone and perpetuate this male violence. In the chapter and its conclusion, Mosher tacitly urges non-racialized people, more specifically women, to change the structures that perpetuate male violence. However, Mosher makes no specific recommendations.

The next chapter, entitled "Violence in Immigrant Families in Halifax," explores immigrant women's experience of domestic violence. Based on a policy-oriented project where the goal was to enhance the knowledge of the policy makers, Barbara Cottrell, Evangelia Tastsoglou, and Carmen Monaco report findings that according to them echo the findings in major immigrant-receiving provinces in Canada, that is, that male violence against women in immigrant families is common. Having said so, these authors could have outlined specific policies that could be implemented in Halifax where immigrant population is sparse, as compared with the policies used in Toronto, Vancouver, and Montréal, major immigrant-populated cities.

Chapters Three to Six in Section Two of Agnew's collection explore immigrant women's health issues and demonstrate a positive correlation between social class and women's health, however it is measured. In Chapter Three, Arlene Bierman, Farah Ahmad, and Farah Mawani examine the interactions among the determinants of health pertinent to gender and migration. The authors' proposed conceptual framework, which illustrates multiple complexities from pre-migration to immigrants' settlement encompassing macro-meso-micro levels, deserves attention. Using the results of qualitative interviews, Denise L. Spitzer in Chapter Four gives voice to immigrant women while exploring a key question: what impact does health policy and context have on immigrant and refugee women's health in Canada? Evaluating a few of Canada's major policies, Spitzer poignantly argues that these policies, from immigration to health, adversely affect these women's lives, including their health. Moreover, linguistic barriers, as well as precarious employment

conditions, restrict women's ability to attend medical appointments during regular business hours. Unfortunately, Spitzer fails to make distinctions regarding the degree of access to health services between immigrant and refugee women that arise because of their different legal statuses.

Ito Peng and Margot Lettner's chapter on older immigrants is a thought-provoking essay that provides an array of guidelines for a gerontology researcher. Identifying a number of gaps, Peng and Lettner recommend a number of strategies useful for a beginning researcher inclined to do health research with immigrant women. Pointing out that health is a continuum that spans women's lives, Peng and Lettner deplore the absence of literature on pre- and post-migratory experiences and how these experiences impact immigrant women's health. These authors argue that while both men and women face much the same challenges, gender, power relations, and socio-economic status result in differential health outcomes for women. In Chapter Six, Bilkin Vissandjee, Alisha Apale, and Saskia Wieringa problematize social capital theory pertinent to gender-based analysis in power relations. One of these authors' main critiques is that current social-capital literature is Eurocentric, prioritizing the nuclear family, its norms and values, and representing a static perspective of social relations. These authors argue that social capital may function for those who experience marginalization in both horizontal and vertical networks. In their conclusive statement, the authors suggest that social capital as a stepping stone for migrant women may function as an essential tool to subvert structural injustices. This chapter urges policy makers to identify and understand social capital that may obstruct healthy behaviour or perceptions of health and illness. However, this chapter never illustrates or cites examples of how social capital among immigrant women functions or serves as a tool for fostering women's health. In its lack of women's voices and experiences, this chapter deviates from the rest of the book.

Section Three of Agnew's collection contains four chapters and addresses inequity issues that immigrant women encounter in employment, care-giving, advocacy, and family-dispute resolution. Reviewing government documents and earlier studies, Monica Boyd and Jessica Yiu in "Immigrant Women and Earnings Inequality in Canada" provide information on immigrant women's earnings in the 21st century. Boyd and Yiu skilfully demonstrate immigrant women's triple disadvantages in the labour market by virtue of their gender, race, and immigration status. Evaluating briefly the federal government's employment-equity and pay-equity programs, the authors correctly point out that these programs barely address immigrant women's needs due to the underlying assumption that "a rising tide lifts all boats."

In the eighth chapter, "Haitian-Canadians' Experiences of Racism in Quebec: A Postcolonial Perspective," Louise Racine examines how race, gender, class, and ethnicity intersect to shape the everyday lives of Haitian-Canadian caregivers in Québec. Delineating candidly the context of the research – white researcher and black participants – Racine lays out a

theoretical and methodological framework, and here lies the strength of her analysis. Providing a historical background of multiculturalism and of Haitian immigrants in Québec, Racine explores how racism and ethnocentrism in Québec impede Haitian-Canadians' social integration and determine the utilization of healthcare services by Haitians, including how they provide care to their aging parents. Citing the rise of Islamophobia in the town of Hérouxville, Québec, Racine illustrates how many smaller towns and big cities in Québec resist diverse cultures. According to her, the process of "Othering" in school, work, health, and the socio-political arena is a complex one that breeds multiple exclusions – social, economic, cultural, and political – based on gender, race, religion, ethnicity, and class. For Racine, integrating knowledge from the margins is one of the essential prerequisites to achieve justice in the Canadian healthcare system.

The ninth chapter, Jill Hanley's "Challenging Gendered and Ethnoracial Assumptions in Organizing for Housing Rights," highlights the racism and shortcomings inherent in a multicultural approach that excludes women and illustrates how a grassroots Montréal tenants' rights organization struggled to address race, ethnicity, and gender-based stereotypes in community organizing. Finally, Chapter Ten, Annie Bunting and Shadi Mokhtari's "Muslim Women's Interests and the Case of 'Shari'a' Tribunals in Ontario," examines the debates and discourses surrounding "Shari'a" arbitration tribunals in Ontario. These tribunals arose out of a new Ontario law that requires any religious arbitration to conform to provincial statutory requirements. Providing a background for this debate, Bunting and Mokhtari judiciously reveal the challenges social-justice activists encounter when law reform relates to Muslim women's issues.

As a whole, *Racialized Migrant Women in Canada* has a number of limitations. First, although used in the book's title, "migrant" is used in a comprehensive way without any explanation in the introduction. This kind of categorization without explanation is problematic. The concept of "migrant" has different legal, social, economic, and political connotations that may further portray racialized women as "Other," and this clearly is neither Agnew's intention nor the book's objective. Second, the book's use of language is problematic. For example, the portrayal of women as "victims" in the first section takes away women's agency in an aggressive situation. Language is powerful and fluid, and since the beginning of feminist publications on male violence, language has been transformed. "Victim" and other kinds of negative wording require and deserve special attention. Third, the book contains a number of sweeping and generalized comments about racialized immigrants' perceived community. For example, the statement "Not one of the interviewed women received support from her community" (89) is problematic because it reproduces cultural explanations and stereotypes. These questions arise: What kind of support – tangible and intangible – is the author talking about? What does "the community" mean? Does it mean an ethno-specific cultural community?

Finally, while it plays an important role in some of the book's chapters, culture is often reduced to discrete or overly simplified variables such as religion, race, ethnicity, family type, region, or country of origin. Presenting an expanded view of culture in the introduction would have helped offset this limited and limiting view of an important concept.

Of the three sections in Agnew's collection, Section Three on immigrant women and equity is the most exciting. While male violence and health issues pertinent to immigrant women may provide valuable roadmaps, understanding the practices and discourses of equity provides critically important insight into the workings of asymmetrical power and socio-economic-legal-political inequality. This section of four chapters has a great deal to contribute to our understanding of these unequal structural and systemic processes. Overall, Agnew's collection provides much for immigration literature to think about. Although it does not provide complete answers to many questions on violence, health, and equity issues, the collection nonetheless represents an important beginning.

In *Racialized Bodies, Disabling Worlds*, Parin Dossa explores the perceived differences of multiple abilities, gendered identities, nationality, and religion by interrogating structures of exclusion and oppression through voices of racialized women who have disabilities. This engaging book is an ethnographic study based on narratives of fifteen women – six Iranian, seven South Asian, and two women who have children with disabilities. From the perspectives of the women themselves, Dossa skilfully demonstrates how people on the margins of society can challenge people who do not have visible disabilities and reshape their world. At the same time, people on the margins can affirm their agency and avoid being perceived as helpless victims. Advocating for social justice and creating equality for a marginalized population are the key goals for the book. Juxtaposing her younger sibling Mohamud's life-story, Dossa contextualizes how the state, despite its welfare policy, institutionalizes and denies people with disabilities migrating with their families. These actions create an anti-disabilities structure that delegates power and authority to able-bodied non-racialized professionals and workers who in turn are perceived to be experts and managers of people with disabilities. As a result of her volunteer work and research, Dossa finds that in the Western world, disability has become a business that sustains the generic category of disability while dichotomizing "Us" and "Them" and erasing race and gender. A key question that Dossa explores in the book is: How do we render social visibility to people who are otherwise dehumanized? (13) Through the participants' multiple stories and strategies, Dossa portrays how racialized individuals who have disabilities can become socially visible, humanized, and active agents.

Critiquing the so-called objective point system that has been introduced since 1967, Dossa in her opening chapter shows how the immigration policy of Canada perceives disability as a drain on the social system and does not acknowledge society's responsibility to this marginalized population.

Exclusion of people with disabilities in Canadian immigration policy indicates their non-recognition and results in their marginalization in sectors such as healthcare and social services. Further, the increasing literature on disability hardly makes reference to racialized persons. The disability movement also lacks recognition of diversity. Revealing the erroneously “neutral” category of disability, where the focal point is actually able-bodied young white males, Dossa’s goal is to show how race and gender matter in disability literature and scholarship – racialized individuals with disabilities face social erasure and exclusion that compromise their very humanity.

Storytelling is a social act that restores humanity and reveals isolated and privatized life experiences in a larger socio-political context. To overcome the separateness of individual experiences, Dossa as a researcher not only passionately elicits and listens to the stories of racialized women, but channels these stories to other people to create a common ground. Dossa explores the multiple vulnerabilities of racialized women and shows how their humanity has been denied. Women’s stories, she claims, are testimonies that interconnect lived realities and differences and multiple social locations to create and advance a just society. This research project through storytelling becomes unequivocally a social justice project as women not only narrate their lived realities and everyday lives, but also create an alternative space where social relationships can be fostered.

The research participants’ identities as Muslims provide an entry point for Dossa to explore her argument that “persons with disabilities are human and are subject in their own right.” (8) All of the women migrated to Canada as refugees and developed a disability (except the two who have children with disabilities) after migrating to Canada. Ranging between 35 and 50 years old, most of the women had been living in Canada from four to 30 years. In the book, Dossa maps out her methodology in vivid ways that not only describe the participants’ countries of origin, religion, age, and gender, but eloquently point out their heterogeneity in terms of their migration history, how they were received in Canada, their ethnicity, and their socioeconomic status. For example, South Asian migrants from East Africa in the early 1970s were well received as their labour was required for an economic boom and resulting labour shortage in Canada. In contrast, Iranians who migrated in 1978 and after were not well received as Canada was experiencing an economic recession resulting in the downsizing of social sectors. Undoubtedly, the degree of shortage of labour in the Canadian capitalist economy is linked with racialized people’s inclusion and exclusion.

Through racialized women with disabilities, Dossa explores one of the key issues in migration literature: diasporic community. Reviewing an array of well-recognized literature, Dossa argues that diaspora is shaped by political rather than cultural factors as ancestral cultural practices, values, and traditions are reinterpreted and reshaped in the larger socio-economic-political context. Thus, the revival of Islam in the West could be explained as an ideology

of resistance to counter structural inequalities and neo-racism. Interestingly, none of the participants in Dossa's study spoke elaborately about her Muslim identity; rather, this identity was referred to in low-key ways. These women, despite their social exclusion, engaged with the larger society. This finding persuaded Dossa to address in each chapter one of the key questions that is almost non-existent in disability literature: What is it like to be a racialized Muslim woman with a disability?

In each chapter from Chapter Two to Five, through the voice of one woman, Dossa explores the multi-faceted dimensions of individual disability, showing how each crosses the boundary from the world of no visible disabilities to the world of disabilities. The narrations of participants Mehrun, Tamiza, Firouzeh, and Sara range from recalling the car accident that caused a disability, to remembering life in the country of origin, to describing life in Canada, to making the transition from a refugee to a Canadian citizen. These stories are rich and vibrant and demonstrate how these women are linked through their accomplishments, aspirations, and struggles. The strength of each individual story lies in the fact that each participant is located in a particular socio-economic-political-geographic context while addressing the issues of race and gender. Through their stories, these women identify their exclusion and marginality due to structural and systemic factors. Indeed, their vulnerability has been accelerated due to their "disabled" and racialized bodies, which ultimately shrink their opportunities in various sectors, including the labour market.

In the book, Dossa draws the reader's attention by outlining how these women achieve their personhood from Islamic heritage, how they reinterpret Islam to be meaningful to them. Dossa correctly cautions that these women's leanings towards Islamic heritage should be considered within a larger context including their structural exclusion, dehumanization, and marginalization. Reviewing the conflicting relationships between secular Western liberal democracies and contemporary Islamic movements, Dossa reveals how Muslim women exercise agency through their engagement with Islamic scholarship, previously a male domain, and how women's agency may challenge different forms of domination, including male domination. For example, Mehrun, one of the participants, points out that religion should focus on a person's internal values as these will humanize the person. Simultaneously, while referring to social services, Mehrun argues that focusing on part of the person reduces that person, and society should focus on inner values.

While focusing on four women's stories is a strength of the book, it can also be considered a drawback. Featuring four women's stories means that eleven other stories, each representing a participant in Dossa's research, are subdued. The selection of these four stories represents an exclusion of majority voices in numerical terms. Dossa's analysis may be influenced by all fifteen stories, but unfortunately they are not revealed. To eradicate this limitation, a background socio-economic history of these other eleven women could have been

incorporated as an appendix. Further, to rectify social exclusion and marginalization, Dossa could have chalked out a number of strategies directed to the world of no visible disabilities, from local to provincial to national levels.

Overall, *Racialized Bodies, Disabling Worlds* is a thought-provoking and critical engagement with issues that are becoming increasingly significant and no doubt will become more visible in the years and decades to come. To be sure, this provocative book is definitely going to ruffle some feathers.

The four books under review here have used the concept of immigrant in a comprehensive way, ranging from undocumented workers to racialized citizens. In a welfare state like Canada, each individual, irrespective of citizenship, is expected to have access to social entitlements. However, this rarely happens as Canada delineates clear distinctions among citizens, immigrants, migrant workers, refugees, undocumented workers, and asylum seekers. Hence, the concept of "immigrant" has a number of connotations: legal, social, class, and racial.

Legally, the concept of immigrant in Canada refers to those who are landed immigrants – commonly known as permanent residents – rather than to citizens who can hold Canadian passports. In 2009, the federal government's target was to accept up to 265,000 new immigrants, i.e. permanent residents.<sup>3</sup> In addition to permanent residents, Canada every year brings in a large number of visa workers, from seasonal farm labourers to domestic workers. Visa workers are commonly referred to as "migrant workers," "work permit holders," or "temporary workers." In addition to government-sponsored refugees, Canada also receives undocumented workers and asylum seekers who seek refugee status every year.

Currently, there exists a huge backlog of refugee claims – an estimated 61,000. On 30 March 2010, to accelerate the delay-plagued refugee determination process, Canada's immigration minister tabled Bill C-11<sup>4</sup> in the House of Commons. On average, it takes nineteen months for a refugee claim to get to an Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB). Bill C-11 proposes a maximum period of 68 days between when a claim is first deemed eligible by border or immigration officials and when it is heard by an IRB official, and giving failed refugee claimants an opportunity to appeal to a Refugee Appeal Division (RAD) of the IRB. The Conservative federal government's reforms would divide prospective refugees into two streams—those from so-called safe countries and those from elsewhere. Claimants from safe countries would receive hearings, but be ineligible for an appeal process. Refugee advocates warn that the bill's strict timelines will make it extremely difficult for refugee claimants and their lawyers to prepare their cases effectively. While the Opposition

3. *The Vancouver Sun*, 11 February 2009.

4. This discussion on Bill C-11 is based on a news report by Cristin Schmitz in the *Lawyers Weekly* in the 23 April 2010 issue. The title of the report is "Timelines mar refugee system overhaul: lawyers."

Liberals called Bill C-11 “a good start,” both the Bloc Québécois and the NDP demanded modification of the bill’s timelines and of safe country provisions, based on the argument that everyone should have the opportunity to appeal whatever their country of origin.

Of all the above-mentioned categories, undocumented workers are the least preferred category when it comes to hiring for jobs. It is also evident that employers have several excuses not to hire racialized immigrants, let alone undocumented workers. A 2008 conference on workplace discrimination revealed that Québec employers use all sorts of excuses to avoid hiring immigrants and visible minorities.<sup>5</sup> Currently, more than 50 per cent of immigrants come from Asia, and the majority of principal immigrants, mostly men, come under the skilled category. This eventually creates a two-tier system: those who migrate as principal applicants are “skilled,” male, educated, and financially independent; those “others” who migrate as dependents are “unskilled,” female, less educated, and financially dependent. If the Québec employers’ perceptions, or more accurately xenophobia, are the norm in the labour market, the second category, i.e., racialized women, will be the last to be hired and the first to be fired during economic recession.

The demand for racialized people’s labour is inextricably linked to labour market needs, provided all other labour supply sources are exhausted. For example, in October 2008, the BC provincial government supported the recruitment of temporary foreign workers from the Philippines. Thus, at a job fair in Manila, employers met with pre-screened applicants for positions in several sectors such as hospitality, tourism, and transportation services.<sup>6</sup> Recruiting foreign workers is the last resort as it is very expensive to go through a process that may include interviewing the applicants in their country of origin. A continuous demand still exists for certain occupations in many industries. A Vancouver-based firm commented: “... [we] have one client who needs about 10 community care workers to work with mentally or physically challenged people for northern Alberta and B.C., who has advertised for months to no avail.”<sup>7</sup>

*Fight Back*, the final book to be discussed in this essay, is not a conventional academic book as it originates out of a collaborative project between a team of five university researchers and the Immigrant Workers Centre in Montréal. Part a historical synthesis of Canada as a “white settler colonial state” based on immigrant labour, part a presentation of interviews with immigrant workers, and part an exploration of the issues of government policy and workplace rights, the book’s specific aim is to examine immigrant labourers’ issues and workplace conditions as well as how these immigrants contest unjust

5. *The Montreal Gazette*, 14 November 2008, “Employers often write off minorities.”

6. *The Vancouver Sun*, 16 February 2009, “Temporary foreign workers still needed, say B.C. recruiters, lawyers: Unemployed Canadians not applying for jobs.”

7. Ibid.



situations both individually and collectively. In exploring these specificities, *Fight Back* also seeks to describe immigrant workers' survival strategies as well as their fighting-back strategies. These strategies include overt and subtle negotiations in multiple arenas from workplace issues to deportation by the state and immigrants' adaptation to dire economic necessity while showing defiance when they contest unjust situations both individually and collectively. Pointing out the prevailing state ideology in the name of national security that is conflated with xenophobia, this book provokes debate about workers' rights regardless of their legal status in Canada. *Fight Back* will be of interest to students, academics, and activists within the broad areas of labour studies, immigration, sociology, and policy issues.

Six short chapters follow the introduction. Drawing on a concise history of four major migrations to North America, ranging from forced migration via slavery to mass migration comprised of indentured/bonded labour from India and China, to emigration of millions of Europeans and a flow of migration from the global South to the North that ushered in the 1950s, Choudry *et al.* point out the racialized construction of the Canadian nation-state. In collaboration with Canadian immigration, labour, and various other policies, this racialized hegemony sustains a framework in which immigrants, migrants, and refugees have unequal access to rights. Using one of the most popular theoretical frameworks in migration literature, the "push" and "pull" factor, these authors succinctly argue that several factors pushed millions of labourers to migrate from the Global South to the North: the World Bank's Structural Adjustment Programs; the restructuring of global and national economics resulting from neo-liberalism; multiple trade pacts; and agreements including NAFTA and the privatization of essential services. The promises of a better life and the prospects of being able to send back remittances to support extended family in the country of origin act as pull factors in millions of migrants' lives. Citing several well-known authors' works in migration literature, the book finds the growth of a global apartheid based on migrant workers' labour from countries in the Global South. Further, contemporary contested issues such as the Canadian federal government's policy pertinent to national security and the Québec provincial government's reasonable accommodation have accelerated the growth of a new xenophobia that is embedded in the prevailing state ideology. The book succinctly provides a historical context to labour migration and the existence of racist policies in Canada. The book's authors passionately argue that in order to create a just society, the racialized construction of the nation as bilingual and bicultural needs to be contested.

*Fight Back* examines two major immigration policies of the federal government: the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP) and the Live-in Caregiver Program (LCP), which supply cheap labour to agriculture and all kinds of homecare. To illustrate work experiences, the book presents workers' narrations in two ways: one is a summary of the stories of specific participants or a group of participants, and the other cites excerpts from individual

narrations. Using a chronological story of migrants' lived experiences, the book reveals striking similarities in immigrants' experiences in terms of work and settlement across historical time and geographical space. Commonalities of experiences vary from disappointment and broken dreams of settlement, to low-waged jobs, to deskilling resulting from non-recognition of academic credentials and training in country of origin, to hope for better opportunities for children. To navigate the system, skilled workers as immigrants in Canada must unlearn their social status, conceal their qualifications in order to obtain a lower-echelon job, and deny their education and training in their country of origin. It must be noted, however, that the literature cited to illustrate earlier immigrants' work experiences is selective and dated.

*Fight Back's* analysis of the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (SAWP) and Bill C-50's enhancement of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) deserves attention. It is pointed out that the administration of these programs has been privatized, resulting in zero public accountability while manoeuvring immigration policy through negotiation of contracts and evaluation of programs. The historical withholding of citizenship rights from various groups, including Chinese and Indian workers, has an analogy with the experience of current temporary migrant workers who come through the SAWP and TFWP. These programs perpetuate a racialized non-citizen underclass in Canada. The book rightfully argues that the expansion of the agricultural industry, especially the expansion of corporate agriculture in Central Canada, is inextricably linked to the introduction of the TFWP. In addition to urging fundamental reforms, the book's authors strongly recommend removing the super-restrictions associated with SAWP and TFWP.

To provide an overview of the historical context of the Live-in Caregiver Program (LCP) while delving into caregivers' migration and work experiences, the book focuses on the Filipino Women's Organization in Québec known as PINAY and reveals the gendered nature of the LCP. Starting in the 1950s, single, childless domestic workers who were in good health and from Barbados and Jamaica started to come to Canada to work as nannies and maids. This migration originated in the Caribbean Domestic Scheme and was part of bilateral agreements between Canada and the Caribbean. Over the years, the scheme has been modified, but the fundamental character of the historical Domestic Scheme remains unchanged under the guise of the LCP. Although workers from the Philippines are currently favoured over those from the Caribbean, domestic work continues as a racialized and feminized profession.

The role of the migrant-sending countries pertinent to the domestic workers – first, Caribbean countries, and now, the Philippines – is tightly linked to these countries' development strategies. Massive labour migration mitigates severe unemployment problems in these countries, and remittances sent by migrant citizens serve as a way of earning foreign exchange to pay off debts to the International Monetary Fund. Examining the working conditions of domestic workers, the book sums up domestic workers' experiences, their

reasons for migration, their tenuous relationships with employers, and, most of all, the effects of federal and provincial policies, especially the Québec government's policies, that create numerous barriers and "grey zones."

One of the major drawbacks of the LCP is that it fosters family disintegration for domestic workers. The separation of immigrant domestic workers from their family members has caused one community, Filipinos living in Québec, to organize to assert their labour rights. *Fight Back* shows that the establishment of PINAY, a non-profit organization for Filipina workers, has created a space for developing a network of alliances, which cross-cut diverse women's organizations and protect Filipino workers' rights in Canada. One of the great trumps for PINAY is the inclusion of domestic workers under Québec Labour Standards (Normes de travail) and the amending of Labour Standards for migrant workers. PINAY's tactful but successful strategies to promote and protect migrant workers' rights include lobbying, use of electronic and print media, and collaboration with academics.

Throughout *Fight Back*, the authors illustrate varied strategies for both individual and collective adapting and resisting in the workplace. Migrants, immigrants, and refugees are portrayed not as passive but as active actors in resisting injustice in the workplace and in the wider society. Participants' narrations reveal the process of resignation, when workers hit their limits, and the process of resistance, when workers start to fight back. The book correctly argues that in addition to strategies involved with adaptation, resistance, and resignation, transgressive learning – that is, learning to challenge, exercise rights, and overcome exploitative work conditions – sustains resistance through generations. It is clear that challenging as an individual brings small gain, while building solidarity with a grassroots organization fosters an active collective engagement in terms of resistance and transgressive learning.

*Fight Back* has a number of limitations. First, it assumes that the reader knows the distinctions among migrants, immigrants, and refugees, and accordingly stays away from illustrating these important concepts in the introduction. Thus, economic migrants, refugees, and all the workers who come to Canada through different programs such as the LCP, SAWP, and TFWP are lumped together under one category: immigrants. Despite their commonality as workers, their very legal status as immigrants orchestrates various layers of vulnerability and marginality in the workplace. For example, the work experience of a non-status refugee significantly differs from that of an immigrant. Second, the book is methodologically sketchy. For example, the book never sheds light on the role of the front-line workers of the Immigrant Workers Centre and PINAY. A collaborative project requires giving credit to personnel in such Centres. In this book, the nameless and faceless workers in the IWC and PINAY place academics and community activists on unequal footing. Third, the number of participants (50) is not disclosed until page 58. A brief profile of the participants in the introduction could have provided the variations of the racialized workers in terms of geographical location.

Fourth, commonalities among immigrants across generations and geographical distance (from Germany to Canada) are reiterated throughout the book. However, commonalities rarely apply across the board like this. One reason for this failing is that the book's authors use dated published sources to support historical experiences of immigrants. Finally, while three chapters use names for the participants, one chapter omits naming altogether and identifies participants only as "one worker" or "one woman." These workers are not nameless and faceless. Naming a participant not only provides a human face to a book but gives dignity to a worker.

The strengths of *Fight Back* are its accessible language, its use of an array of participants' narrations, and its broad coverage of workers, encompassing new immigrants, migrants, and refugees. The book is appropriate for use in the classroom, and it would be appreciated by anyone wanting a comprehensive picture of immigrants' experiences in the workplace. Academics, activists, labour union organizers, and policy planners who are interested in workplace rights for diverse groups of populations based on immigration status will find this book worth reading. The book is also an example of exemplary team work. Academia still shies away from collective work. This book and the team work involved in creating it represent a call to academia to recognize collaborative effort – in this case, from an array of scholars housed in different disciplines in two universities in Québec.

To sum up, racialized women in the 21st century are confronting both the old racisms that Gupta has skilfully illustrated and the new forms of racism so passionately demonstrated by Agnew, Dossa, and Choudhury *et al.* Each of these forms of racism displays multi-layered complexity. There are currently many signs that in order to improve their workplace situations, racialized immigrant women continue to challenge pervasive sexism and racism in the workplace and beyond. These women demonstrate their agency by organizing various street protests, demonstrations, and rallies at local, national, and global levels. One example occurred in Vancouver recently when Grassroots Women British Columbia celebrated the 100th International Women's Day on March 8, 2010.<sup>8</sup> The celebration highlighted the increasing commitment of women locally to raise awareness of worsening economic conditions under the current global economic crisis. Numerous organizations endorsed a powerful statement by Grassroots Women British Columbia. In brief, this statement said that working-class women are mobilizing to expose and oppose exploitation, support families and communities, reclaim their history of resistance, and attain not only their full potential but also their liberation. The endorsing organizations included the Philippine Women Centre of BC, South Asian Network for Secularism and Democracy, Pakistan Action Network, Bolivia

8. Grassroots Women, a BC-based racialized and working-class organization, sent this press release, entitled "Media Advisory: Local women to rally on 100th International Women's Day" on Monday, 8 March 2010.

Solidarity Group, Aboriginal Women's Actions Network, Filipino Nurses Group, No One is Illegal, Café Rebelde, BC Committee for Human Rights in the Philippines, Organizing Centre for Social and Economic Justice, East Van Abolitionists, Filipino-Canadian Youth Alliance, New Noise, and Vancouver Relief and Women's Shelter. This statement in 2010 indicates that a racialized immigrant women's group in BC has created a broad-based alliance across class and numerous social justice groups who struggle for their daily survival in the workplace and wider society and are not afraid to pose challenging questions to the federal government.