

Access for All?

Struggles Over Citizenship and Social Policy

KRISTA JOHNSTON

This paper focuses on struggles over citizenship in anti-colonial activism in the city of Toronto. In their campaigns for national regularization, access to city services, and their commitments to Indigenous sovereignty, anti-colonial social movements problematize citizenship and nationalism. Their demands for access to services and their claiming of the city stand as acts of contestation and provocation. In claiming the city, they are not merely advancing a vision of multicultural cosmopolitanism, but rather proposing a broader decolonization of space, politics and belonging. The implications of their interventions on the scope and potential of social policy as a means of advancing equality are also considered.

Cet article concentre son attention sur les luttes anticoloniales sur la citoyenneté dans la ville de Toronto. Les mouvements sociaux anticoloniaux questionnent à la fois la notion de citoyenneté et le nationalisme à l'aide de campagnes en faveur de la régularisation nationale, l'accès aux services sociaux municipaux et l'engagement en faveur de la souveraineté indigène. Leurs revendications d'accès aux services sociaux et la quête de visibilité au cœur de la ville, ces mouvements sociaux avancent une vision de la décolonisation qui englobe l'espace, la politique, et l'appartenance. L'article aborde également l'impact de

ces interventions sur l'ensemble des délibérations concernant la valeur et la forme des politiques sociales en tant que moyens d'atteindre l'égalité.

I think that whole notion of citizenship is colonial. People doing solidarity work have to live with it, but there's something uncomfortable about it. (Patty)¹

Engin Isin et al. argue that “fundamental issues of our time are refracted through struggles over citizenship” (“Recasting” 4). This paper focuses on struggles over citizenship in anti-colonial activism in the city of Toronto. These struggles over citizenship range from demands for regularization (obtaining formal citizenship status), to gaining access to the social rights and provisions that flow from this status. In their broader contestations of social policy and citizenship, anti-colonial activists highlight the limits of activism around these artifacts of colonial state power, highlighting the inescapability of the exclusions of citizenship. Their claiming of the city and attempts to build difficult solidarities provide inspiration for a reworking of citizenship, and its place in social policy.

The paper begins by tracing conceptualizations of citizenship with

a focus on social movements and social policy. Drawing on Isin's work, the city is theorized as a “difference machine” (*Being Political*), and as the ground for enactments of, and challenges to, citizenship's exclusions. Building on this theoretical foundation, the paper then outlines the engagements of anti-colonial activists with citizenship and social policy in the city of Toronto. In claiming rights to the city and access to social policy, anti-colonial social movements contest, exceed and reformulate conceptions of belonging, politics and space. The implications of their insights on the relationship between citizenship and social policy more broadly are considered in the paper's concluding section.

Theorizing Citizenship

Peter Nyers suggests that “citizenship is at once one of the most celebrated and most problematic of political concepts” (“What's Left” 203). Indeed, citizenship has become the focus of scholarly investigations in a wide range of disciplines, where it has been taken up in a variety of ways. Often, conceptualizations of citizenship focus on formal status and membership in a nation state. Daiva Stasiulis and Abigail Bakan advance a conceptualization that

focuses on the negotiations that take place over and through citizenship.

Citizenship includes legal status, demanding formal national state certification, but citizenship is not reducible to legal status alone. Citizenship exists on a spectrum, involving a pool of rights that are variously offered, denied, or challenged, as well as a set of obligations that are unequally demanded. The terms and conditions of citizenship rights and responsibilities are the product of active and ongoing negotiation. (2)

This approach suggests that rather than being merely a 'status,' citizenship is a lived experience, characterized by struggles over recognition, inclusion, redistribution, and space.

Social movements have long focused on citizenship. Isin notes that, "Every age since the Ancient Greeks fashioned an image of being political based upon citizenship. That citizenship has expressed a right to being political, a right to constitute oneself as an agent to govern and be governed, deliberate with others, and enjoy determining the fate of the polity to which one belongs is well recognized" (*Being Political* 1). Sunera Thobani suggests that "[a]lthough citizenship is a complex and deeply contested construct, it has been enthusiastically welcomed as an emancipatory measure by those included within its orbit, and desperately struggled for by those excluded from its entitlements" (77). Citizenship has figured centrally in many different social movements: as a means of gaining recognition, for access to the myriad rights and provisions associated with social citizenship, and as a symbol of emancipation. Writing in the Australian context, Ann Curthoys notes that "[f]rom its beginnings feminism relied on the Enlightenment ideal of the citizen, supposedly universal, free and equal, refining it to include women as well as men" (31-2). Struggles over citizenship have ranged from anti-colonial national liberation movements,

to campaigns for suffrage and access to the social rights of citizenship (including employment and income security programs, as well as mobility rights, healthcare, and education).

Of course, the emancipatory promise of citizenship has rarely been fulfilled. Barry Hindess and others have noted that its progressive potential is perhaps moderate, rather than far-reaching and universal (306). Feminist theorists in particular have noted that citizenship presumes and reinforces a white male subject (Lister; Yuval-Davis; Thobani). Anti-racist and anti-colonial scholars have likewise noted that regimes of citizenship require the maintenance of a border between those seen as the nation's insiders and its outsiders (see Dua; Thobani).

Citizenship may be particularly problematic when considered in the context of a white settler society. As Nira Yuval-Davis suggests:

A whole different set of citizenship issues would relate to indigenous minorities in settler societies.... It is not just that in many societies Indigenous populations have been very late entrants, if entrants at all, to the formal citizenship body of the state. It is that were their claim on the country—in the form of land rights, for instance—taken seriously to a full measure, this would totally conflict with the claim of the settler national collectivity for legitimacy. (75-6)

Indeed, the function of citizenship in a white settler society seems to be to obfuscate this colonial history. Indigenous people are simultaneously positioned as "outsiders" to the national order, and subject to the pressures of assimilation into the national order. Indigeneity stands as a central source of discomfort for the white settler state, unsettling the presumed sovereignty and legitimacy of its founding and elaboration through the institution of citizenship (for example, see Hage).

Such criticisms of citizenship lead

Donna Baines and Nandita Sharma to argue that: "rather than expanding social rights and entitlements for all people living in Canada, citizenship has been and is completely tied up in notions of gender, nationhood, colonialism, neocolonialism and a binary opposition of the Self-citizen/ Other-non-citizen ... citizenship continues to be used to define who is entitled to rights and protections and who is excluded" (76). Their indictment of citizenship leads them to argue "against citizenship as a social policy concept."

One of the central arguments of this paper is that the exclusionary practices of citizenship are clearly evident in the structure and scope of social policy provisions under the welfare state in Canada. Thobani notes:

Access to social programs as an integral right of citizenship came to be accepted as natural and normal in the welfare era. Such access could certainly have been organized along different principles, and with different eligibility criteria, had there been a commitment to ensure that this access became truly universal. Instead, the organization of social entitlements through the political institution of citizenship meant that the Canadian welfare state incorporated ra-

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cialized constructs of the nation and its real citizens into the social policies organizing these entitlements. This organization of social entitlements strengthened the institution of citizenship as the key mechanism regulating membership in the nation and access to its resources. (139)

In other words, social policy has been one of the key sites for the mobilization of citizenship and for practices of exclusion and differentiation amongst those possessing formal citizenship status, as well as differentiating between citizens and non-citizens.

This builds on the research of feminist scholars who have highlighted the ways that social policy often functions as a tool of social and moral regulation (see Valverde; Gavigan; McKeen this issue). For example, Baines and Sharma note that “social citizenship explicitly incorporates the notion of a bread-winning male as the complement to a financially dependent, homemaking woman within the framework of nation-building strategies” (80). The impact of such a narrow conceptualization has meant that many women, particularly single mothers, are less likely to access the social rights of citizenship (see McKeen, this issue), while many others find their access to such provisions rooted in, and

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structurally enforcing relations of dependency and vulnerability (see Gavigan on the “man in the house rule” for access to social assistance; Thobani on the immigration sponsorship program).

In the case of Indigenous peoples, one does not need to look far in Canadian history to find examples of the dire impacts of family policy on Indigenous communities, including the residential school system, the child welfare system, and social assistance policy (this is discussed in greater detail below). These lessons suggest that social policy has been an instrument of citizenship, and perhaps also of colonialism. This is likely no less the case under the current phase of neo-liberal retrenchment and reshaping of social policy.

As is well documented in this issue, neo-liberalism has focused on the retrenchment of social services and social policies under the guise of personal responsibility (see Brodie “Citizenship and Solidarity”). This retrenchment further deepens existing inequalities, simultaneously advancing very specific interests in maintaining and perhaps shaping social relations (see Bezanson). For those whose immigration status is insecure and those long constructed as “burdens” on the social support system, the intensification of eligibility criteria and the reduction in supports available further exacerbate barriers to social services. Under neo-liberalism, it seems that citizenship and national borders are becoming more important. Indeed, as a result of heightened “border control” practices advanced under neo-liberalism, the borders where citizenship is enforced and policed seem to multiply. Nyers conceptualizes this as the “ubiquitous border,” writing:

Borders no longer simply signal the external limits of states. They are complex practices that cut deep into the heart of contemporary politics in order to produce difference, create unequal hierarchies, and force entire communities to live

permanently “at the border,” neither inside nor outside the state. (“Community Without Status” 128)

The “ubiquitous border” may be manifested in very specific ways in the urban context, as border control practices are increasingly carried out in these sites. Rather than suggesting that the city is an alternative site to the state, these interventions seem to suggest that the city is one space where the concrete impacts of citizenship and border politics might be made evident. Cities are spaces where the “ubiquitous border” is made visible. As Nyers explains:

For non-status immigrants, the borderline is not just at physical entry points at ports, airports, and land crossings. Rather, the border exists wherever and whenever they try to claim the rights of social citizenship. The border is therefore widespread and ever-present, emerging in such places as health centres, social housing cooperatives, schools, food banks, welfare offices, police stations, and other sites where social services are provided to community members. (“Community” 129)

While the “ubiquitous border” and its enactment through social policy is certainly not a new development, neo-liberal intensifications of border control, the retrenchment of social provisions associated with the welfare state, and mobilizations against these shifts are increasingly highlighted in the city. In particular, the city of Toronto has been the site of several rounds of neo-liberal restructuring, advanced first under Premier Michael Harris (1995-2002), and most recently initiated under the auspices of Mayor Rob Ford (elected in 2011).

A number of scholars have noted a pronounced shift away from seeing citizenship as primarily (or solely) invested in the state. Under neo-liberal restructuring, the downloading of responsibilities for the provision

and scope of many social services has been relegated to provinces, municipalities, communities, and the private sector. In order to track these shifts, particular attention to their interactions is required. In particular, the city is often theorized as a key site for the negotiation of citizenship and social policy. In part, this might be attributed to the place of cities in the global neo-liberal economic system. As Isin et al. note:

The increasing importance of cities as sites for organizing and shaping cultural, social, symbolic, and economic flows has also prompted a recognition of their significance in cultivating or blocking citizenship. Thus, while the state remains the fundamental institution through which all these rights and obligations are negotiated, contested, and allocated, citizenship's correspondence with a single nation (however imagined) is increasingly being called into question by various reimaginings of identity, belonging, and community ("Recasting" 12).

The focus on the city as a site for citizenship is not new² nor does it suggest that the city is atomized from the nation-state. Instead, the city is a site where the politics of citizenship and the nation-state are made concrete, and where the exclusions of state-based definitions of citizenship might be contested, challenged, and reconfigured. Isin regards the city as "a crucial condition of citizenship in the sense that being a citizen is inextricably associated with being *of* the city. Throughout the centuries, struggles over citizenship have always taken place 'over' the city" ("Being Political" 283).

Activists who have long engaged with the nation state also seem to be turning their attention to the city. Nyers suggests that as a result of their dissatisfaction with the piecemeal nature of national regularization programs at the level of the federal state, immigrant rights activists have begun

to focus on other levels of governance:

campaigns by non-status immigrants and their allies are beginning to direct their advocacy at levels of governance where the state's power to exclude can be avoided or minimized. One can see this kind of political activity within refugee and migrant rights movements, especially in their efforts to implement innovative public policy at the municipal level of governance. ("Community" 136)

The drastic increase in the Indigenous population in Canadian cities beginning in the 1960s (see Peters; Donovan), as well as the ongoing reworking of the relationship between the Canadian state and Indigenous peoples provides further evidence of the growing importance of the site of the city for anti-colonial social movements. As social policy and citizenship are downloaded to the level of the city, so too are struggles over them. In Toronto, anti-colonial activists have mounted numerous campaigns against neo-liberalism and the retrenchment of social policy. As is elaborated in the following pages, these may be seen as contestations of citizenship, social policy, and the city.

"Access for All" and "We're All Illegal Until No One Is Illegal"

The data highlighted here draws from twenty-two in-depth interviews and four focus groups conducted with activists in the city of Toronto. Data was collected between November 2005 and February 2007, beginning with members of radical migrant rights group, *No One is Illegal Toronto* and focused in large part on their commitment to anti-colonialism and Indigenous solidarity. A number of activists from other Toronto-based groups were also approached. The final data set includes insights from 37 different participants, including activists devoted to causes such as anti-poverty, immigrant rights, Indigenous sovereignty, Latin

American solidarity, and Palestinian rights. Participants were approached based on their stated commitment to anti-colonialism (broadly defined) and open-ended qualitative interview questions focused on the broad themes of citizenship, identity and the possibilities of anti-colonial solidarity among different groups. In particular, research focused on the impact of citizenship policy and practice on the possibilities of broad-based anti-colonial coalition. Informed by feminist research methodologies (particularly DeVault; Lather; Ristock and Pannell), as well as anti-colonial ethnography (Tuhiwai Smith; Brown and Strega; Bishop) and political activist ethnography (see Smith, Frampton et al.), the focus was on creating knowledge *for*, rather than solely *about* social action (DeVault 48).

This research must be situated in the context of a growing movement against colonialism in Canada. While Indigenous peoples and their supporters have been organizing and taking action against Canadian colonialism for generations, a number of social movements have framed aspects of their organizing as anti-colonial since at least 2001. These movements take a broad perspective on colonialism and its legacy. Activists committed to anti-colonialism take on a wide range of issues, including transnational

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migration, war and militarization, Indigenous rights (in transnational and national contexts), poverty, environmental rights, and corporate globalization. Many of these movements regard the current phase of neo-liberalism as an extension and reworking of colonialism and imperialism. In particular, these movements are unified in their commitment to the rights of Indigenous peoples to sovereignty and self-determination. In Toronto, a number of groups situate their specific struggles (i.e. Palestinian rights, the rights of immigrants and refugees, Indigenous sovereignty, organizing against the disappearance and murder of Indigenous women and girls) as part of a broader movement against colonialism in its historical and contemporary manifestations.

Growing out of a city-wide coalition focused on migrant rights, and spurred by organizing across Canada, No One is Illegal (NOII) Toronto was formed in the winter of 2002, following an immigrant rights Consulta hosted by NOII Montreal. Attendees at this event included representatives of labour unions, immigrant-rights groups, and immigrant-serving organizations, as well as a broad cross-section of activists from diverse groups and communities. In Toronto, immigrant rights organizing was part and parcel of radical anti-racist and anti-war

organizing (Wilmot). Activists from the anti-poverty organization OCAP (Ontario Coalition Against Poverty) had also mobilized around the rights of immigrants and refugees as part of their response to the overtly neo-liberal restructuring advanced under Premier Mike Harris.

As outlined at the 2002 Consultation and developed since then, the three largest No One is Illegal groups in Canada advance a complex analysis of displacement, mobility, and colonialism. As part of this analysis, a commitment to Indigenous sovereignty, and an analysis of the impacts of colonialism and imperialism on the construction of certain communities as “displaced and displaceable” (Walia) is clearly articulated. This analysis is reflected in NOII Vancouver’s statement:

We are in active confrontation with a colonial system built on the dispossession and genocide of indigenous peoples – such as through the 1876 *Indian Act*, the reserve system, and residential schools—and racist anti-immigrant measures—since the historic Chinese Exclusion Act and Japanese-Canadian internment to the current use of Security Certificates. Such legislations and structures serve to label entire communities as “illegal aliens” or “status Indians,” an apartheid system of who has the right to dignity and livelihood and who does not. (“Our Vision,” NOII Vancouver)

This statement and the anti-colonial orientation of all three NOII collectives focus on the potential for solidarity among these groups. This is difficult work, in part because of the ways in which citizenship policy and projects of colonialism have served to construct differences (and indeed, competition) among them, and in part because of the very different, though at times intersecting, histories of displacement and dispossession. Struggles over citizenship present the simultaneous potential for coalition

and deep divisions among anti-colonial activists.

Regularization and National Citizenship

Most of the activists interviewed suggested that citizenship was a complex and problematic, if unavoidable, aspect of their organizing. Groups like noii negotiate the citizenship regime on a daily basis, from campaigning to end immigration raids, detentions, and deportations, to highlighting the problematic nature of immigration and refugee policy. All three No One is Illegal groups in Canada share a demand for a national regularization program, arguing that all those currently residing in the country should receive full citizenship status. Frequently advanced under the slogan of ‘Status for All!’ this demand is fleshed out in the Declaration and Principles for a National Regularization Program (for example, see “Regularization”). This seemingly direct demand for inclusion in the citizenship regime has the potential to sit uncomfortably alongside the group’s stated commitment to Indigenous sovereignty.

This potential tension was discussed extensively in focus groups and interviews. In one focus group I asked whether working toward citizenship for immigrant, refugee and non-status community stood in contradiction with their commitment to anti-colonialism and to solidarity with Indigenous struggles for sovereignty and self-determination. After a couple of participants had spoken, Gia, a woman of colour in a leadership position within the group who had earlier shared her family’s story of displacement and arrival in Toronto, surprised me when she said that citizenship was in fact *not* the goal of her organizing. She said:

The point is to reveal to these communities who don’t think status is an issue, or don’t recognize the roles of non-status people in Canada or where they fit in or why this is important—to

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give them the opportunity to see that. And I think the same way we do our immigration work in a broad way ... slowly—when we're there at that point where people are, where regularization is in the broader consciousness of people, we can begin to infuse other things ... we can talk more concretely about how we challenge the Canadian nation state, how we challenge capitalism in its various forms. (Gia)

In response, I asked whether citizenship was the goal of national regularization campaigns, and Gia's emphatic and immediate response was "No. It's not." The language of seeking access and regularization, then, is strategic. It is not necessarily the ultimate vision or project of No One is Illegal organizers (at least, not of all of them), to gain inclusion in Canada's citizenship regime. Instead, their struggles around citizenship work to highlight its exclusions, and to problematize the many ways and places in which citizenship is enforced.

A similar mistrust of citizenship was evident in the responses of other activists. Many of the Indigenous sovereignty activists interviewed regard citizenship as an outright colonial institution. As Rachel suggested, "I think it's a huge sham, really." Where their activism does engage directly with citizenship, it seems to focus on opposing changes such as the *First Nations Governance Act* (FNGA), and highlighting the problematic existence of the citizenship regime in Canada. Their stance is more clearly oppositional than that advanced by members of NOI Toronto, largely as a result of their very different relationship to the Canadian state.

Among Indigenous activists, there was a clear understanding of the operationalization of the citizenship regime as a key aspect of the colonial system in Canada. As a result, many Indigenous activists situate themselves *against* Canadian citizenship. Iris explained:

Concretely, at Six Nations, people don't believe they're citizens of Canada, so that impacts their struggle in that they don't recognize the Canadian rule of law, so it does impact and relate to them but it's just to me the most pure expression of what I've always believed anyways...

Although several of the Indigenous activists that I interviewed signaled that they only considered themselves to be citizens of their Indigenous nations, many were hesitant to employ the language of citizenship at all.

Among activists in other kinds of struggles (anti-poverty, anti-war, Palestinian solidarity, environmental, anti-violence), many also shared an ambivalent relationship to citizenship. Those who do hold Canadian citizenship, particularly those who have received it recently, suggest that this puts them in an uncomfortable position of complicity with the state's colonial project. Several also noted that receiving Canadian citizenship through the immigration program and refugee determination process leaves them in a position of regularized precarity. They were well aware that under recently implemented "Security" legislation (passed as part of the IRPA) they could have this status revoked, as exemplified in the Security Certificates program and the case of Amparo Torres,³ both referenced by a number of participants. Participants therefore readily recognize that the Canadian citizenship regime is legitimated through such exclusions, and that their 'inclusion' in the formal status of citizenship is partial, and perhaps temporary. This partiality is particularly evident in the proceeding investigation of citizenship as a barrier to accessing social services in the city of Toronto.

Citizenship, Social Policy and the Sanctuary City

Like many other anti-colonial groups, many of NOI Toronto's mobilizations focus directly on the city. In their words: "We are taking back our city.

One shelter at a time, one food bank at a time, one health care centre at a time. Breaking the walls, fences and borders in Toronto, we are creating a Sanctuary City that ensures justice and dignity for all" ("This City is a Sweatshop 2010"). This could be seen as an articulation of rights *to* the city, following Isin's approach. He notes:

Rather than struggles over rights that derive from belonging to the city, many social groups have struggled over rights to the city by, what I would call, staging or enacting themselves through the city. For groups to enact themselves through the city means to organize, assemble, appropriate, stage, symbolize, and imagine themselves, in short constitute themselves as social groups, by claiming rights to and through the city. ("The City" 275)

In building meaningful connections between affected communities, service providers and activists, this city-based organizing provides insight into the lived experiences of those whose citizenship status is contested. Their interventions highlight the ways in which barriers to accessing social provisions are deeply gendered, as well as racialized.

Originally conceived in 2004 as the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" Campaign (or

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Access for All!), and launched in 2008 as the Sanctuary City campaign, NOII has worked steadily to highlight the barriers faced by those without full immigration status in accessing social services⁴. Within the Sanctuary City campaign, three sub-foci are articulated, each highlighting a different area of social policy: Education Not Deportation, Food for All, and Shelter/Status/Sanctuary. Each of these areas of focus highlights the ways that citizenship and the “ubiquitous border” function within the city. In particular, they highlight the complex interrelations of federal, provincial, and municipal power, the ways in which citizenship is operationalized as a condition of eligibility, even when not stipulated in the actual policy, and the enforcement and elaboration of citizenship. In each of these areas of mobilization, NOII Toronto and allied organizations have encountered complex policy debates, simultaneously negotiating federal and provincial policy directives as well as municipal service provision (for example, in the case of education, discussed below). It is important to note that each of these campaigns has been prompted by actual border enforcement activity, and furthered in subsequent organizing in detention centres, schools, women’s shelters and the federal court system.

The Education Not Deportation campaign was initiated in response to the incursion of border officials into area public schools. Two high profile cases in 2006 saw border officials take children into custody at their schools, as a way of targeting their parents (see Keung 2009 for the story of the Lizano-Sossa family). The Canadian-born children were later deported with their families, amidst an outpouring of community outrage. Initially mobilizing to prevent border officials from apprehending children at area schools, organizers were disturbed to learn that school officials at both public school boards in Toronto were regularly requiring proof of citizenship in order to register children, and routinely collecting immigration information from

families in the registration process. These practices go far beyond the actual dictates of education policy in Ontario. Under Section 49.1 of the Ontario *Education Act*, “A person who is otherwise entitled to be admitted to a school and who is less than eighteen years of age shall not be refused admission because the person or the person’s parent or guardian is unlawfully in Canada” (Ontario Ministry of Education). Despite the seeming inclusive language of the legislation, the practice of demanding and recording immigration information served as a barrier to children’s access to education, as did the immigration enforcement activity which sent a chill through the non-status community to the extent that attendance at some schools plummeted drastically.⁵ Through their work with local school boards, teachers, and other members of school communities, the Education Not Deportation campaign was eventually successful in having registration forms and practices changed (see Keung 2009; NOII Toronto “Education”).

In addition to area schools, Sanctuary City organizing has successfully highlighted the myriad places where citizenship identification is required in order to access social services, sometimes as a condition of eligibility, and other times as proof of identification. As Maryam Adrangi and Laura Lepper note, “food injustice is exacerbated when non-status people face obstacles that others do not. Many with precarious status are either deterred or actively turned away from food banks that ask for identification. Additionally, the monitoring and infiltration of food banks and community gardens by immigration enforcement and police officers presents the food movement with a significant challenge and responsibility” (2). Adrangi and Lepper describe the coalitional work between NOII and The Stop (a community food centre in Toronto), providing education and training to other food banks and community gardens to “help spread

the centre’s strategies to other food banks and spaces of food provision in the city” (3). Service providers not wishing to become *de facto* ‘border enforcement officials’ have sought training and support, seeking information about their responsibilities and legal requirements, and the extent to which they may resist such policies without jeopardizing their funding sources.

In their attention to city social services, Sanctuary City organizers have highlighted the ways in which gender intersects with citizenship status. While NOII Toronto has long worked around issues of women’s safety and access to shelters and emergency services, the 2010 raid of a shelter for homeless women by immigration officials (Keung 2010) is merely one example of the ways in which women fleeing violence are at an increased risk of detention and deportation. The systemic sexism and racism of the immigration system, and the sponsorship program in particular have been detailed in Thobani’s research. In highlighting the lived experiences of non-status women, Sanctuary City organizing through the Shelter/Status/Sanctuary committee also makes visible the gendered contours of citizenship and social policy in Canada.

In each of these committees, NOII Toronto works in coalition with service providers, concerned community members, and other organizations. Their demands for rights to the city are advanced in ways that claim access to city programs and social services, while also advancing a more general sense of claiming the city. These are struggles over citizenship, highlighting the ways that citizenship operates in numerous aspects of daily life, particularly for those whose citizenship status is contested. In targeting the state *and* the city as legitimate places for access and status, groups like NOII are therefore making the “ubiquitous border” visible, serving to politicize and contest the myriad sites and practices of border control. This problematizes citizenship and its enforcement through the provision of

social services in the city of Toronto. Echoing her earlier comments about citizenship and the regularization campaign, Gia said: “We’re not really going to win access to all services for all people who don’t have status. *That’s the point.*” Instead, the problematic exclusion of some people from these vital services is highlighted and contested.

Sanctuary City and the Politics of Anti-Colonialism

These contestations suggest that the city is a sphere where state politics are certainly felt and seen, but where there is also the potential for opposition and contestation. As one participant suggested, “the city is a place where we should get to decide how we live together, not the state” (Rose). Another participant explained that city-based organizing posed the greatest challenge to state-based citizenship:

They’re [the state] not really worried about us erasing the border guards from, you know, Fort Erie or Detroit, but rather that people are, like, “I live in Toronto. I see these people, whatever. Just let them do what they want,” right? And that’s scary for the government, more so. And I think that’s why for me, the Don’t Ask Don’t Tell campaign [later re-named ‘Access for All’ or Sanctuary City] can really get to the heart of that because if we can get people on an individual level to be, like, “You know what? This is how I’m going to live my life... I don’t care what this person is here for or why they’re here or what their status is, but that they’re here, they’re doing their thing, and let’s just work, you know, and let them be,” right? And in that notion, sort of that buy-out, [it’s] like saying, “You know what? I’m done believing whatever you’re telling me about who should be here and who shouldn’t,” I think can have a really strong effect at really delegitimizing any sort of

[citizenship] over the long term. (Greg).

The city is therefore figured by these activists as a potential site for the creation of alternative social relations, a place where many different people find themselves together. This is what Isin refers to as the “difference machine” of the city:

The city is a difference machine because these ‘characters’ [strangers, outsiders, aliens] are not formed outside the machine and encounter each within the city, but the city assembles, generates, distributes, and differentiates these differences, incorporates them within strategies and technologies, and elicits, interpellates, adjures, and incites them. The city is not a container where differences encounter each other; the city generates differences and assembles identities. (*Being Political* 283)

The size, diversity, and heterogeneous nature of the city figured prominently in discussions with activists. Many see the city as the only place where they can find some degree of belonging. Ursula spoke about her comfort in the city as a queer woman. Gia said that Toronto was the first place that she could imagine building a community, or a “home”—a word which she did not employ lightly. And Carlos suggested:

This is a “meeting place.” We kind of stick to this place, because who do I got in Alberta? My connection to North America and Toronto ... my blood relatives in Canada and in Toronto are maybe five ... my family for whatever reason, our roots in Toronto and in Canada are very tenuous still. We’re a small family. I’ve had to seek “family” in the ... solidarity work in a sense.

Of course, the city is not just a place of uncontested, multicultural com-

munity where these differences sit together easily.

Many participants suggested that they were displaced to Toronto, some came here because of persecution, homophobia, death threats, poverty, or because they “had nowhere else to be” (Rose). Even among those coming as migrant workers or under student visas or other facets of the immigration system, conditions of extreme poverty and economic collapse in their “home” countries were cited as “push” factors, and connected to re-workings of colonialism and imperialism (Bakan and Stasiulis document this in detail).

Indigenous activists articulated a similar understanding of the city as an end destination for those displaced from their territories and communities, albeit through different trajectories and mechanisms than those articulated by immigrants and refugees.⁶ In her book, Bonita Lawrence provides further explanation:

In the Canadian context, Toronto is relatively unique in that it usually represents the final stage in a process of urbanization that might begin with an Aboriginal family being relocated from their community of origin—by various policies of removal or loss of land through resource development—to small adjacent towns.... (19)

Many participants, like Carlos (cited above), employ the Indigenous conceptualization of Toronto as “a meeting place” (see Sanderson and Bobiwash), where the city figures as a site of cosmopolitan ‘mixing.’ Of course, the relations of difference and potential for affiliation are marked by inequality and the histories of colonialism.

Many noted that Indigenous people in Toronto seem invisible, that they are folded into the multicultural fabric of the city. As Rachel explained: “I can go for days in this city and not see another Indigenous person.” This invisibility is a reflection of the colonial project in Canada, and the

problematic twin conceptions of Indigenous peoples as non-urban, and of cities as non-Indigenous. This seeming contradiction was repeatedly cited as an obstacle to the building of anti-colonial coalitions in the city (see also Lawrence 19).

Peters notes that the construction of cities as sites of modernity, and of Indigenous people as 'pre-modern' and out of place in the urban context were key aspects of the colonial process in Canada (for more on Indigeneity and the city, see Lawrence; Silver; Robertson and Culhane). This served to distinguish Indigenous people from settler-citizens, which was central to projects of colonialism and nation-building, and worked alongside assimilation and genocide. It also furthered the dispossession of Indigenous peoples from their lands, which became marked as "modern" and "civilized" (and hence as non-Indigenous), particularly through the process of urbanization. The creation of cities therefore, was closely connected to the project of colonial dispossession (Jacobs), and of nation-building.

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Just as non-status and racialized immigrant women have specific experiences of border enforcement and citizenship, Indigenous women have been systematically displaced from reservations through provisions of the *Indian Act*, and marked as "out-of-place" in the cities where they often eventually find themselves.

through provisions of the *Indian Act*, and marked as "out-of-place" in the cities where they often eventually find themselves (see also Lawrence; Krouse and Howard). She writes:

The intersection of colonial spaces of race and gender created a unique relationship between Indian women and the city. *Indian Act* legislation and administration, and the erosion of First Nations women's roles in their communities, separated many First Nations women from their reserve communities of origin. Many of these women migrated to urban areas. First Nations women have been overrepresented in urban areas since at least the 1960s.... Once in the city, First Nations women are often separated from their cultures of origin because of the historic lack of development of First Nations institutions in many urban areas. (Peters 674)

As has been argued elsewhere in this paper, social policy can be seen as a site for the advancement of citizenship and colonialism in this regard as well. Indigenous people's encounters with the Canadian citizenship regime and social policy have been largely traumatic. Martin Cooke and Jennifer McWhirter suggest that "The legal legacy of colonial institutions, including the *Indian Act*, has meant that Aboriginal peoples are often exposed to different educational, health, employment, and family policies than are other Canadians" (S22). Thobani points out that "The welfare state's treatment of Aboriginal peoples revealed it to be obstinately colonial, effecting not only the dispossession of their lands but also of their children and families" (140; see also pages 118-125). The legacy of the residential school system, as well as the 'sixties scoop' and other interventions under the guise of 'child welfare,' stand as evidence that social policy has been employed to further the projects of colonialism and nation-building in Canada.

The goals of moral and social regulation are also evident in Indigenous peoples' experiences of social policy. Policies designed for "the citizen" are not easily amended to meet the needs of Indigenous peoples' who have been marked out as distinctly "non-citizen" since the inception of the colonial project. Social policies around education, healthcare and social assistance all target a specific conception of the citizen and the family, one which is neither cross-cultural nor readily able to accommodate the impacts of generations of colonial intervention on families and communities. Many of these provisions are further limited to those holding federal status and living on reservations. Frances Sanderson notes that this limits the "portability" of treaty rights (a concern shared by one Indigenous activist as well):

You have a policy where if an Indian goes off the edge of the reserve he loses his inherent and treaty rights. Those government policies add to the confusion. When we look at the portability of our rights, we are talking about the international and national recognition of the portability of inherent rights and treaty rights, not based on on-reserve, off-reserve or federal-provincial policies. ("Proceedings" 7).

The assumption that Indigenous people live on reservations and ought to access social services and social provisions there can be seen clearly in education policy. Sanderson notes that through the *Indian Act*, federal funding for education is only provided to Indigenous nations (through the Band Council) for those living on-reserve, under the assumption that those residing off-reserve will access education funding provided to schools in those jurisdictions ("Proceedings" 7). Given high rates of mobility, and the widely documented combination of on- and off-reserve residence among Indigenous people in Canada, this is an inadequate way

to ensure rights to education are met, and curtails access to Indigenous led and directed educational opportunities (Donovan). The assumption that Indigenous people are tied to reserves further circumscribes support and funding for Indigenous education in other contexts (see Dion). For example, Cooke and McWhirter note that the high mobility rates of Indigenous people are not easily recognized or accommodated by the structure of existing education policy: “high rates of mobility between Aboriginal communities and other areas might not be well accommodated by various social policies and institutions. Schools may not adequately support children whose families are highly mobile, with negative implications for educational attainment among Aboriginal students” (S21).

The assumption that Indigenous people live primarily on reserves is also evident in the administration of tax exemptions provided under the *Indian Act*. Despite widespread misunderstanding, only Indigenous people holding federal status and residing on reserves are exempt from personal and property tax (Vowel). As Chelsea Vowel and others have noted, this means that a narrow (and steadily decreasing) segment of the Indigenous population actually has access to this provision. While many provinces provide “point-of-sale” exemptions from provincial sales tax and/or the HST, these exemptions are uneven, and many businesses are unclear on the regulations or how to administer them (Vowel). Again, rather than having access to inherent rights as Indigenous people, these rights are tied to on-reserve residence, and federal determinations of status and identity. Such provisions further exacerbate the misconception that Indigenous people “belong” on reservations, and that they have no historical or current “place” in urban centres such as Toronto.

The “place” of Indigenous people in urban centres is further complicated by the discourse of multicultural diversity prevalent in places such as Toronto. Social service agencies run

by and for the urban Indigenous community are positioned in competition with other agencies for funding and support, while also combating the all-too-common perception that there are few Indigenous people in the city, or that they may have specific needs or entitlements. Such challenges led Bea, a service provider within a large agency in Toronto, to suggest that advocating for Indigenous rights and recognition in the city of Toronto requires a “warrior position.” Many Indigenous activists advance this warrior position by claiming the city (see also Janovicek; Culhane; Howard; Peters). In her research, Peters notes that “First Nations women claim their cultural heritage *in the city*” (677). She goes on to explain that one of the primary sites for this claiming is through access to social services: “They do this by insisting that the benefits of services for First Nations peoples should extend to the urban milieu and by creating formal and informal organizations in the city which support people in reclaiming their cultural values and histories” (Peters 677). She notes that “women insisted over and over again that they should have access to federal services, programs and funding on an equal basis with residents on reserves” (Peters 677).

Among research participants, few Indigenous activists spoke specifically about access to social services or social policy for Indigenous people. In part, this might be reflected by the fact that few of the Indigenous activists I spoke with held federal status. As Lawrence explains, given the colonial structure of the *Indian Act* and its provisions regarding status, an increasing number of Indigenous people do not have Indian status. This is particularly the case for those living in Canada’s cities. As a result, they are assimilated into the citizenship and social policy structures of the federal nation-state. For urban Indigenous people then, the claiming of the city is also an act of claiming Indigeneity.

Despite the limited discussion of access to social services, many participants did echo the importance of

attesting to the ongoing and continuous presence of Indigenous people in Toronto. Rachel, for example, said:

Without a doubt Native people have been here, without a doubt. Toronto itself is known as “the gathering place,” and the place of the fish weirs. Do you know about the fish weirs?... “Where the fish gathered.” That’s the Ojibwa word for gathering. So it’s also to do with all the weirs that Native people used in all of Ontario, almost. There’s all kinds of ancient burial sites throughout Toronto. At the time of contact here, there were a huge community of Ojibwa people living here and they have a claim. There’s an active land claim and it’s very defined and it obviously has been broken in treaties. Toronto has a lot of thinking to do about the First Nations here.

While the Indigenous history and contemporary claims over this land have been actively “covered over” (Borrows), several Indigenous participants suggested that it is impossible to completely ignore these lineages. Thus, their claiming of the city means also that in order to mount a broad-based anti-colonial social movement, this history must be acknowledged and addressed.

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This could be seen as an advancement of the decolonization of the city. For participants like Patty (a non-Indigenous activist), this means that alternative conceptualizations of social relations in the city must begin from Indigenous peoples' conceptions of land and belonging:

Well, the Ojibway said they expected everybody to come here, they expected all the colours of the medicine wheel to arrive here. And some say that that's why they weren't surprised when people came and white people were welcomed. It was expected that a whole lot of people would come here together on this continent. But it's ... the way that often has been an awful surprise and injury to them. What that would say about citizenship is that if you're here, you're here. If you make it here, you have a right to be here and to them it's all about the land. No human being would say you belong here, you don't. (Patty)

This position is echoed by Iris, an Indigenous activist who sees tremendous potential in an anti-colonial conception of belonging:

We've talked about what does Indigenous mean, to us. It shifts and fluctuates, depending on where you are and how you situate yourself. ... It used to mean 'people of the land,' and that was whoever was living on the land and whoever was adhering to those principles of those values of being in unity with the land and the four-legged ones and all of creation, that world view. So that it would have nothing to do with where you came from, or what your blood quantum was. And I think that's the way the paradigm shift will go. ... So then being Indigenous would refer to someone that practises that worldview. That "people of the land" means someone who's a caretaker of the land and that's somebody

that values.... We always talk about the four directions—and those directions intermingle and come together.... (Iris)

These anti-colonial conceptions of city-based community may be seen as challenging, perhaps even unsettling dominant conceptualizations of citizenship. But this is a shift not only from the dominance of the nation-state, but also from the dominance of colonialism. Whether or not they employed the language of citizenship, participants clearly articulated their conviction that 'being together' in the city in ways that further anti-colonial social action requires careful attention to the legacies of colonialism. As Indigenous activist Brenda explains:

I really do believe that our differences are necessary towards survival. We need each other to be different. We need those different cultures and histories and languages and ways of thinking and approaching things in order to survive because it's not just enriching; it's also, creative, it's inventive, you know, and those kinds of things.... But it is very difficult. And I think that colonization has impacted us in ways that—I mean, to some extent, it's been very successful at keeping us from building alliances. (Brenda)

These comments suggest that citizenship and its enactment through social policy has had negative consequences on the possibilities of broad-based anti-colonial coalition. In claiming the city, anti-colonial activists' struggles over citizenship are also struggles against the historical and contemporary manifestations of colonialism. As Peters suggests, similar to the claims advanced by non-status immigrants and refugees, "When First Nations women insist that cities are places for First Nations peoples and cultures, they redefine the spaces settlers have defined for themselves" (680). It is in this redef-

inition that tremendous potential for decolonization might be found.

Access for All? Struggles Over Citizenship and the Implications for Social Policy

Activists of colour and Indigenous activists were very clear about how citizenship policy and practice function, how it impacts on their organizing and what it means in their personal lives. In contrast, many of the activists who self-identified as "white" or "settler" were much less clear about what citizenship meant to them personally, or to the activist struggles of which they were a part. Many white participants suggested that they rarely thought about citizenship, as summed up in Ursula's comment that "It's like the air I breathe, it's just always been around." Similarly, many white citizens suggest that they rarely think about their access to health care, education, or other social services. This demonstrates that social policy and citizenship function to normalize the status of some, while problematizing the belonging of those who are marked and constructed as 'other.' One of the goals of anti-colonial activists is to highlight and unsettle this naturalization of citizenship and its enactment through social policy.

Feminist and other social movements have long problematized the role of the state and its place in struggles for equality and emancipation (for example, see Dufour this issue), yet social policy has also been regarded as an important site for the advancement of equality (see Siltanen, for example), and indeed, important improvements have been gained for many different marginalized groups through social policy. The interventions of anti-colonial activists seem to suggest that they too regard social policy as a key site for the advancement of equality, as well as a site for the contestation of state power and citizenship. At the time of writing, anti-austerity activism under the banner of "Stop the Cuts!" in the city of Toronto has

once again galvanized action around access to city services, highlighting the importance of access to these vital services and proposing alternative systems and means of ensuring access for all. The caution presented by the anti-colonial activists whose words are highlighted here is that the state is not a disinterested player, particularly not in this increasingly bleak neo-liberal context. Such insights must inform ongoing responses to the state, citizenship, and attempts to build a future that is anti-colonial, and where there is “access for all.” Nyers (2008) argues that:

The political campaigns and social movements by and in support of non-status immigrants provoke serious challenges to our received notions of political community (state) and individual autonomy (citizenship)... What turns the four words *no one is illegal* into such a radical proclamation is that statist political communities *require* that some human beings be illegal. To say that no human is illegal is to radically call into question the principles and practices of state sovereignty – *as well as the sovereign political subjects (citizens) that state sovereignty makes possible.* (138, italics original)

The demands of Indigenous activists for rights to self-determination and sovereignty, in cities and elsewhere, similarly stand as contestations of state power, the Canadian citizenship regime, and colonialism. Combined, such interventions provoke a problematization of citizenship and highlight the ways that social policy serves not only as a tool of social and moral regulation, but also as an instrument of citizenship and a practice of border control. These struggles over citizenship in the city of Toronto also highlight the crucial potential of social policy in ameliorating conditions of inequality, and the importance of access to these provisions in the construction and imagining of a Sanctuary City.

Krista Johnston is a P.D. Candidate in York University's graduate program in Gender, Feminist and Women's Studies, currently completing her dissertation on the impact of citizenship policy on anti-colonial social movements in the city of Toronto. She has taught on the topics of gender, public policy, the family and social movements, and was co-investigator (with Dr. Susan Dion) of the Talking Stick Project, an evaluation of the Urban Aboriginal Education Pilot Project in the Toronto District School Board. Krista has been engaged in a range of social movements and a long-time member of No More Silence, a Toronto-based group of Indigenous and non-Indigenous women aiming to end the murders and disappearances of Indigenous women.

¹All participants have been assigned pseudonyms. Identifying features have been changed where necessary, in order to protect the confidentiality of participants.

²Isin provides a detailed history of this (*Being Political*).

³Amparo Torres, a labour union leader in Colombia, was offered Convention Refugee status by the Canadian government in 1996. Following 9/11, she was detained and charged under a security certificate under which neither she nor her lawyer had access to the charges against her. She is accused of being a member or supporter of FARC, which has been added to Canada's list of terrorist organizations, and has been working through a lengthy (and costly) hearing process, threatened with losing her Canadian citizenship status and facing deportation (for more information, see Walkom 2007).

⁴Of course, as Thobani notes, even those with secure immigration status face obstacles to accessing some of these provisions. In particular, those entering under the sponsorship program (as well as their sponsors) face significant barriers (136-137).

⁵NOII Toronto organizers reported a deluge of calls and questions from concerned parents and family members, as well as other members of the

school community, some of whom reported that even though they had secure citizenship status there was a sense that “no one was safe,” as many had family members at various stages of the regularization process, as well as some without secure status.

⁶Of course, it should also be noted that many of those who identify as “immigrant” or “refugee” also identified as Indigenous people. Such is the pattern of displacement and migration that these histories and subjectivities intersect.

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