

MYTHS AND REALITIES ABOUT MIGRANTS

“Non-Status Migrants and Refugees Jump the Queue”

Our current immigration point system is designed to ensure that those who qualify for immigration to Canada are either business people with large amounts of capital, professionals with a university education who speak English or French fluently, or family class immigrants. Most of the non-status immigrants are skilled or semi-skilled workers who do not qualify under our point system so there is no queue for them. The Toronto Star reported that under the new point system most people currently living in Canada would not qualify under the point system.



“Migrants are Really Economic Migrants”

Terms like "economic migrant" and "bogus refugee" have been used to discredit migrants and to foster hostility against them. There can be multiple simultaneous reasons for an individual to migrate - ranging from family reunification to economic pressures to personal survival to fear of government corruption to the desire for religious freedom. In fact, most immigrants to the settler colony of Canada could also be described as economic migrants. One of the many reasons for present-day migration is the destruction of rural economies in the world due to corporate globalization and millions of people have been displaced by the privatization of their economy.

“We Cannot Afford to Let Anymore People In”

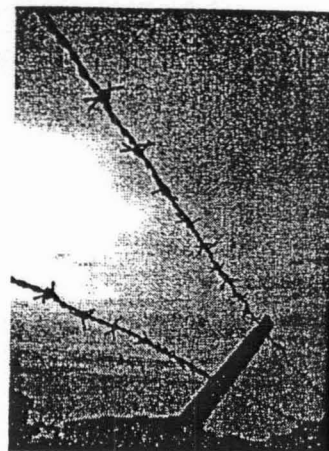
Canada sets immigration targets because demographically we need immigrants to help sustain our country's economy. These targets are set at 1% of the total population, and we consistently fail to meet them.

“Migrants Take Away Jobs”

There is a shortage of skilled or semi-skilled workers and trades people in many sectors of our economy. Industries such as manufacturing, construction, garment, childcare, cleaning, food and services, and many others rely heavily on non-status immigrants. Many migrants work in jobs that Canadians won't do and are exploited by employers.

“Canada's Refugee Policy Takes Care of Everyone”

The definition of a Convention refugee is restricted to persons who face serious reprisals against their human rights because of their race, religion, nationality, and membership in a social group or political opinion. However, many of the people who come in as non-status are victims of growing global inequalities, extreme poverty and generalized violence in their country of origin, but do not qualify as Convention refugees. In addition, the system that has been widely condemned for its structural flaws, still gives no recourse to refugees whose claims have been denied due to the lack of a Refugee Appeal Division.



“Non-Status Migrants are Criminals and Terrorists”

Living without status, in fact makes you more vulnerable to crimes and also less likely to report crimes done to yourself or others. Refusing status to migrants with criminal records in Canada amounts to a double punishment- once a person has paid a fine or served time in prison, they should not face double jeopardy by then being deported to heavily unstable and violent situations where they face further imprisonment, torture or death.

Moreover many of these crimes are overwhelmingly minor and a direct consequence of economic poverty and/or state repression. For example, 10 non-status Algerians and two supporters who were peacefully demanding a meeting with the (then) Minister of Immigration Denis Coderre were arrested, beaten and brutalized with tasers on May 29, 2003. Amnesty International in their 2004 Report on Canada has raised serious concerns about these acts of police brutality and violence, yet these Algerians now face criminal convictions and potential deportation.

A basic legal principle of proportionality is at work here- that it is fundamentally unjust to have the criminal justice system influence the immigrant and refugee determination system. Finally, the assumption that all migrants of colour are more likely to be criminals or terrorists is a racist one.