

The Henceforward Episode 22

Migrant labour, white settler anxiety, and no returns

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Eve: Aang aang. This is Eve Tuck, and this is The Henceforward, a podcast about connections between Indigenous and Black life on Turtle Island. Here we come to the table to discuss settler colonialism and anti-blackness, but more to imagine shared futures and the practices of theory and care that it will take to get there, to get elsewhere.

Nisha: We wanted to start this podcast with a clip from Heritage Minutes released in 1991 and called Underground Railroad.

Chris: The setting is Chatham, Ontario, in a church where two women are anxiously waiting for the arrival of a former slave from the United States. The first woman is fearful, concerned about the safety of the person she's waiting for. And a second person, who is Canadian, is trying to calm in this typical rational voice.

Nisha: And the woman is becoming increasingly anxious and panicked and saying, "Papa, Papa," and asking for her father and worrying that because he's three hours late, he won't have made it across the border. And the other woman is saying, "Just pray, just pray."

Chris: A coffin comes in and the people in the church are perplexed. "Why is a coffin here? Why is this arriving in a place of worship." All of a sudden, a person pops out of the coffin.

Nisha: There's emotional piano playing in the background and father and daughter are joyfully reunited.

Chris: Then the narrator comes on and he says, "Between 1840 and 1860, more than 30,000 slaves arrived in Canada for the dream of freedom."

Nisha: And it all ends with the beautiful loon call.

Chris: We asked Heritage Canada if we could seek permission to use this clip and permission was denied.

Nisha: Mainstream Canadian culture preaches that this is the land of freedom and opportunity par excellence, a place where peacekeepers come from, where refugees go to, where immigrants find themselves in a multicultural oasis and perhaps most of all, a place so much better than the United States because of our role as a sanctuary for escaped slaves.

Chris: The history of labor in this country is always taught as being exceptional from the violent history of what happened with our neighbors in the south. And the way people here are taught to think about the history resonates with how we consider ourselves in the present -- less brutal.

Nisha: Less capitalistic.

Chris: More innocent. But scratch the surface just a little and you'll find a different story we're not taught in our school books or in popular culture, the ones really found in the media.

Nisha: You'll find a story of hundreds of thousands of migrant workers compelled to come to this country every year and every year, reporting countless abuses and injustices, all lawfully approved and implemented by Canadian government.

I'm Nisha Toomey, a student at the University of Toronto and the first in my family to be born in this place called Canada. I'm learning woefully late in life about the way that the genocide on which this nation is founded continues to infuse and inform our present. I am responsible to not perpetuate this violence. So I choose to reject the Canadian white settler mythology of this place as some kind of haven.

Chris: I'm Chris Ramsaroop. I'm an organizer with Justicia for Migrant Workers. For the past 15 years, I've been organizing with Migrant Farm Workers across Ontario. Returning to school for me is trying to make sense of migration, Indigeneity, anti-blackness, whiteness and the role of both possession, dispossession of land and property. There is no one answer, but so many directions to take this in, both theoretically and as an organizer.

Nisha: It's so great to have you here in the department, Chris. We're lucky to have this kind of experience here. And I know we both share a healthy dose of skepticism when it comes to the academy too.

Chris: Skepticism is critical, I think, when we're in academe in the role of the Ivory Tower. However, it's also really important space to work through the tensions and contradictions between activism and academic work. What can we learn from conflict? How can academics and activism cooperate? What lessons can we learn from both to direct our work both in the community as activists and organizers and here in the ivory towers?

Nisha: So you've been working with farm workers for almost two decades who come here through the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program. Can you tell us a little bit about this program?

Chris: Absolutely. The Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program began in 1966. It's a government to government agreement and started first with Jamaica and Canada. Workers are tied to an employer. They work in Canada anywhere from eight weeks

to eight months and they must return home at the end of their contract. Migrant workers have no liberal or social mobility and they must return home when their contracts are completed. The program is a labor shortage program. It's always described as a win-win program for both workers and employers. However, that's definitely not the reality that we see.

Nisha: So here in Canada, we tend to have this illusion that we're this safe place for people as in our Heritage Minutes talking about slaves coming here for safety through places like Chatham, Ontario.

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Chris: Yeah. Let's talk about Chatham. Chatham is portrayed as a land of freedom, the end of the Underground Railroad. But in our experiences, we have met dozens of workers from the area, people like Terron Baptiste, Kevin Campbell, workers who are injured here in Canada, working in workplaces around the Chatham area and simply because of their injuries, they were sent back home to a life of perpetual poverty and hardships.

Nisha: This program actually represents the containment, regulation, punishment, capture and captivity that are all internal characteristics of anti-blackness. These are all things that the liberal state has learned from the structure of slavery. So Canada represents itself in the media as a kind of happy and peaceful place, a multicultural place, but who gets to belong and who doesn't get to belong is deeply marked along racialized lines.

Chris: The arrival of Caribbean migrant workers meant the state had to develop ways to prevent the permanent presence of Black Caribbean workers. Vic Satzewich noted -- a scholar, sociologist at Hamilton McMaster University -- that the Canadian state was concerned that Black workers would interrelate, intermarry with white Canadian women. They would organize to resist against unjust and frankly racist working conditions that these workers would unfairly gain access to our social safety net and finally, that these workers, for climatic reasons, would not survive the cold weather.

Nandita Sharma, in her book, *Home Economics*, examines our parliamentary records to show that migrant workers were wanted in Canada on the other side as labor because of their supposedly "ability to work under harsh, hot, tough conditions." So workers were denied permanency in Canada because of climatic reasons, but their labor, on the other hand, was justified because of the notion that they could withstand harsh climates.

Nisha: Where do these stereotypes about racialized people come from? Saidiya Hartman talks about the notion of fungibility of the Black body. Fungibility is the property of a good or a commodity whose individual units are capable of mutual substitution,

i.e., interchangeability, that is they have a property or essence or goods that are capable of being substituted in place of one another.

Chris: There's a focus on these bodies as being able to do this labor and being replaceable and disposable.

Nisha: That's right. And the only way to excuse the kinds of harm done to people in this economic structure is through an imaginary where people think that they are prone to this kind of work. As with factory workers in the Global South, especially women who are often imagined as being more simple-minded or good at extremely tedious labor in horrible conditions, of course, it's not the case that they are better at this work or don't mind this work, but this is the way that people excuse it. And all of these things have been learned from the plantation.

Let's hear what our friends from the Kitchen Table had to say about this.

Sandi: Welcome to the Kitchen Table where Indigenous folks and Black folks come to meet to discuss some very serious topic. I'm Sandi Wemigwase.

Sandy: I am Sandy Hudson.

Jade: I'm Jade Nixon.

Cornel: I'm Cornel Gray.

Michelle: I'm Michelle Ford.

Megan: And I'm Megan Scribe.

Sandy: This makes me very angry, this whole thing because it's not just a lack of information. It's not that. Somebody has chosen to -- people, the system, people in that system has chosen to make this reality. There's a reason we don't know where fruits and vegetables come from. We had this idea they magically are imported from other places and that there's a farmer who shows up on a TTC bus ad looking really happy holding an apple and that's how our food is picked when it really looks a lot more like a plantation. And it is a lot like a plantation because people are beholden to masters who decide their fate.

And that's a decision on a lot of people actually. It's not just like the government. It's also labor activists who decide that that's not necessarily the most important labor injustice to deal with in our time. Just like people will decide if we're going to talk about labor that when we talk about -- to give an example that people are very familiar with -- pay equity, that we will only talk about a certain type of pay equity. Everyone else do that.

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It's enraging. It's like there is a, "Hi, everyone. Slavery still exists in Canada. And there's still plantations. You can drive past them and see all the Black people picking their fruits and vegetables." And people don't want to look at that because it requires you to admit something about yourself and about the world that you live in. And it is enraging. People like to believe that this is in the past so they can tell you, "Everything is right here in Canada. We got rid of colonization and racism. We never had slavery. This is the end of the Underground Railroad," blah, blah, blah.

But this is less than a two-hour drive away. The plantations are there. And you were eating that fruit.

Cornel: I'm glad Sandy brought us back to a kind of plantation logics because one of the things that I was thinking about was how like there are certain racial logics that we can connect to enslavement. Value and property gets understood within these questions of labor and intentional deportation and so on.

I mean to go back to the question of choice, there's a certain kind of equation, I think, that the state, the government applies when they're making certain decisions. So it's, "Do we hire 'Global South' to do this work at a cheaper cost as opposed to getting over more citizens to do it?" Then there's a question of – then you were talking about those folks who choose to participate in the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program, what mean for them?

Chris: What is choice? I really like the way that it was put. A lot of times, we situate choice as the individual option or the individual ability of one person to choose. But what do we think about government choice or government direction? And rather, the idea of moving is imposed on individuals because of socio economic reasons, because of the long legacy of colonialism and imperialism, that in effect, people are being forced to move. People who are coming to the migrant worker programs are being forced because of the economic dispossession that's happening in their own communities. So very much, it's about that larger government choices and not the individual choice but the direction of larger forces that are leading to people to migrate.

Niche: Yeah. So often, we have this narrative that the people themselves are to blame for the abuses that they suffer under these programs because they've made the choice to come here, to live here, to be a part of this. But actually, it's really much part of a much bigger structure. And the way that they're treated when they come here is part of a long legacy, a long structural legacy that has been learned originally from the plantation and from slavery.

So these individuals are always already marked as being under surveillance from the moment they arrive and also well before they leave their home countries. Can you explain this a little bit?

Chris: Absolutely. Black bodies are marked right from their admission to the program. Now, specifically with Jamaican bodies, but actually for all Caribbean migrant workers, they must pay for their own visa. They have to pay for background criminal police checks, medical exams. And one time, they had to undergo tests to see if they're HIV positive or if they're free of HIV.

Recent Jamaican workers and particularly people from Jamaica had to pay and were subjected to mandatory biometric data collection. Their passports are marked. And I'm referring to all migrant workers with special work permits that denies their ability to attend public educational facilities.

Upon arrival to Canada, they're shepherded to special areas in the airport. It might be to protect them from getting lost, but it's really done so they don't run away. On the farm, their bodies are surveilled at work. Many bunk houses have signs stating that workers are not allowed visitors. Curfews are put in place and visitors specifically of the other sex are not permitted. At work and during off time, there's always a steady stream of eyes, whether it's co-workers, supervisors, employers that keep constant watch on workers.

I'll get into that and what happens in towns, communities where they live in a little bit later, but community surveils workers even upon returning home. In some cases, passports are taken. Workers are not told specifically when their flights are going to be. And they're not given their tickets until they arrive at the airport.

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Nisha: It feels so infantilizing, right? We blame it on them when they undergo these abuses by the system in terms of the employment that they have. Yet they are treated so much like children. They're treated as these controlled individuals.

Let's talk a little bit more about this airport thing because Simone Brown did write an amazing book and talks a lot about airports in that book.

Chris: Exactly. The sole purpose is to ensure that no one runs away and remains in Canada. I think Brown is prolific. Her discussion about airport stories where she identifies them as disrupting common notions of airports as merely transportation spaces. Airports are spaces where enactments of surveillance reify boundaries and borders and weighs down some bodies more than others where the outcome is often discriminatory treatment.

I hope by illustration, it helps to show the different and exclusionary treatment of migrant workers who, in many cases, have been coming to Canada for decades. Canadian Americans, frequent fliers can get Nexus cards, practically wave through each other's borders. Migrant workers are subjected to controls where Evelyn,

who's an organizer with Justicia, and many others would say that the borders are on the bodies of migrant workers themselves.

Nisha: Simone Brown calls surveillance the fact of anti-blackness. She uses what Fanon called ontological resistance -- the fact that Black people can always be seen -- and identified to explain how surveillance reifies boundaries on racial lines and therefore reifies race, the outcome of which becomes discriminatory and violent treatment.

And I think that we should just note here something that we were thinking about. So people do come from across the Caribbean. What other countries do they come from?

Chris: There's two programs. There's a Seasonal Agriculture which is the focus of this podcast. And there's the Temporary Foreign Worker Program which is a larger umbrella. The Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program has workers from Mexico, Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad and the organization of Eastern Caribbean States. The low-skilled program, which also has migrant workers from basically anywhere around the world, working side-by-side with workers in the SAWP program. So very much immigration control is being used as a tool for employers to divide workers.

And if you recall, Min Sook Lee had a documentary called El Contrato. One of the main protagonist many years later had told us in a conversation that what's changed in Leamington -- Leamington is considered the United Nations of Canada because there's so many workers and so many people from all over the world.

Nisha: Leamington's a small town in Ontario about two hours --

Chris: An hour away.

Nisha: An hour from Toronto?

Chris: It's an hour from Detroit, an hour from Windsor.

Nisha: Okay.

Chris: Yes. And what he made so poignantly was that the employers could pick and choose workers from anywhere across the world. So one of the things he talks about, the power of employers and the ability to relocate and I would say dispossess people from the Global South to come and be exploited here in Canada.

Nisha: Let's take this back for a second to what's been learned from anti-blackness here because these are not -- migrant workers are not all Black.

Chris: That's right.

Nisha: Yet the structural system has learned something really key and really important from anti-blackness, from the practices of surveillance, from the practices of thinking about people as disposable bodies, as interchangeable, as people that can be deported, turned away, as people that need to be controlled. There has been a really strong lesson learned so that when you talk about migrant workers, you're not only talking about Black migrant workers specifically but that there is a lesson learned from anti-blackness, from slavery and the structure of that that continues to permeate through and form a logic that allows the state to treat people in this way.

Chris: Exactly. Exactly.

Nisha: Brown also reminds us that these kinds of surveillance, these kinds of control have some of its roots in sociological study wherein “objective observation” became this scientific and social technique for the good of modern state power.

So employers who work with these workers are often bolstered by the Canadian state because it's so easy for them to fire employees, right?

Chris: That's right. Workers are doing this case right after the incident happened or say the racial attack. The worker was fired and was fired by calling the police.

Nisha: So they call the police when they want to fire somebody?

Chris: Yes. They do come around.

Nisha: And the police coming back them up?

Chris: Yes.

Nisha: And of course, the police are never going to be on the side of the –

Chris: No, they're not on the side of workers.

Nisha: Surveillance and the control of the farm worker really becomes a way of justifying the cold hand of the nation state. So reading this through Indigenous theories of land, it becomes extra ironic that these employers would abuse people on land that they ultimately stole.

Aileen Moreton-Robinson says that, “White possessive logics are operationalized within discourses to circulate sets of meaning about ownership of the nation as part of common sense knowledge. And the courts by denying the existence of race, rationalize a patriarchal white possessive logic.” She points out that white patriarchal sovereign identity is formed through dispossession, slavery and migration.

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Chris: These kind of abuses of migrant laborers are naturalized and seen as a necessary integral part of our system. The more I reflect, the more I think through ideas of simultaneous belonging and unbelonging. Migrant workers yearn for their bodies as controlled, indentured labor, surveilled at work and surveilled off work, surveilled and controlled in the towns they shop in.

Employers demand their bodies. Their communities demand their exclusion. Farmworkers are suspended in a permanent temporaryness. Something is a feature of Canadian tolerance, tolerance for profit in the captains of industry, intolerance for the Black and brown bodies that produce profit. They want to reap the wealth of their labor, but keep them and spatially segregated from the rest of society.

Quickly, when our comrades brought bread, they refer to the wealth of the Niagara region. In Justicia, we undertook several actions to disrupt the invincibility of migrant labor and expose the distorted nature of belonging that exist. Niagara-on-the-lake and Virgil are two stark contrast. Niagara-on-the-lake and Virgil are very close to the US border. So migrant workers live in stark poverty, in old houses and bunk houses and are seen riding their bikes in often dangerous roadways. Then Niagara-on-the-lake, whoa the wealth, all generated on the backs of broken Black and brown bodies.

A few years ago, we decided with about 150 migrant workers and allies to hold an impromptu march and rally in Niagara-on-the-lake. We brought peaches and apples and vegetables with us and took to the streets. We did this to confront exploitation racism, the response from the community was outright fear and hatred. Protests just don't happen in Niagara-on-the-lake. But there's something else going on that day. The fact that migrant workers were confronting the white wealth, confronted the scenic tranquil tourist location who had seemed to be both bad for business but also scraping away ever so painfully of the artificial veneer of a white supremacist space.

Second, last year, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program, as part of our Niagara section of the marches, we decided to interject ourselves in the annual Niagara Wine Festival. Tens of thousands of people had to deal with our messaging, our signs and banners calling out the racist Canadian state. We remain with a bit of both confusion, Canadian politeness and others who are outward hostile about our presence there.

Nisha: Unsurprisingly?

Chris: Yeah.

Nisha: It sounds like a great rally. I think that when you talk about the hostility and the reactions that people have to this -- you say there has never been a protest in

Niagara-on-the-lake. This is not a place where people think of themselves as being politicized. And they don't. You're right. People don't like to think about what's under the surface, what's under the layer of this happy, bucolic life.

Eva Mackey speaks about this, what she calls settler anxiety. She calls them settled expectations. So this idea that the legal protection of property rights, naturalized expectations that are actually rooted in deep injustice. So essentially, the notion that white Canadians own this land, this land was originally stolen. The land is built on genocide. It's built on dispossession of Indigenous peoples. And it's built on Black chattel slavery.

She talks about the pursuit of certainty as a source of white settler anxiety. So what happens is people become really threatened by the notion that all of this is not permanent, that all of it may not be permanent. And they start feeling like they don't have a place to go. They start feeling like if they give up their space, then there won't be any space for them afterwards. And this causes -- this is what causes a lot of the anxiety and what ultimately causes a lot of the violence that comes along with that. So talk with me a little bit about the Leamington mayor and the Leamington city council.

Chris: Oh, yes, the Leamington mayor. Going back to what we discussed earlier, migrant workers are wanted for their labor. However, they're not welcome to the communities they live in and work. And their effort to control brown or Black bodies and to raise their physical presence, there's a long lasting, ongoing tension between the white community and migrant workers.

A few years ago, several city councilors complained that the library expenditures in the community were skyrocketing. Migrant workers were seen as a culprit as they were accused of congregating outside of the library to use the free Wi-Fi that the library provided. John Paterson as counsel about a year later than that –

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Nisha: John Paterson being the Leamington mayor?

Chris: That is correct -- commissioned a consultant to survey and rethink the downtown core. One of the findings by this consultant was that many local, i.e., white residents, just don't go downtown because there are too many migrant workers hanging out there. And the businesses that are currently located do not serve the local community. They only serve the migrant workers.

So downtown is seen as degenerate zone, clearly marked by Black and brown migrants. Finally, a migrant worker was catcalling the daughter of the mayor about two years ago. As a direct result of that, the mayor demanded action by the OPP, who was a local police force in the community, that they draft a loitering law to prevent migrant workers from hanging out in the downtown area.

There was a general outrage. And Justicia or J from MW drafted an open letter referring to him, referring him and making sure that he remembers the town's racist history of sunset laws that prevented Black bodies in the town after sunset. Interesting enough, Japanese prisoners of wars were subjected to similar treatment during World War Two in the Chatham area where they were confined. They're not permitted to loiter in the downtown area of Chatham as well.

Nisha: I mean it's interesting and also totally unsurprising, right, when you start understanding this imaginary of Canada as a white settler nation that's owned by white people. So others who don't belong, are not allowed. They're not allowed to belong. They're not allowed to be in certain spaces.

Chris: More recently, the illustrious John Paterson made his views clear during the last royal visit that too much money –

Nisha: Oh, yeah.

Chris: Well, yeah -- was being spent in multiculturalism and not enough money was being spent on promoting the British monarchy.

Yes. Rob Ford of Southwest Ontario. I think Moreton-Robison is extremely helpful here in describing the local community's response to migrant workers. She talks about Australia, but very much, Canada follows the same pattern. And she discusses settler anxiety, about dispossession, a fear that is embedded in the nation's denial of the continuing existence of Indigenous sovereignty. This denial of Indigenous ownership ensures legitimacy of patriarchal white sovereignty and its right to exert border protection against others. In this way, Indigenous sovereignty subliminally shapes Australian Border Protection Policy.

Leamington is a microcosm of a national project to accomplish the very same goals. In a shout out to Sonia Singh who's an organizer with Justicia for Migrant Workers, she undertook research to examine the Caldwell Nation's relationship to Leamington and the theft of their land and their dispossession from their community in that area.

Nisha: Eva Mackey's work also addresses directly the Caldwell Nation. She talks about how the ongoing fights over land there revealed the limitations ultimately of colonial logic. So what happens is it becomes extremely hard to imagine any different kind of relationship to land and to the world and to others. So you're not ever able to look beyond ownership or to think beyond the subjugation of others. This is ultimately also what leads to anxiety because you can't imagine beyond the borders of what the colonial logic has given to you.

Moreton-Robinson calls this white colonial paranoia, which she argues is inextricably tied to an anxiety of being dispossessed by others. So this is the trick,

right? It's that under colonialism, we've become cultured to imagine the world as you either subjugate or be subjugated. And it becomes very, very hard to imagine another way.

Chris: And all of this is supported by the courts, the judicial system and the laws that actually become social norms. And out of this project, we see some of the most horrific conditions that can occur to people.

Rosa: Sheldon McKenzie spent a lot of his adult life going back and forth between Jamaica and Canada, working on Canadian farms as part of the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program. He had two teenage daughters and a wife who was supporting back in Jamaica. While working at a tomato farm in Ontario two years ago, he fell while in a greenhouse hitting his head. This is where labor laws would protect injured workers. But advocates say that's often not what happens for people who are part of this program. In McKenzie's case, he did have something most of these workers don't. He had family in Canada to advocate for him.

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Marcia: His face was completely bandaged. He was swollen. When we got there, he was on life support. He was basically in a coma.

Rosa: His condition was so bad doctors had to remove a part of his brain. No longer able to work, McKenzie was stripped of his work visa, which meant he could no longer qualify for provincial healthcare. His cousin, Marcia Barrett, hired lawyers to fight that and she succeeded. But she says she was also being pressured to have McKenzie shipped back to Jamaica as soon as possible. And that pressure she says came from a surprising source, the Jamaican liaison officer whose job it was to advocate for the workers.

Marcia: Their main goal was to ship him back home. The only way he wasn't shipped back maybe in three days was because we were there with our heels stuck in saying no because the healthcare in Jamaica is not up to par to take care of the kind of injury that he has.

Rosa: A recent study found, over a ten-year period, almost 800 migrant farm workers were fired in Canada and sent back to their country of origin after being injured or having medical problems. Ottawa doesn't track how many of these workers are hurt or killed on Canadian soil. And that's surprising because the program itself has been around for 50 years.

Chris: To be blunt, I consider this an apartheid system. And what I mean by that is that migrant workers live and work under a different set of legal rights and obligations than we do. We aren't denied basic human rights. We're not denied basic healthcare.

Rosa: Sheldon McKenzie didn't survive his injury. He died several months later. We brought Sheldon McKenzie's case to the Minister responsible. She said she was shocked and said her government would look into it. Rosa Marchitelli, CBC News, Calgary.

Nisha: Wow. After listening to that news clip, I'm wanting to hold space for the fact that there are people who are brought here to do work that we require and the moment that they get hurt, injured, they're deported. Like the Canadian state doesn't want to do anything for them at the moment of their deepest vulnerability, when their lives are at stake or they're ill or unwell, injured. And the bureaucracy tries to send them back. How does this happen? You're sent back. What better example is there of just how cold the state is toward these people?

Chris: Yea. I also want to point out that last week, if Sheldon had lived, he would have been 39 years old. So here's a 39-year-old whose family will never see him again. He'll never be able to provide or see his children.

Nisha: And in the news clip, they mentioned that they did a study and it was 800 people who faced medical repatriation in the past ten years?

Chris: It's a lot more than that. A lot of people who get injured aren't repatriated for so-called medical reasons. They're just simply sent home. So we may never know what the exact figures are, but they're very, very, very high.

Nisha: Yeah. And why the veil of silence? Why not keep the numbers? Obviously, they know something is wrong, right?

Chris: Exactly. Yes.

Nisha: They don't want to keep the numbers because keeping the numbers would mean having to admit that what you're doing is extremely cruel.

We need to go back to slavery, I think. We need to go back to this idea, this illusion that Canadians tend to live in, that Canada is so much better, that Canada is exceptional. The situation of migrant workers here proves that we are not exceptional. There is a form of unfree labor on our land that is alive and well and that we have learned.

Chris: If we ask ourselves, what has the state learned from slavery? So many of the lessons would be here, in these stories of death and injury. I've been spending a lot of time thinking through deaths and injuries. And unfortunately, a lot of my activism and organizing has been about this specifically. There is nothing that could hide the sheer brutality and savagery of disposing of migrant workers and the socio and economic costs that occur when repatriations occur to those who are injured and their families.

I think for us, it's important to problematize further that it's not just simply the disposable broken bodies or that migrant workers fall into the cracks. That's simply not it.

Nisha: Yeah. And that we understand that we have learned from the slavery structure about this idea, this imagined Black fungibility – fungibility, meaning that people are disposable and that this notion enables a whole series of ways that ideologically, legally and otherwise, people are viewed as being able to be sent home, as being able to be under this strict surveillance when they get here, as being able to be yelled at brutally while they're trying to do a job that they're hired for.

This is a heavy stuff.

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Chris: It's extremely heavy, extremely, extremely outrageous.

Nisha: And how do we move -- what do we do from here? How do we look forward?

Chris: I think that in organizing spaces or talking to the community, that there's always anger. There's always outrage. And that there is tremendous hardship. But people, migrant workers find ways to resist. This is extremely important. So as acts of solidarity, we need to figure out what we do with our anger and our rage. How do we share where anger doesn't turn to guilt? Guilt usually leads to paternalism and charity. That's not the road that we want to take.

Nisha: Nope.

Chris: Rage can address short-term goals. But what are we building towards? What is the long term reality? That is very complicated and complex.

Nisha: And we need to change the structure. Donating to charity or feeling badly for someone is not going to help the structure that is hundreds of years old.

Chris: Okay. How do we bring migrants and Indigenous communities together to talk about whiteness, race, theft, property, land and dispossessions? What methodologies can we undertake to build this dialogue? And I wanted to also see how do we respond to Walcott's insightful comments on border crossing, constructing space to demonstrate some way that which Black people sometimes share pain, pleasure, disappointment and hope. He says race isn't simply nation bound. It crosses across nations. Those who are oppressed understand their experiences, both locally and extra locally.

What are other different ways of thinking about migrant work? How do transnational movements and activism for migrant workers -- how does it turn out to be wake work?

Nisha: Wake work, as described by Christina Sharpe so, so beautifully in her book that just came out, *In the Wake*. There are so many inspiring things to draw from. And I think that we just go forward from here.

Chris: Yes. Yes, exactly.

We're going to close off this conversation, which has been really important and exciting. We're going to close off with a quote from Dionne Brand. Would you like to read it?

Nisha: Sure.

This is Dionne Brand in *A Map to the Door of no Return*, page 24. "Migration, can it be called migration? There is a sense of return in migrations -- a sense of continuities, remembered homes -- as with birds or butterflies or deer or fish. Those returns which are lodged indelibly, unconsciously, instinctively in the mind. But migrations suggest intentions or purposes. Some choice and, if not choice, decisions. And if not decisions, options, all be they difficult. But the sense of return in the Door of No Return is one of irrecoverable losses of those very things which make returning possible. A place to return to, a way of being, familiar sights or sounds, familiar smells, a welcome perhaps, but a place, welcome or not."

Chris: For us today, let's think of what it's like to be in perpetual migration -- movement and control, belonging and on belonging, home and exile, a criminal and a provider, someone who's a familiar face and someone who is unknown. This is the life of migrant workers -- never welcome in Canada and treated as a stranger upon their return home, a constant cycle of moving, moving to build capitalist accumulation, theft and dispossession on a system that's over 500 years old.

Eve: The Henceforward, Indigenous and Black life on Turtle Island.

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