

# REFUGEE UPDATE

ISSUE NO. 56

A JOINT PROJECT OF THE FCJ REFUGEE CENTRE AND THE CANADIAN COUNCIL FOR REFUGEES

SUMMER 2006

## INSIDE:

TORTURE IN AN AGE OF FEAR	INTERVIEW WITH EZAT MOSSALLAJENAD	DONNEZ LE DROIT DE PA-ROLE	NAFTA AND NATIVISM	TWO MILLION MARCH IN L.A. FOR AMNESTY AND EQUALITY	IMMIGRATION ANXIETY	IMMIGRATION NAD REFUGEE STATISTICS FOR 2005
P. 5	P.6	P. 10	P.11	P.12	P.13	P. 14

## UNDOCUMENTED WORKERS RISE UP IN THE U.S.: "WE'RE HERE AND WE'RE NOT MOVING"

BY KEN LUCKHARDT

Imagine if statues and their inscriptions told the truth. If so, the Statue of Liberty on Ellis Island would read:

"Give me your tired, your poor,  
Your huddled masses,  
Desperately yearning,  
To sell their labour cheaply ..."

Cities throughout the U.S. have witnessed their largest rallies and demonstrations ever as undocumented immigrants overcome the fear of being discovered and assert their collective right to be "regularized" and treated as equals in American society. In response, the Bush administration has now threatened in mid-May to "call out the National Guard" to further militarize the border in an effort to stop the exodus of "the tired, poor and huddled masses" from Mexico and Central America.

### The Bill that Sparked a Movement

The protests were triggered by the draconian Immigration Bill HR4437, introduced by Republican Congressman James Sensenbrenner. Described by one commentator as a vicioU.S. piece of "drive-by" legislation, HH4437 would criminalize at least 12 million undocumented immigrants by making them "aggravated fel-

ons" for doing nothing more than seeking a survival strategy for their families in the U.S. If caught "sans-papiers" (as they say in France), the swift punishment would be deportation.

The Sensenbrenner Bill further calls for the construction of 700 miles of a militarized border wall that would cost a mere (minimum of) \$2.2 billion. Such a wall would totally disrupt the life of the Tohono O'odham First Nation whose land straddles the border. Further, it would block migration patterns for deer, javelina, coyotes and mountain lions as well as damage sensitive desert ecosystems.

For those churches, humanitarian groups and individuals liberal-minded enough to assist the undocumented, Sensenbrenner and his anti-immigrant lobby also has a legal solution: criminalization and jail time.

When HR4437 stalled in the Senate, another bipartisan legislative effort by Democrat Ted Kennedy and Republican John McCain proposed a compromise that would provide differential benefits to undocumented workers according to their length of residence in the U.S. Deportations, although fewer in number, would also feature prominently with this alternative Bill

(HR2230). This initiative too was stopped by Republican opposition, and the consensus now suggests little chance of successful legislative action until after mid-November 2006 Congressional elections.

### **The Political Economy of Undocumented Workers**

It needs to be stated plainly: U.S. capitalism depends on “undocumented workers” for cheap labour. Neo-liberal globalization policies have ensured an ever-increasing supply of desperate humanity fleeing unemployment, starvation and repression in Mexico and Central America. The employers (and the Chamber of Commerce that does their bidding) love cheap labour, and the Bush administration likes to make both as content as possible.

Consider the following facts:

- Over 40% of Mexicans migrating to the U.S. have done so in the last 15 years. In 1995, an estimated 2.5 million Mexican migrants were undocumented; ten years later, that number had exploded to over 10 million.
- Before the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994, Mexican wages were on average 23 per cent of U.S. wages. By 2002, they were less than half that, at 12 per cent.
- The dumping of cheap U.S. agricultural imports has forced an estimated 2 million Mexican farmers to head north; more than 600 leave every day.
- For Latin America as a region, 91 million “new poor” have been created in the past two decades. There are over 100 million indigents, and 200 million cannot provide the basic necessities of life. Forty million children live in the streets, and one of every three children suffers from hunger.
- **Remittances** sent back home to family members by the undocumented in the north are estimated to be an annual \$22 billion for Mexico and another \$8 billion for Central America. For Mexico, remittances generate more money than foreign direct investment and are the equivalent of 71% of oil exports. (In 2003, an estimated \$14 billion in remittances to African nations came from undocumented African immigrants in Europe.)
- The cost of desperation is approximately \$2500 per person to hire a “coyote” to lead the undocumented across the border. Many never make it alive to the “land of the free”. Over 2,000 have died of dehydration, drowning or acts of violence in the past five

years. **A San Francisco Chronicle article (25<sup>th</sup> of February 2006) says that 473 died through illegal border crossings in 2005. “Throughout its entire existence, by contrast, exactly 171 people died trying to cross the Berlin wall.”<sup>1</sup>**

- Since 1985, funding for border enforcement has increased fivefold and the number of Border Patrol Agents tenfold, yet illegal border crossings continue to rise.

Keeping those facts in mind, it needs to be repeated that U.S. capitalists clamour for this form of undocumented, cheap labour. Passive, compliant workers for farms, hotels, restaurants, construction, janitorial and residential cleaning, child care, gardening, delivery, meat and poultry packing, retail ... a godsend for the ruling class.

The capitalist globalization program is really pretty simple to outline: (1) It creates conditions in the underdeveloped South so intolerable that citizens of those countries must migrate to northern industrial economies to survive; (2) restrictive immigration and refugee laws/regulations are legislated by northern governments to ensure “illegality”; and (3) it resorts to even more punitive measures (such as deportations and militarized borders) when the undocumented show signs of collective resistance. As long as neo-liberal policies determine the priorities of Mexican and Central American economies, there will always be more desperate families forced to flee.

Migrant labour worldwide now exceeds 200 million, according to the United Nations data. Some 30 million are in the United States; at least 20 million of these workers come from Latin America, of whom 11 million are without legal status. The National Immigrant Solidarity Network says that immigrants contribute \$7 billion in social security each year. “They contribute \$25 billion more to the U.S. economy than they receive in healthcare and social services.”<sup>2</sup> “The National Research Council found that when the taxes paid by the children of low-skilled immigrant families—most of whom are illegal—are factored in, they contribute on average \$80,000 more to federal coffers than they consume.”<sup>3</sup>

**More importantly, these “huddled masses” create trillions of dollars of profits for capital while receiving only a pittance in wages in return.**

As well, they suffer the wrath of the politician and the threats of the racists. Although two-thirds of undocumented immigrants pay Medicare, Social Security and personal income taxes, an 1996 welfare reform bill dis-

qualified them from nearly all means-tested government programs including food stamps, housing assistance, Medicaid and Medicare-funded hospitalization. Only emergency medical care and K-12 education are allowed. The paramilitary organization known as “Minutemen”, avowedly created to “secure the border”, are the most recent proponents of neo-fascism as they sport T-shirts bearing slogans such as “Kill a Mexican Today?”

**In sum, a huge pool of cheap labour without rights creates the perfect conditions for maximum exploitation.** Not only are the undocumented workers fodder for the employers, but they also negatively affect the bargaining capacity of the remainder of the workforce. The so-called “fair market” for wage rates is a myth as evidenced by an 1999 case brought before the National Labor Relations Board. Holiday Inn management in Minnesota fired undocumented workers and reported them to Immigration authorities after they had voted to join the union of their choice, HERE Local 17.

The prevalence of undocumented workers in the U.S. economy amounts to **“outsourcing within national boundaries.”**<sup>4</sup>

When the winds of massive protest began to blow in March of this year, the immigration “restrictionists”, supported by President Bush, began to promote guest-worker programs. Such programs would force undocumented workers to report regularly to Immigration officers to apply and re-apply for temporary work permits. Social Security inspectors would become workplace police rather than responsible for ensuring that workers receive rightful pension and disability benefits.

The “temporary work visa” concept is not surprisingly endorsed by major employers of immigrant labour such as Wal-Mart and Tyson Foods and the Essential Worker Immigration Coalition of which they are corporate members. Undocumented workers however made

it equally clear through their collective political action in March and April and especially on May Day 2006 that they will not become “braceros” (guest workers on temporary permits).

### “The Civil Rights Struggle of our Time”<sup>5</sup>

That’s how **Shirley Jackson Lee, Houston’s African American Congresswoman**, speaks of the current struggle for immigrant rights. Neither the hard-line restrictionists (mostly Republicans) nor the equally anti-immigrant guest-worker advocates (mostly Democrats) anticipated the upsurge of protest that would result from their efforts to enact repressive legislation proposed by the mainstream political parties.

It began in Washington on the 7<sup>th</sup> of March with 30,000 protesting the Sensenbrenner bill. Then Chicago found an estimated 300,000 in the streets during the same week. Portland, Lansing, Atlanta, Milwaukee, Denver, Charlotte joined, and then there was Los Angeles with half a million people in the streets on March 25. To those who invoked security concerns as a defense of tougher immigration policy, one young Mexican immigrant responded: “When did you ever see a Mexican blow up the World Trade Center? Who do you think built the World Trade Center?”



By late March, California students in Los Angeles and in San Diego and Orange counties were leaving classes on a regular basis to join the rallies. Far from “skipping school”, student organizers encouraged those who didn’t understand the issue to stay in the classroom. As one activist said, “...the last thing we need is a student not knowing why they are out of school.”<sup>6</sup> Nearly 75 per cent of over 877,000 Los Angeles Unified School District students are Latino. By the end of March, student walk-outs had spread to the neighboring states of Nevada, Utah, Arizona and Texas.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> of April, the New York Times reported hundreds of thousands of immigrants and their support-

ers marching in more than 100 cities across the United States. They were the cities where hardened protestors had always taken to the streets, but they were also the smaller communities in traditionally conservative regions such as Boise, Idaho and Garden City, Kansas. Some activists made a point of drawing historical parallels with Rosa Parks and the civil rights struggle of African Americans of earlier decades.

And then, in the tradition of radical U.S. labour history, the **“Great American Boycott of 2006”** was called for May Day. Even the California State Senate endorsed the action with a resolution that documented the \$4.5 billion in state taxes and \$30 billion in Federal taxes contributed by immigrants. One clause in the resolution actually stated that “the average immigrant-headed household in California contributes over \$2,600 annually to federal Social Security, \$539 more than the national average.”

**An estimated 2 million people took to the streets in Los Angeles on May Day.** Some said that the crowd was “sin numero” (un countable). The dominant chant made their position clear: **“Aquí Estamos y No Nos Vamos!” (We’re Here and We’re Not Leaving”).** Many of the protestors refused to make any purchases on May Day to demonstrate their importance to the local economy of Southern California. March organizer Nartivo Lopez, President of the Mexican American Political Association and the Hermandad Nacional Mexicana, said, **“(We) are rescuing from anonymity the struggle for the 8-hour day, begun in Chicago over a century ago by the immigrants of yesteryear. (We) are recovering the traditions of all working people.”**<sup>7</sup>

### **The Political Demands and Solidarity**

The demand from the undocumented workers’ movement is for **“equality”** of treatment through some form of **“regularization”** of their immigration status. This is precisely what Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee and Congressional Black Caucus members proposed in draft legislation (HR2092) in the spring of 2005. The Bill would give permanent residence visas to undocumented immigrants already resident in the U.S. Such legislation would go a long way towards preventing migrants and native-born workers from being legally pitted against each other (as guest-worker programs inevitably do). HR2092 didn’t even receive a hearing in the mad rush to endorse Sensenbrenner’s restrictionist measure.

The demand for equality through legal regularization will have a political future only if and when it is supported by the larger U.S. working class, and especially the trade union movement. The simultaneous demands

for legal status and workers’ rights must be articulated clearly, loudly and repeatedly to have any hope of victory.

Up until 2000, the AFL-CIO continued to oppose rights for “undocumented” workers, but it has now publicly called for residence visas instead of guest-worker programs. Sections of the Teamsters have also supported real legal status for the undocumented as the only means to prevent employers from exploiting the most vulnerable segment of the working class.

Legal status is more than a piece of paper. It offers the right to the minimum wage (which over 2 million workers now do not receive), occupational safety, workers’ compensation and overtime pay, amongst other protections offered through labour law. The ability to have labour laws for all workers is essential to overcome divisions within the working class.

Ignorance of U.S.-Mexican history is often a cause of the divisions that must be overcome. For starters, movement leaders should point out that “the U.S. seizure of more than half of Mexico’s territory in 1848 netted Washington more than 80 per cent of Mexico’s mineral wealth and was a criminal act ... if Mexico today still included California and Texas, she would possess more oil than Saudi Arabia and have sufficient economic infrastructure to employ all of her people.”<sup>8</sup>

Even more important is an effort to forge a unity between African American and Mexican American communities on this issue. A starting point on that road might be a reminder to both peoples that Mexico consistently opposed U.S. slavery throughout most of the 19th century. In 1857, for example, the Mexican Congress adopted Article 13 which declared that an enslaved person was free the moment he/she set foot on Mexican soil. Upwards of 5,000 former African slaves had fled the U.S. South to Mexico by that time.

As such divisions are being confronted within the working class, the Republicans and right-wing Democrats will continue to have their own points of serious internal strife. Those in the overtly right-wing restrictionist lobby will relish the thought of National Guard-controlled borders while they continue to demand permanent walls and higher rates of deportation. Their Republican allies in the corporate sector will however continue to demand their reservoirs of cheap labour without full legal rights.

### **Footnotes.**

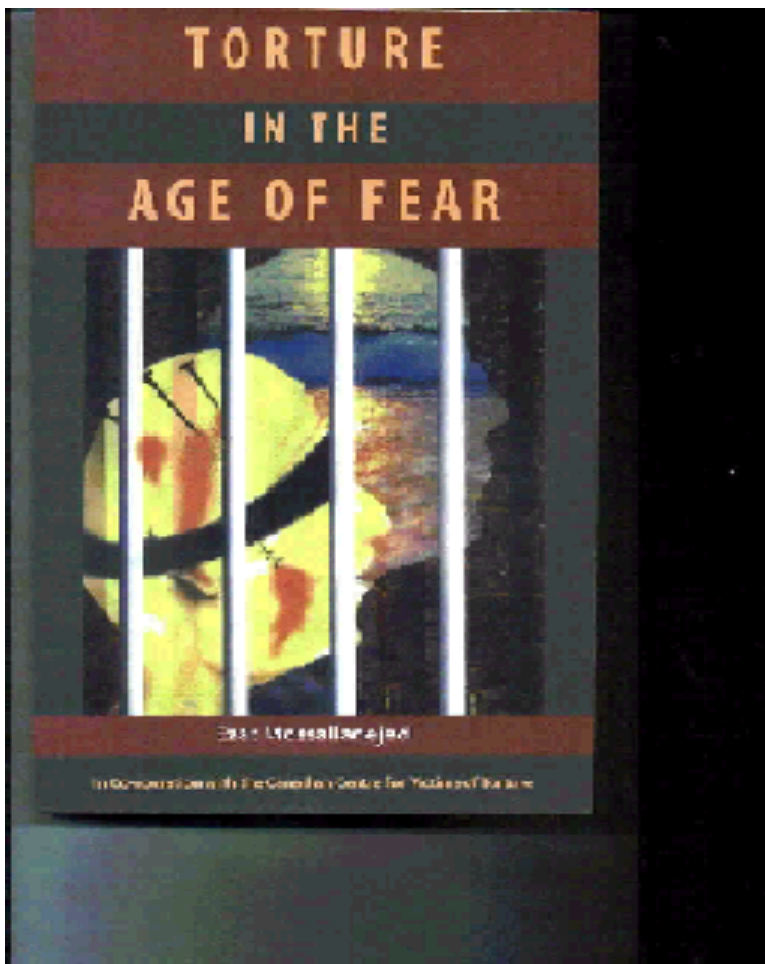
1. Corey Rubin, Review of “Human Cargo: A Journey Among Refugees”, *The Nation*, April 10, 2006.
2. Aquí Estamos y No Nos Vamos: The Struggle for

Immigrant Rights in the United States.

3. "No Free Ride," Knight Ridder/Tribune News Service, May 9, 2006.
4. Laura Carlsen, "Bad Blood on the Border," March 13, 2006.
5. Quoted in David Bacon, "Equality, or Not", Truthout, March 3, 2006.
6. Joel Rubin and Cynthia H. Chao, "High School Students to Extend Immigration Protests into Third Day", Los Angeles Times, March 27, 2006.
7. David Bacon, "Two Million March in Los Angeles for Amnesty and Equality," May 3, 2006.
8. Professor Ron Wilkins, "New Perspectives on the Immigration Debate".

*Ken Luckhardt is National representative, International Department, CAW-Canada and a member of the Editorial Board of Refugee Update.*

V V V V V



***Torture in the Age of Fear***  
by Ezat Mossallanejed

Published by Seraphim Editions  
Hamilton, Ontario 2005  
Canadian \$24.95  
US \$22.95

A must reading to understand the history of human suffering under torture, the torture industry today and why it can **never** be justified.

Ezat Mossallanejed, Ph.D. in Political Economy, poet, and currently Counselor and Policy Analyst at the Center for Victims of Torture in Toronto, writes out of his personal experience under torture which gives him the window to understand not only the torturer and human suffering and fear under torture but the spirit of resistance and moments of hope found in the solidarity between and among those under torture. Ezat's ability to find hope, to see beauty and express humour in the midst such horror is but one of the powerful messages of this book.

V V V V V

# INTERVIEW WITH EZAT MOSSALLANEJAD

*How much can the human spirit take before it breaks? What makes a person resilient in the face of unimaginable suffering? His name is Ezat Mossallanejad and his story is about a journey from darkness into light. He is a poet, and he holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy. What he never planned to become was an expert in torture. Dr. Mossallanejad was imprisoned and tortured in his native Iran. Today he's a councillor and a policy analyst with the Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture. Few people know better how much the human spirit can take and still sing, literally sing. Ezat, Welcome to Tapestry.*

**Ezat.** Oh thank you very much for inviting me!

**Interviewer:** Your book is the last place I would have expected to find humour and there it is, peppered throughout the pages. Where did that come from?

**Ezat.** It's a kind of defence mechanism. When you are living in a world upside-down, when there is no harmony, when there is no justice, everything is grotesque, and then it brings a kind of satire to your life. Then it gives you a message about the vanity of our being, the absurdity of human life. An inherent stupidity in some of our behaviours including torture. We have to laugh but it is a kind of bitter laugh you now, the kind of crying laugh.

**Interviewer.** Take us back for a minute the, the bulk of our conversation is about the human spirit and how it can triumph in the most horrific circumstances. But I'm going to ask you to take us back to the time you were in prison. How did you end up in prison during the days of the Shah in Iran? What happened to you?

**Ezat.** (Deep breath) I was involved in writing and also in some human rights and peace activities. And then one day ... a ... I was working at the ministry of water and power, later it was changed to the Ministry of Energy. Two men, well dressed came to my office and said, "Ezat" I said, "Yes?" They said: "Put your hands on top of your head." They handcuffed me from the back and they took me to a big car. Immediately they blindfolded me and then I found myself in a dungeon after some time. Ah! ... then, they started ...um ... flogging me on the sole and then ...

**Interviewer.** On the sole of your foot?

**Ezat.** Yeah, and for fifty days I couldn't walk properly. That was severe torture, for no reason. And they had a philosophy that, we torture them, if they

have something, some information it would come out through torture. And if there's nothing, we don't lose anything. I never forget, um ... the ... all the time we heard screams. And from the types of screams we could recognize what type of torture was going on, whether it was burning, whether extracting nails, flogging or hanging. We identified true screams, and the type of screams.

And you had no sleep at all and it was very difficult to ... um ... maintain your morale. Then we had to ... a ... sing, we had to crack jokes and we had to ... um... just make mockery of our torturers and sometimes also we imitated them and we played their roles in different types of skits. And then satire actually, humorous satire was something that helped us resist against torture and to keep our morale high.

**Interviewer.** I'm trying to reconcile this story with the man who's written this book, which is full of moments of hope, moments of joy among your fellow prisoners who are being held. Some people would respond to this by collapsing. That's also a way of dealing with all of this. What do you think is it inside you - inside people who survived along side you that chooses not to collapse - that chooses to fight back through humour, through skits, through mocking your tormentors?

**Ezat.** There is one thing that is very essential when you are under torture. If you can't resist torture and within few days, a ... you just give them all your information and bring many people to jail and that results in the execution of some of your friends then you lose your values and you could collapse. But if you resist and nobody comes to jail because of you, then you have a kind of pride that, you know, and say to yourself "I'm going through these difficulties but I withstand all difficulties, let me die and nobody dies because of me." That keeps you in very, very high spirits. Then it's very essential like ... you know, a balloon, that if you just open it and let the air go out nothing of you would remain.

And in those days I was thinking of my friends and my friends were outside keeping an eye and be the voice. If I failed, I may die but they would continue with a cause and they gave that and it was like nectar of life for me, that I could stand the torture. But it's a disaster when you lose meaning in you life, and when you lose your values. And of course it is unfortunately very common that under torture, because they reduce you to your basic instincts, the instinct of survival and you, and you may betray somebody. One method of torture was making you totally naked, and

tying your legs and your hands to a naked bed. Under the bed there was a flame and there was enough distance between your buttocks and the flame but they pushed your abdomen and then your buttocks touched the flame for a few seconds. Maybe one second not more than two, three seconds at the most.

Then under that condition when they are burning you, you can do anything; you can betray anybody because you are not yourself. You are just like an animal defending your very survival and after that people used to collapse.

**Interviewer.** In the book you lay out almost a recipe for surviving torture, for surviving the worst. And you give ingredients. You give the ingredients of hope, humour, music, exercise, and setting tasks for yourself, and love. Which one was at the top of the list for you?

**Ezat.** On the top of the list is love.

**Interviewer.** Why?

**Ezat.** Because, love is a process where you fully forget about yourself. You are not yourself; you are somebody else. And somebody else is you. That is marvelous because if you ask me what is the reason for torture. I have one question. When I feel that you are other you are not me, you are my enemy so there is a saying that ... Mark Twain actually said: "Every Sunday we go to church and we pray for sisterhood and brotherhood of human kind but we cut the throat of our neighbour and our sisters and our brothers if they believe in another religion. But love is something that just removes this otherness. You are I. I am you. I extend my humanity to you. You extend it to me. And it is on the top of everything.

**Interviewer.** I'd like to hear about some of the people who helped to keep you going during your years ... in prison. People who helped to keep you alive, who helped keep you sane. Who do you remember?

**Ezat.** I have dedicated my book to Dr. Nezam Rashidiyoon, a medical doctor. This is a man I will never forget. He had published some articles about tyranny and human rights violations in Iran. They arrested him and tortured him for fifty days. So he was a great human being and a great writer. He never said yes to them. He always remained steadfast. They sentenced him to life imprisonment.

We were together under torture, in a cell twice. He used to exercise two hours per day and he was the man who encouraged me to exercise and also he had the kind ... a sense of satire and sense of humour. And not only me, everybody maintained their morale

because of him. And any time he was with us, teaching us, telling us about war, politics, philosophy, about medicine even teaching us about biology. Then again we were separated because they sent him to a jail that was for people who were sentenced to life.

Then one day, they transferred me to another jail. Before transferring, they put me in a cage. I saw the doctor coming to the cage because as a punishment they threw him to the cage, then we embraced each other and said: "Look! They thought that they were going to punish me in this cage. This is the best time of my life seeing you again!" And he told me that seeing a friend after a long time is like refreshing water in the middle of the desert for a thirsty person.

Then after the downfall of the Shah the people actually released him from the jail; he just abandoned politics all together and he totally devoted himself to medical services; he worked in a hospital. I tried my best to see him. And in 1981 there was massacre in Iran, massacre of political prisoners and even killing people on the spot on the road. And one day I read newspaper. I saw his name in the list of people who had been shot by the government. It was a terrible blow to me because he was a very dedicated person. In jail he never lost his hope. And after he left so we had silence and everybody shedding tears.

**Interviewer.** You had a friend named Habib while you were in prison. Tell me about him.

**Ezat.** Habib. I will never forget him. I never forget, that one day they tortured me to almost death and they brought me back to the cell and it was a public cell. Then Habib told them: "Bring, bring, bring something we have to put a bandage on his legs and feet, both feet". And the people didn't have anything. Habib took out his shirt and...

**Interviewer.** He took off his own shirt?

**Ezat.** Own shirt and started tearing the shirt and making it pieces of bandage and then just putting bandage on my wounds. And always encouraging me to resist, and always kind words and some times singing. And in jail speaking about different parks, different rose gardens, roses, and the beauty of the mountain. And never stopped giving hope to people.

**Interviewer.** The word beauty comes up more than once in your book as well. Was that something you needed to cling to when you were in prison? The idea that somewhere beauty exists?

**Ezat.** You know, I in prison. There are two ways of appreciating beauty. One way through imagination because here I never forget that we imagined the out-

side world we didn't have it. And one day I had friend, we were both imprisoned in a cell, both two of us in a very ugly cell, there was no air, no light, and it was suffocating actually.

Then Jose said: "Let's together make a skit." The skit was that, I'm living in a city and Jose comes to visit me and brings some gifts for me but I don't want to accept gifts from him. Then, when he came to my, in our imagination, to my house, *top top top top top* ... then said: "Angel how are you?" I said: "Good, very good! Welcome, welcome! You have come from the village." He said: "But Angel, why is your house so small?"

**Both.** (Laughter)

**Ezat.** That was, you know, we both laughed and beauty came through imagination. But sometimes we could have a feeling of real beauty. I never forget one day the soldier took me to the garden of the prison and the doctor started just working on my wounds...

**Interviewer.** In the garden?

**Ezat.** In the garden. And he actually cut the flesh without anaesthetics but I saw a ray of sun coming to me through the branches of a tree and it gave me such a sense of beauty and I thought life was worth living. And also sometimes, in your cell you could hear the sound of an owl far away and the braying of a donkey. I never forget. Then, everybody said: "We love donkeys!" Such a beautiful sound! I don't know how it did reach our cell, because our jail was far from the city.

**Interviewer.** Yes.

**Ezat.** That you could see real beauty, most of the time, imaginary beauty. But beauty could keep you going.

**Interviewer.** You mentioned a moment ago the guard who brought you into the garden so that you could see the doctor who was working there. Were there other guards, people on the (I don't even want to use the word "other" with you but) other side who showed moments of humanity to you?

**Ezat.** I will never forget. A soldier took me to the clinic and it was like a slaughter house. Soldiers had no power and they had no rights. They could never speak with prisoners. If they saw them speaking with a prisoner they would punish them or even put them in jail.

But a soldier saw me. He saw my wounds and not being able to walk and all torture I had gone through

and he started giving me hope. He said: "Don't worry my dear, we are born once and we die once." Then he started insulting torturers. "Damn them!" And started listing the names of the tortures. And it was like a nectar of life to me. It reenergized me. I forgot about my torture and I came to know that even deep inside hell you can find signs of paradise. Humanity is not dead.

So, we are living in a world where these kinds of people are there, everywhere. And then I came to know about two sides to life. Darkness and light. So, I came to know that we have so many enemies hiding here and there but the worst enemy is cynicism, and seeing only the dark side of the things, and the feeling that we cannot make a difference. All of us can make a difference.

**Interviewer.** Does it seem to you that those, those attitudes, that of cynicism and that of hopelessness, powerlessness that, what can I do I'm just one person? Do they seem to be to you pervasive, in the world we live in? Do they seem to you to be everywhere? Sinicism and the spirit of, I can't do anything?

**Ezat.** I think that, unfortunately, it is there everywhere, especially among human rights workers and sometimes social workers and sometimes people like me who are working for policy change. Because I have been working in Canada for the past 20 years for policy change and I have seen policies moving from bad to worse.

But, still I think there is some room for hope and I never forget that in my small cell when I was going through a very bad time and they came and told me that next day they were going to kill you and be prepared. That was their technique of torture to keep you in limbo and to intimidate you and to break your morale and to make you give them information. Then I started singing some songs that the rebels used to sing during constitutional revolution. And through singing those songs I just strengthen my morale.

**Interviewer.** What kinds of songs?

**Ezat.** I can't sing but I can tell you the words: ... "If they cut my head, if they use it as a soccer ball and if you pass it from one enemy to another then I have pledged to my people that I will work for them, I would be with them, that I never betrayed them. Then maybe through my suffering that, a candle would light the heart of each and every human person.

**Interviewer.** You mention the songs that perhaps link you to your past, were there soothing songs, you were able to sing? Song you might have heard when you



were at home? When you were a boy, when you were growing up? Were they sustenance for you?

**Ezat.** Yeah! There were some people for example, people who used to dig wells, you know ... And then, maybe after ten meters of digging they reached water. And they celebrated having new water after such hard work. But sometimes the professional well digger, instead of getting to water, they got a big rock, a very solid rock: they couldn't go further. There is a song here about a professional well digger...

**Interviewer.** Can you sing a bit?

**Ezat.** OK. It goes like this: (Ezat sings) "I'm just a professional well digger, I got rock instead of water. What can I do? Oh, my beloved, give me a kiss then I will use my hammer to break this rock all together and I will get refreshing water for you." Those types of songs we used to sing in jail.

**Interviewer.** Would your cell mates know it? Would you all sing together?

**Ezat.** Yeah!

**Interviewer.** Or would you sing, one person sing a song for the rest?

**Ezat.** No, it was different. Sometimes you were in solitary confinement. There's no other person and you can't speak loudly because you are a dangerous prisoner (that is what they called you). You sing just to yourself. But sometimes you are imprisoned in a big

cell. One day, and I will never forget that in a cell four meters by 3 meters we were thirty-three people, then we used to sing together, we used to sing in turns, we used to perfect our songs and we used to enjoy the songs people used to sing for us.

**Interviewer.** You write in the book about the day, the day you look forward to. The day you will retire to a small farm, in a remote corner of the world and breed donkeys. In your words: "Whom I love as happy, stubborn and intelligent animals." Why donkeys?

**Ezat.** I love donkeys because throughout history and in all countries, donkeys are portrayed as symbols of stupidity. But I used to have donkeys, in my childhood, I used to ride donkeys. Donkeys are not stupid. Donkeys are very intelligent, very happy and very hard working animals. But why do we use donkeys as a symbol of stupidity? I think human beings everywhere use donkeys as a mirror to see their own stupidities in donkeys. And look at all the stories about donkeys. That is the story of human beings: what we did, we attribute to donkeys. I think we need to rehabilitate donkeys and instead of looking at donkeys as symbols of stupidity, look at ourselves. If I remain alive in the future I'm tempted to write a book on the dignity of donkeys.

**Interviewer.** Maybe we'll have a chat about that one the next time you are in. Ezat, thank you so much.

**Ezat.** All the best! Thank you.

## KAIROS IS PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE...

**BORDERLESS** a 25 minute educational video that gives voice to the struggles and dreams of undocumented workers in Canada. Geraldo, a Costa Rican construction worker, and Angela, a second-generation Caribbean domestic worker, struggle against labour exploitation. Against the odds, they work to build a future for families painfully separated by restrictive immigration laws. Viewers meet an often invisible workforce and reflect on the hidden costs of sustaining our first world economy. **Borderless** is directed by Gemini nominated filmmaker Min Sook Lee. The beautifully moving script is written by Dionne Brand, winner of the 1997 Governor General's Literary Award, and narrated by d'bi young. **Borderless** comes with a **study guide** that offers background information, discussion questions, workshop exercises and tips for organizing a community screening.

**TO ORDER** Call Fahira Golich at 1-877-403-8933 X 221 or 416-463-5312 X 221 or email [orders@kairoscanada.org](mailto:orders@kairoscanada.org). Alternatively, order online at <http://www.kairoscanada.org/e/resources/orders.asp>

**DVD \$25. VHS \$32. Prices include study guide, postage and handling**

# DONNER LE DROIT DE PAROLE!

BY CATHERINE GAUVREAU

*A people's commission was held in Montreal on the 21<sup>st</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> and the 23<sup>rd</sup> of April.*

*The principle objective was to offer an alternative forum in order to give a voice to individuals who are affected by security measures taken by representatives of the Canadian government.*

*Other objectives were the denunciations of security measures, proposing changes of these current measures and also finding a mode of action for individuals who are affected by these measures.*

*During the public hearings, witnesses and experts from different related backgrounds expressed their point of view and the impact that these security measures have on their lives. The commissioners and members of the public then had an opportunity to ask questions. The commissioners were particularly interested in the situation of five persons who have had security certificates placed on them, these are Mohammad Mahjoub, Mahmoud Jaballah, Hassan Almrei, Mohamed Harkat and Adil Charkaoui. Each of these persons mentioned except for the last two are detained. Mr Charkaoui and Mr. Harkat are presently under conditional release.*

*In conclusion, the commissioners will evaluate the validity of all evidence put before them during the public hearing whether it be by oral or written submissions. A final report in which the commissioners will voice their conclusions and recommendations will be made public at the end of May.*

\*\*\*\*\*

Une Commission populaire a eu lieu à Montréal les 21, 22 et 23 avril derniers.

Cette Commission ([www.peoplescommission.ath.cx](http://www.peoplescommission.ath.cx)) est une initiative de

- la Coalition Justice pour Adil Charkaoui ([www.adilinfo.org](http://www.adilinfo.org)): *qui exige la libération de toutes les personnes détenues sous un certificat de sécurité, l'abolition de cette mesure, le déroulement de procès justes, la fin des déportations et du harcèlement contre les Musulmans et Arabes.*

- du GRIP-Concordia (514) 848-7585 : *un centre communautaire et étudiant basé à l'Université Concordia qui soutient les initiatives populaires, ainsi que les pro-*

*jets et recherches reliées à l'environnement et la justice sociale.*

- du réseau Solidarité sans frontière ([www.solidarityacrossborders.org](http://www.solidarityacrossborders.org)): *composé de groupes de défense des droits des personnes migrantes, immigrantes et réfugiées de la région de Montréal. Le réseau revendique la régularisation de toutes les personnes sans-statut, la fin des déportations, la fin des détentions sous un mandat d'immigration et l'abolition des certificats de sécurité.*

Divers groupes communautaires, culturels, religieux, de défense des droits et des syndicats ont appuyé cette démarche.

L'objectif principal est d'offrir un forum alternatif pour donner la parole aux personnes qui sont affectées par les mesures de sécurité prises par des représentants du gouvernement au Canada.

Les objectifs secondaires sont de dénoncer les mesures de sécurité, de proposer des changements aux présentes mesures et de fournir des moyens d'action aux individus qui sont touchés par celles-ci.

Tous étaient invités à soumettre des éléments de preuve à la Commission. Les commissaires étaient cependant particulièrement intéressés aux témoignages qui portent sur les politiques en matière de sécurité dans le domaine de l'immigration.

**Au cours des audiences publiques, des témoins et des experts provenant de divers milieux ont pu exposer brièvement leurs points de vue et l'impact que les mesures de sécurité ont eu sur leur vie. Les commissaires et des membres du public ont ensuite eu l'opportunité de les questionner.**

Les commissaires ont porté une attention particulière sur la situation des cinq personnes dont un certificat de sécurité a été émis contre eux, soit messieurs Mohammad Mahjoub, Mahmoud Jaballah, Hassan Almrei, Mohamed Harkat et Adil Charkaoui. Tous, sauf les deux derniers, sont détenus. Messieurs Charkaoui et Harkat sont présentement en liberté conditionnelle. Il doit porter obligatoirement un bracelet de surveillance et la police peut entrer chez lui en tout temps sans obtenir une autorisation préalable. De plus, il ne peut pas quitter sa résidence sans être accompagné par un de ses parents et il est soumis à un couvre-feu.

Messrieurs Harkat et Charakaoui ont déposé chacun à la Cour suprême du Canada une requête pour demander que celle-ci accepte d'examiner la constitutionnalité des certificats de sécurité. La Cour suprême a accepté les requêtes et va entendre leurs causes en juin 2006.

Un certificat de sécurité attestant qu'un non-citoyen canadien est interdit de territoire pour des raisons de sécurité est déposé à la section de première instance de la Cour fédérale par le ministre de l'immigration et le solliciteur général du Canada (article 77 LIPR).

Les renseignements obtenus dans le cadre de cette démarche et au cours de l'audition qui suit demeurent sous le sceau du secret pour des raisons de sécurité nationale. (articles 76 et 78 LIPR). La personne visée par le certificat n'obtient qu'un résumé de la preuve qui a pour but d'informer cette dernière sur les circonstances qui ont justifié l'émission d'un tel certificat. À ce stade-ci, encore tout élément de preuve pouvant contrevenir à la sécurité nationale n'est pas divulgué. De plus, le juge peut recevoir en preuve, tout élément, même si celui-ci serait, en d'autres circonstances, considéré inadmissible et il peut fonder sa décision sur celui-ci (article 78 LIPR).

Le juge doit décider du caractère raisonnable du certificat et sa décision n'est pas sujette d'appel ou de contrôle judiciaire. (article 80 LIPR)

En dernier lieu, les personnes qui se retrouvent sous l'effet d'un certificat de sécurité ne peuvent pas revendiquer le statut de réfugié au Canada, mais ils peuvent demander la protection contre le renvoi vers la torture.

En conclusion, les commissaires vont évaluer tous les témoignages reçus lors des audiences publiques et des soumissions audio ou écrites. Un rapport final dans lequel les commissaires auront émis leurs conclusions et recommandations sera publié à la fin mai.

*LIPR= Loi concernant l'immigration au Canada et l'asile conféré aux personnes déplacées, persécutées ou en danger.*

Cet article a été rédigé en se basant sur les dépliants préparés et distribués par le comité organisateur de la Commission populaire.

*Catherine Gauvreau is a member of the Editorial Board of Refugee Update.*

V V V V V V V V V

## NAFTA AND NATIVISM

BY HAROLD MEYERSON

Everybody talks about globalization; nobody ever does anything about it. The world labor market looms over every horizon with its promise of cheaper goods and lower pay. The public is skeptical, rightly, about the benefits of globalization, but the process of harnessing it, of writing enforceable rules that would benefit not just investors but most of our citizens, is hard to even conceive. And so globalization is experienced by many Americans as a loss of control. Manufacturing moves to China, engineering to India; *que sera, sera*.

Except on our borders. With the number of immigrants illegally in the United States estimated at 11 million, the tensions between Americans and Mexicans -- chiefly, working-class Americans and working-class Mexicans -- are rising. And those are tensions that congressional Republicans, who don't look to have a lot of other issues they can run on this fall, are eager to stoke.

In December the House approved a bill by Judiciary Committee Chairman James Sensenbrenner of Wisconsin that would turn all those undocumented immigrants into felons. It would supersede local ordinances that keep police from inquiring into the status of people coming forth to report crimes or help in investigations. It would help create a permanent underground population in our midst, with no hope of ever attaining legal status.

But the most striking aspect of the assault on undocumented immigrants is that it has no theory of causality. Over 40 percent of the Mexicans who have come, legally and illegally, to the United States have done so in the past 15 years. The boom in undocumented is even more concentrated than that: There were just 2.5 million such immigrants in the United States in 1995; fully

8 million have arrived since then.

Why? It's not because we've let down our guard at the border; to the contrary, the border is more militarized now than it's ever been. The answer is actually simpler than that. In large part, it's NAFTA.

The North American Free Trade Agreement was sold, of course, as a boon to the citizens of the United States, Canada and Mexico -- guaranteed both to raise incomes and lower prices, however improbably, throughout the continent. Bipartisan elites promised that it would stanch the flow of illegal immigrants, too. "There will be less illegal immigration because more Mexicans will be able to support their children by staying home," said President Bill Clinton as he was building support for the measure in the spring of 1993.

But NAFTA, which took effect in 1994, could not have been more precisely crafted to increase immigration -- chiefly because of its devastating effect on Mexican agriculture. As liberal economist Jeff Faux points out in "The Global Class War," his just-published indictment of the actual workings of the new economy, Mexico had been home to a poor agrarian sector for generations, which the government helped sustain through price supports on corn and beans. NAFTA, though, put those farmers in direct competition with incomparably more efficient U.S. agribusinesses. It proved to be no contest: From 1993 through 2002, at least 2 million Mexican farmers were driven off their land.

The experience of Mexican industrial workers under NAFTA hasn't been a whole lot better. With the passage of NAFTA, the *maquiladoras* on the border boomed. But the *raison d'etre* for these factories was to produce exports at the lowest wages possible, and with the Mexican government determined to keep its workers from unionizing, the NAFTA boom for Mexican workers never materialized. In the pre-NAFTA days of 1975, Faux documents, Mexican wages came to 23 percent of U.S. wages; in 1993-94, just before NAFTA, they amounted to 15 percent; and by 2002 they had sunk to a mere 12 percent.

The official Mexican poverty rate rose from 45.6 percent in 1994 to 50.3 percent in 2000. And that was before competition from China began to shutter the *maquiladoras* and reduce Mexican wages even more.

So if Sensenbrenner wants to identify a responsible party for the immigration he so deplors, he might take a peek in the mirror. In the winter of '93, he voted for NAFTA. He helped establish a system that increased investment opportunities for major corporations and diminished the rights, power and, in many instances,

living standards of workers on both sides of the border. Now he and his Republican colleagues are stirring the resentments of the same American workers they placed in jeopardy by supporting the corporate trade agenda.

Walls on the border won't fix this problem, nor will forcing cops to arrest entire barrios. So long as the global economy is designed, as NAFTA was, to keep workers powerless, Mexican desperation and American anger will only grow. Forget the fence. We need a new rulebook for the world.

*Harold Meyerson works for the Washington Post. This article was published on Wednesday, February 8, 2006, on page A19. [meyersonh@washpost.com](mailto:meyersonh@washpost.com)*



## **TWO MILLION MARCH IN L.A. FOR AMNESTY AND EQUALITY**

DAVID BACON, PHOTOGRAPH  
AND STORY

On May Day immigrants and their supporters filled the streets of Los Angeles twice in one day - a huge march downtown, and another through the Wilshire district's Miracle Mile.

There were so many people that those participating said they were *sin numero* - uncountable. Marchers of all races and nationalities protested the bills in Congress that would criminalize 12 million undocumented people, build a wall between the U.S. and Mexico, set up guest worker programs, allow indefinite detention and drive from their jobs those without papers.

They called for amnesty - permanent residence visas which would give the undocumented immediate legal status and rights - and equality - opposing second-class status as temporary or guest workers. They carried thousands of American flags, chanting "Aquí Estamos y No Nos Vamos!" - "We're Here, and We're not Leaving!"

Hundreds of thousands of immigrants had taken off work or school to come to the marches, and refrained from buying anything, to show their economic importance. Even the LA Metro let marchers on for free.

March organizer Nativio Lopez, president of the Mexican American Political Association and the Hermandad Nacional Mexicana, said: "On May 1<sup>st</sup> immigrant workers demonstrated their power in the national



immigration debate. Their absence from workplaces, schools and stores sent a powerful message that that they will not be shut out of this discussion.

They are rescuing from anonymity the struggle for the 8-hour day, begun in Chicago over a century ago by the immigrants of yesteryear. They are recovering the traditions of all working people."

V V V V V

## IMMIGRATION ANXIETY

BY THOMAS I. PALLEY

A lot of newspaper ink has been spilled over immigration. So why write another op-ed? Because the economics behind the debate remains badly out of focus, and understanding those economics is key to carving a passage through this nastiest of political wedge issues.

Right now, Congress is deadlocked over how to deal with undocumented workers. House Republicans favor a get-tough on workers approach. The Senate supports a more business-friendly approach that establishes a guest worker program while also offering existing illegal immigrants a path to citizenship. Both approaches are deeply flawed because they ignore worker's rights, and because they fail to tackle the role of business in illegal immigration. Failure to

address worker's rights means failing to help those who have been harmed by illegal immigration, while failure to tackle business' contribution means that illegal immigration will continue unabated.

First, some basic economics. In my view, economists—such as George Borjas and Lawrence Katz of Harvard University—have it right when they say that illegal immigration has negatively impacted wages, especially for low-skilled native-born Americans. That is simple supply and demand analysis. The flood of undocumented immigrants has increased low-skilled labor supply, holding down wages relative to what they would have been absent any immigration.

However, these economists are mistaken in their claim that the economic contribution of undocumented immigrants is very low. Their reasoning is that low-skilled immigrants are paid little because their productive contribution is very low. Ergo, even though immigrants may be far better off than they were in their native countries, the U.S. economy benefits little, according to them. However, this logic ignores the fact that illegal immigrants are subject to massive exploitation, so their contribution may significantly exceed what they are paid—with their employers capturing the surplus.

That spotlights a crucial point. Having a huge pool of illegal immigrants who are stripped of legal rights and driven underground creates the perfect environment for exploitation. That environment hurts all workers because the fears of immigrants can be used to lower wages below what a fair market would pay. Those fears can also be leveraged to undermine the bargaining position of native-born workers, especially when it comes to union organizing efforts.

This reality was starkly illustrated in a case from 1999 that came before the National Labor Relations Board. In that case, management for a Holiday Inn Express in Minnesota terminated workers' employment and reported them to the Immigration and Naturalization Service shortly after they had voted to join Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees Local 17. The management knew all along that the workers were undocumented, but only reported them to bust a union organizing drive.

The Holiday Inn case illustrates how the lack of worker rights for immigrants has adverse wage impacts on all workers. There are estimated to be 11 million undocumented workers in the U.S., and these workers are here to stay. Awful conditions here are still better than conditions in their home countries. Given that, law and policy must change in two ways. First, the undocumented must be given full worker rights. Second, business must be discouraged from trying to take advantage of the vulnerability of undocumented workers.

With regard to worker rights, undocumented workers must be given the full protection of all labor laws—such as back pay for firings without cause. Additionally, undocumented workers should be given "safe harbor" status that protects them from deportation when employers report them as part of a strategy of busting unions and frustrating union organizing efforts. Labor law must apply uniformly to all workers

regardless of immigration status, because when it comes to the workplace, an injury to one is an injury to all.

With regard to business, the law must impose stiff penalties on businesses that hire workers without making reasonable efforts to verify their legal status. Additionally, the direction of enforcement efforts must be changed. Instead of pursuing illegal immigrants, prosecuting them and deporting them, enforcement efforts should be directed against business. Business has played an important role in fostering illegal immigration by offering the prospect of employment. Cutting off the supply of jobs to undocumented workers will reduce the pull of illegal immigration. Pairing this with robust border enforcement can then make a real dent in the problem.

Congress is also wrestling with the issue of amnesty or pathways to citizenship for undocumented workers. This is the most difficult issue, because it can appear to condone breaking of the law. Congress must be honest and recognize that it has tacitly encouraged illegal immigration by its past unwillingness to deter business from hiring undocumented workers. At this stage having a large exploitable population of workers is morally repugnant, and it also undermines the economic well being of America's least well-off workers. These factors argue for giving undocumented workers a speedy path to legal status. Allowing them to emerge from the shadows of exploitation will raise their wages, and as a result the wages of low-skill native-born workers will rise.

Taking undocumented workers out of the underground economy can also yield another benefit for society. The underground economy pays no taxes, and it has a tendency to spread like a contagion. That is bad for tax revenues and

shifts tax burdens on to the above-ground economy. Once touched by the underground economy, it is easy for business to get further involved—causing a culture of tolerance for illegal transactions to rapidly expand. Reducing the number of undocumented workers will shrink the underground economy, since these workers don't want to be there.

In sum, a comprehensive “workers' rights” approach can tackle the painful problem of illegal immigration. It includes giving undocumented workers the full protection of labor law, creating pathways to legal status for such workers, legal and policy measures deterring firms from hiring undocumented workers and robust border enforcement. The minimum wage should also be raised to compensate for the depressing wage effect of illegal immigration.

Such an approach contrasts with the current congressional approach that essentially avoids the issue of workers' rights. The House seeks to blame already-unfortunate undocumented workers. The Senate looks to avoid the issue with a guest worker program that placates business and a quasi-amnesty program that placates immigration activists. Neither addresses the causes of illegal immigration, and neither does anything for American workers who have been harmed by such immigration.

*Thomas Palley runs the Economics for Democratic and Open Societies Project. He is the author of **Plenty of Nothing: The Downsizing of the American Dream and the Case for Structural Keynesianism**. His weekly economic policy blog is at [www.thomaspalley.com](http://www.thomaspalley.com)*

*Copyright Thomas I. Palley*



## **IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE BOARD STATISTICS FOR 2005**

### DECISIONS OF THE REFUGEE PROTECTION DIVISION

27,212 refugee claims were finalized  
12,061 (44%) were positive  
11,846 (44%) were negative  
1,634 (6%) were declared abandoned  
1,671 (6%) withdrew or were otherwise resolved.

The number of claims finalized went down significantly from recent years: 27,212, compared to 40,408 in 2004, 42,477 in 2003, and 32,466 in 2002.

The number of claims pending at the end of the year continued to decline: 20,552 at 31 December 2005, compared to 27,290 at the end of 2004, 41,575 at the end of 2003, and 52,761 at the end of 2002. If the

IRB continues at the same rate of finalization, it will take just over 9 months to finalize all the claims pending at the end of 2005.

20,786 claims were referred to the Board in 2005, continuing the recent decline: 25,750 in 2004, 31,937 in 2003, 39,498 in 2002, 44,038 in 2001.

The acceptance rate has risen slightly after several years of decline. For several years it stood at about 47%, then it dropped to 42% in 2003 and further down to 40% in 2004. In 2005, it rose to 44%. The percentage of abandoned and withdrawn has also dropped: from a combined total of 16% in 2003, to 13% in 2004 and 12% in 2005. The percentage of negative decisions has gone down slightly compared to 2004: 44% in 2005, compared to 47% in 2004 (it was 42% in 2003). In 2005, claims decided at a hearing had a 50% chance of being accepted (as they did in 2003), whereas in 2004, there was only a 45% chance of being accepted.

Regional acceptance rates (as a percentage of total claims finalized) for 2005 were as follows:

Montréal: 44% (in 2004: 41%; in 2003: 42%, in 2002: 43%)  
Ottawa/Atlantic: 66% (in 2004: 53%; in 2003: 50%, in 2002: 51%)  
Toronto: 46% (in 2004: 40%; in 2003: 43%, in 2002: 50%)  
Calgary: 30% (in 2004: 27%; in 2003: 35%, in 2002: 48%)  
Vancouver: 27% (in 2004: 24%; in 2003: 28%, in 2002: 30%)

Vancouver continued to have a high abandonment rate of 14% (17%, in 2004, 15% in 2003, 18% in 2002, 21% in 2001). Toronto's abandonment rate fell from 11% in 2002 and 2003 to 7% in 2004 and remained at 7% in 2005 (other regions: Montreal, 4%; Calgary, 5%, Ottawa/Atlantic, 2%).

The top 20 countries, by number of decisions finalized, were as follows (with acceptance rate for 2005, followed, for comparison purposes, by rates for 2004 and 2003):

1. Mexico	3679	(19%, down from 25% in 2004, 27% in 2003)
2. Colombia	3271	(79%, down from 81% in 2004 and 2003)
3. Pakistan	1744	(40%, up from 35% in 2004, 41% in 2003)
4. China	1743	(48%, down from 52% in 2004, 61% in 2003)
5. India	1131	(25%, down 27% in 2004, 29% in 2003)
6. Nigeria	806	(41%, down from 50% in 2004, 47% in 2003)
7. Sri Lanka	751	(67%, up from 64% in 2004, 73% in 2003)
8. Peru	581	(39%, down from 41% in 2004, 40% in 2003)
9. Israel	491	(31%, up from 23% in 2004, 26% in 2003)
10. Albania	427	(48%, up from 40% in 2004, 32% in 2003)
11. Bangladesh	420	(48%, down from 52% in 2004, 53% in 2003)
12. Hungary	382	(13%, up from 11% in 2004, 8% in 2003)
13. Somalia	381	(84%, up from 79% in 2004, 76% in 2003 - not in last year's top 20)
14. Iran	371	(75%, up from 61% in 2004, 60% in 2003 - not in last year's top 20)
15. Guyana	370	(18%, down from 24% in 2004, 17% in 2003)
16. Congo	350	(61%, up from 57% in 2004, 56% in 2003)
17. El Salvador	333	(33%, up from 21% in 2004, 32% in 2003 - not in last year's top 20)
18. Costa Rica	332	(17%, up from 3% in 2004, 2% in 2003)
19. Turkey	304	(57%, down from 63%, up from 60% in 2003)
20. Lebanon	295	(44%, up from 38% in 2004 and 2003 - not in last year's top 20)

Note that the top two countries, Mexico and Colombia, made up by themselves over a quarter of the claims finalized in 2005.

## PRRA STATISTICS, 2005

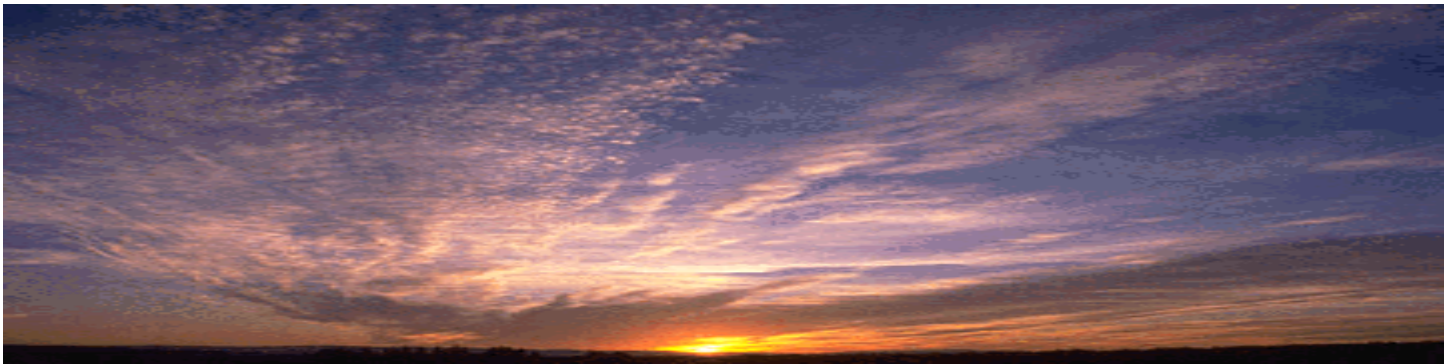
In the calendar year 2005, there were: 194 PRRA applications approved, 6,631 PRRA applications refused. Approval rate: 3% The breakdown by region was as follows:

Atlantic: 0% approval (0 applications were approved)  
Quebec: 1% (21 applications were approved)  
Ontario: 3% (128 applications were approved)  
Prairies: 2% (8 applications were approved)  
BC: 5% (27 applications were approved)

In addition to the applications approved and refused, there were PRRA applications that were waived, abandoned, withdrawn and otherwise closed. The approval rates noted above take account only of the applications either approved or refused.

The pending inventory has been steadily rising, from 4,778 applications at the end of December 2004 to 6,330 applications at the end of December 2005. 70% of the Dec. 2005 inventory is in Ontario, 20% in Quebec.

PRRA— Pre-Removal Risk Assessment



## REFUGEE UPDATE

FOUNDED BY JESUIT REFUGEE SERVICE - CANADA  
CURRENTLY PUBLISHED 3 TIMES PER YEAR BY THE FCJ REFUGEE CENTRE AND THE CANADIAN COUNCIL FOR REFUGEES

**BOARD:** Catherine Balfour, Lois Anne Bordowitz FCJ, Tom Clark, Marty Dolin, Catherine Gauvreau, Ken Luckhardt, Ezat Mossallanejad, Helene Moussa, Elsa Musa, Francisco Rico-Martinez, Carlos F. Sebastián, Norrie De Valencia

**PRODUCTION:** Carlos F. Sebastián

**GRAPHICS:** Juanis María Díaz Cazares

### SUBSCRIPTIONS:

Please note there are now 3 issues per year for:  
Individuals \$15, Institutions \$25; Bulk (20 or more)  
\$3.50 per copy

**ADDRESS:** 208 Oakwood Ave.  
Toronto ON M6E 2V4 Canada  
Tel: (416) 469-9754  
Fax: (416) 469-2670  
e-mail: fcjrefugeecentre@on.aibn.com

*Ideas expressed by writers are not necessarily those of the FCJ Refugee Centre and The Canadian Council for Refugees*