THE EXPERIENCES OF AN AFRICAN WOMAN SEEKING REFUGE IN CANADA

by

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ABSTRACT

This research paper provides insight into the experiences and challenges that asylum seekers go

through in their quest to obtain legal status in countries in the West. Even though countries like

Canada, the US, UK and Australia are signatories to the 1951 Refugee Convention, this paper

attempts to show that these countries are not adhering to the principles of the Convention when it

comes to the issues of those labelled as asylum seekers or refugees. My paper focuses

specifically on the challenges and the experiences that those with these labels go through, from

the ways employed into the attempts to negotiate borders to ways that will provide a favourable

outcome from the Immigration and Refugee Board. Further, the study strives to highlight that

governments of the West are violating the mobility rights of refugees and asylum seekers in

favour of corporations and the free movement of goods.

Key Words: colonisation, governmentality, racial difference and border regimes

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate my research paper to my children Nomakhosi and Noncingelelo. They

were with me all throughout my mission to obtain an education and knowledge. I have no doubt

that if it had not been for their help and encouragement I would have most definitely given up.

Their support and encouragement never withered even if at times I was not the nicest mother to

live with. My girls' support kept me going even when I found myself wanting to give up.

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INTRODUCTION

       This study explores the experiences of asylum seekers who migrate in search of legal status as refugees and offers an account of how the socioeconomic forces that shape the lives of asylum seekers and refugees, particularly those hoping for new lives in western nations such as Canada and the US. The paper incorporates an auto-ethnographic component in which I tell my own story as an asylum seeker and refugee. Through this auto-ethnography case study, I will shed light on the motives for migration, the strategies asylum seekers use to obtain legal status and survive their travels to new lands, and the impacts of Western government policies on asylum seekers and refugees. This paper will also address, at varying levels of analysis, multiple issues related to the quest for legal status such as the factors of gender, race, colonialism, border regimes and dominant social norms of identity that construct asylum seekers and refugees as 'other' and subject them to socioeconomic marginalization and exclusion.

       While this study includes a significant auto-ethnographic element, it draws upon Michel Foucault's insights on power to analyse the methods governments use to control populations, especially the modern techniques of surveillance and administration that enable governments to impose authority without resorting to direct physical control (Foucault, 1991). The study explores how these forms of government control function to shape the experiences of asylum seekers, often preventing them from gaining legal status as refugees. In addition, this paper examines the impact of social norms and policies on those asylum seekers and refugees that are most vulnerable to the power of contemporary governments given that there is not yet an international human rights regime despite the fact that globalization has increased migration and the movement of people between nations.

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The first chapter of this paper presents a literature review which discusses various themes that are relevant to the topic of the experiences of asylum seekers and refugees traveling to the West. Specific themes explored include the concepts of colonisation, governmentality, power, knowledge, racial difference, transnational governmentality, settler colonialism and border regimes. All of these themes apply to the experiences of asylum seekers and help to explain the obstacles they face while searching for legal status.

The second chapter of this paper clarifies the auto-ethnographic methodology used in the paper which is a research approach that combines autobiography and ethnography. This methodology is employed due to the paper's subjective component as this project describes and analyses my own personal experiences as an undocumented 'alien' in the US and then as a refugee in Canada. However, the auto-ethnographic methodology employed in this paper is not limited to my personal experiences; it is also used to explore the wide range of socioeconomic factors that shape the experiences of asylum seekers and refugees.

The third chapter of the paper presents the above-mentioned personal narrative of my experiences as an asylum seeker who gained refugee status in Canada. I discuss the many obstacles that asylum seeks face while fighting to obtain legal status. The narrative begins with my migration from Zimbabwe to the West and describes my struggles to leave my home country with my daughter, survive in the US as an undocumented alien, and then to gain legal status as a refugee in Canada and make a life for myself and my family. In particular, I discuss my experiences of being subjected to endless barriers and borders throughout my journey. This narrative reveals the intersecting impacts of multiple socioeconomic barriers on asylum seekers and refugees at the concrete level of lived experience.

Chapter four offers critical analysis of the issue of asylum seeker and refugee experiences based on both the personal narrative and the theoretical themes introduced in the literature review. An attempt is made to synthesize various elements of the paper and to isolate the socioeconomic factors that most strongly impact the lives of asylum seekers and refugees. The fifth and final chapter of this paper summarizes the project's overall argument and affirms the paper's central thesis that the rapid changes that are taking place under globalization and creating ever-stronger connections between nations demonstrate the need for a new regime of international human rights regime that protect the rights of asylum seekers and refugees across national boundaries.

CHAPTER I: LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review examines a series of books and articles that discuss themes that are closely related to the topic of asylum seeker and refugee experiences in the West. The key words used to find these sources were "refugee," "asylum," "colonialism," "immigrant experiences," "challenges," "exclusion" "refugee challenges," "diaspora," "legal status" and "government immigration policies." In the course of exploring the topic of asylum seeker and refugee experiences, a number of central themes emerged including colonialism, resistance, racism, progress, civilization and others. One of the primary themes discussed within the literature was that of colonialism and especially the impact of western colonial attitudes on asylum seekers and refugees from 'other' cultures.

Aime Cesaire (1972) states that western nations view civilization and define social progress in terms "achievements" such as medical advances, rising incomes, the development of modern technology and infrastructure, and the adoption of western social and cultural norms. According to Cesaire, this creates a situation where societies subjected to colonization are "drained of their essence, cultures trampled underfoot, institutions undermined, lands confiscated, religions smashed, magnificent artistic creations destroyed, extraordinary *possibilities* wiped out (Cesaire, 1972, p. 43). Cesaire focuses on the impacts of European colonialism in Africa, discussing both strategies of colonization and the ways in which indigenous populations present resistance to colonization through voices that 'speak back' to colonialism while affirming traditional cultures, languages, identities and social norms. It is noteworthy that auto-ethnography shares with anti-colonial strategies the element of 'speaking back' and claiming one's own voice in the face of oppressive colonizing forces. There is a strong

linkage between anti-colonial discourses and modern western human rights discourses since they both emphasize human rights and specifically the right to affirm one's own culture, identity and belief system.

Adopting a comparative method of analysis, Cesaire (1972) asserts that the European colonization of African nations was similar to the atrocities committed by Hitler in the sense that both projects were rooted in the notion of imposing a 'superior' culture on 'inferior' and less 'civilized' cultures. European colonizers employed many methods of destroying indigenous cultures and identities but Hitler "unleashed" unprecedented brutality; however, both projects were rooted in the same basic drive to impose white racial superiority on people whose skin colour was not white (Cesaire, 1972, p. 36). Cesaire explains the psychology of colonization in terms of the reduction of non-white peoples to the status of objects, a process he calls "thing-ification" (Cesaire, 1972, p. 42). On the basis of thing-ification, colonizers are able to commit atrocities against those who are defined as less-than-fully human, and the development of such attitudes is clearly relevant to this paper because it helps to explain the processes at work when modern western nations can implement immigration policies that deny the basic human rights of asylum seekers and prevent them from gaining legal status as refugees.

Franz Fanon (2008) explicitly analyses the psychological basis of the exclusionary and racist elements in western colonial thought in his book, *Black skin, White masks* and in his 1995 article, "The Fact of Blackness." In the former work, Fanon describes how white society constructs a man of dark skin colour as a "black man" who is almost like a distinct species when compared to white men (Fanon, 2008, p. 114). Fanon indicates that in white society a white man "was expected to behave like a man. I was expected to behave like a black man or at least like a

nigger" (Fanon, 2008, p. 114). This means that white men had the freedom to gain positions anywhere within society while black males were confined to limited social spaces- specifically those that were far removed from social power and influence. Moreover, many subtle messages were conveyed to make black males feel as if they did not belong in white society. As Fanon states, "I was told to stay within bounds, to go back where I belonged" (Fanon, 2008, p. 114). Two dominant themes emerge in Fanon's writings that are applicable to understanding the modern experiences of asylum seekers and refugees, the theme of the negative social construction of minority identities and the theme of the social marginalization of those identities.

Philomena Essed (2007) echoes Fanon's sentiments in her article, "The Integration of Racism into Everyday Life: The Story of Rosa N." Rosa N. is a black woman who travelled to the Netherlands to pursue medical studies and went through the same experiences as Fanon in terms of suffering "multiple oppressions, racism, rejection, exclusion and underestimation" (Essed, 2007, p. 209). Essed reveals that experiences of racism such as those described by Fanon are not limited to black males but also impact minority females. Josephe Marie Flynn and Helen Prejean (2011) describe the challenges faced by an African asylum-seeking woman in her quest to seek legal status in the US. The woman's name was Regina and due to the oppressive conditions in her home country deportation and failure to obtain legal status would have resulted in death (Flynn & Prejean, 2011). Flynn assisted Regina in her battle for legal status through mobilizing members of her community including church members, and Regina eventually obtained legal status (Flynn & Prejean, 2011). This particular work is instructive because it shows that community activism can place strong pressure on public officials to grant legal status

in cases where asylum seekers face deadly consequences if they are deported and forced to return to their home countries.

Roberta Villalon's (2010) article, "Violence against Latina Immigrants, Citizenship, Inequality and Community," sheds light on the challenges that undocumented Latina women face in the US. Exploring obstacles to legal status, she demonstrates that the very institutions intended to protect asylum seekers often function as obstacles that reinforce existing social inequalities. Villalon indicates that race, ethnicity and gender are interconnected factors that work together to inhibit women from obtaining legal status and citizenship (Villalon's, 2010). In his article, "Integration and settlement: The experiences and expectations of African immigrants and refugees," Reuben Garang (2012) similarly describes the barriers faced by African refugees in their efforts to resettle in Winnipeg, Canada. Garang indicates that these people face many obstacles connected to poverty, housing, employment, barriers to learning English and a lack of training programs (Garang, 2012).

Helena Wray (2006) offers an informative discussion of the strategies asylum seekers use during the quest for legal status in Europe. In her article, "An Ideal Husband? Marriages of Convenience, Moral Gate-keeping and Immigration to the UK," Wray indicates that contrived marriages between undocumented aliens and citizens sometimes take place in order to "help" undocumented immigrants gain legal citizenship (Wray, 2006). Of course, one must have a citizen willing to go along with the plan for this strategy of obtaining legal status to succeed. In their article, "Representing Trauma: Political Asylum Narrative," Amy Schuman and Carol Bohmer (2004) indicate that asylum seekers are often in states of emotional trauma when they seek legal status as refugees. Of course, asylum seekers have often attempted to flee violence and

oppression in their homelands but their emotional devastation is increased when they confront foreign cultures and multiple forms of exclusion during the struggle to obtain legal status in other countries. In some cases, judges overseeing the asylum application process do not understand the cultures of asylum seekers so the process of social exclusion and marginalization begins right at the (hoped for) point of entry (Schuman & Bohmer, 2004).

Fanon's (2008) analysis of racism explains how social exclusion takes place at the concrete level of the physical body and then extends this exclusion outward onto the social body. White society, the dominant social body, marks the black physical body as different and inferior to the white body and hence as a stain on the social body. Fanon states that Africans living in white societies "cannot help but be aware of their body, aware of the inescapable fact of difference, a difference laden with meaning inherited from the brutal history of black-white encounters" (Fanon, 2008, p. 114). Living amongst themselves, blacks do not experience self-consciousness as 'black' people but within white societies they are defined in terms of skin colour and the condemnatory gaze of the dominant white community, and specifically the authority of white governmental power (Fanon, 2008, p. 114). Fanon's discussion emphasizes the psychological processes that take place in processes of domination and oppression. A similar psychological process of exclusion often informs the experiences of asylum seekers in their struggles to obtain legal status. Fanon asserts that the dominating psychology of the colonizer and the social construction/rejection of minority identities - which can manifest in the form of barriers to legal status - demonstrate the need for counter-hegemonic discourses that give voice to the victims of colonization. Auto-ethnography represents one such voice. As Pemina Yellow

Bird (2003) states, "Be prepared to tell your story with courage and conviction, to add your voice to all the others, never to be silenced again (Yellow Bird, p.10).

The views of writers such as Cesaire, Fanon, Essed, Flynn, Prejean, Villalon, Garang, Wray, Shuman and Bohmer on concepts such as colonialism, racism, marginalization and the many barriers to legal status faced by asylum seekers are important to understanding the experiences of modern asylum seekers and refugees. The theories presented by these authors can help to explain the day-to-day experiences of asylum seekers, the socioeconomic factors shaping the immigration policies nations choose to adopt, and the emphasis on borders and strong government control over migration processes that has taken place under globalization and poses many different barriers to legal status.

Michel Foucault (2007) introduces the concept of "governmentality" to describe the exercise of government power within societies. His work in this area contains elements that can help in clarifying not only the colonization processes that took place in Africa but also the forms of government control that impact modern asylum seekers. Since the majority of Africa was colonised very late in the process of European expansion, colonisation in Africa was informed by the forms of modern power and knowledge described by Foucault. The colonisation of Africa took place through a dual regime of power. The first aspect of this power involved the organisation of space and legal power in ways that reflected the interests of the colonising powers. Foucault describes governments' use of social, political, economic and police/military power to shape and control societies as "governmentality" (Foucault, 2007, p. 144). Governmentality, then, entails the ways in which "institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, calculations, and tactics" enable governments to exercise forms of power that have

"the population as its target, political economy as its major form of knowledge, and apparatuses of security as its essential technical instrument" (Foucault, 2007, p. 144). According to Foucault, knowledge represents a major aspect of governmentality since the exercise of government power inherently implicates expressions of knowledge that can take many different forms.

In his discussion of power/knowledge, Foucault (2007) reveals that power and knowledge can be mutually reinforcing. He states that all power relations are constituted within fields of knowledge and that all expressions of knowledge support specific power relations (Foucault, 1977, p. 27). Within societies, governments have preeminent power and exercise their power through "a series of specific governmental apparatuses and knowledges" (Foucault, 2007, p. 144). Foucault draws specific attention to the ways in which governments can shape social norms and foster "habitual" forms of human behaviour that accept and support state ideas and practices regarding justice and the punishment of those who engage in anti-social behaviour. He indicates that social norms become embedded within societies in many ways including through the administrative practices of governments (Foucault, 2007). But it is clear that dominant political and economic ideologies also play strong roles in shaping human attitudes and behaviours. These ideologies shape social identities and condition people's beliefs and behaviour patterns in ways that are desired by the state. However, alternative expressions of power/ knowledge can be formulated and can function as powerful counter-hegemonic discourses that challenge dominant forms of social power and create a drive towards social change. Such discourses can operate at the level of large-scale forces such as competing socio-economic ideologies but this paper suggests that they can also function effectively at the level of auto-ethnographic writing and expression of people's individual voices.

Partha Chatterjee (1993) contends that "the rule of colonial difference" (14) applies across a whole range of dimensions within colonialist discourses - Foucault's fields of power/knowledge - that objectify the colonized not only as fundamentally 'other' but also as inherently inferior and, in extreme cases, as inhuman (Chatterjee, 1993). One of the primary markers of inferiority is race since the white race is positioned at the apex of the social hierarchy while all other races are confined to subordinate social locations. Writing about India, for example, Chatterjee observes that "the more the logic of a modern regime of power pushed the processes of government in the direction of a rationalization of administration and the normalization of the objects of its rule, the more insistently did the issue of race come up to emphasize the specifically colonial character of British dominance in India" (Chatterjee, 1993, p. 14). Under colonialism, India was a nation of almost a billion non-white people dominated by a handful of white rulers. Colonial rule in Africa also reflected racist attitudes but the slave trade was also driven by strong economic interest. The corporate drivers of colonialism represent an important aspect of colonial power that is very relevant to the experiences of modern asylum seekers and refugees. This is because slavery took dominating social power somewhat out of the realm of governmentality and brought it into the realm of economic dictates since private companies sought to exploit black slaves as a source of cheap labour. Increasingly, economic factors also shape the policies of modern governments toward asylum seekers searching for legal status. However, colonialism offers a look at the historical roots of racial discrimination based on economic exploitation.

Colonized nations were subjected not only to the controlling power of governmentality and the many administrative processes that were used to control populations, but also to the

exploitative drive of corporations seeking private profits. James Ferguson and Akhil Gupta (2002) point out that much of Southern Africa was settled not by colonial governments but by the British South Africa Company, a private multinational corporation under the control of Cecil John Rhodes (Ferguson & Gupta, 2002, p. 992). In a contemporary context that reveals the linkages between colonialism and modern forms of governmentality, James Ferguson (2005) uses the term "transnational governmentality" to describe the increasing power of private capital to control nations and people (Ferguson, 2005, p. 380) This form of corporate governmentality, so to speak, is obvious in the process of globalization currently taking place around the world but it is also highly visible in the colonisation processes that took place in Africa. Private interests seeking financial profits did not simply shape a few of the colonial policies that were implemented in many regions of Africa; Ferguson states that in many cases private corporations controlled the colonisation process as a whole "and functioned, to all intents and purposes, as states in their own rights" (Ferguson, 2005, p. 380).

During the period of colonisation, the Congo Free State was under the private rule of Leopold II of Belgium, and Jana Honke (2009) describes how corporate rule continues in the Katanga region as corporations seek access to the area's mineral wealth (Honke, 2009, p. 20). While military power had traditionally been understood as a state prerogative, the exercise of colonial power by private interests led to the development of private military companies. Mining or plantation interests, for example, sub-contracted their security needs to private military contractors that suppressed indigenous populations and thereby enabled private capital to act without opposition (Chesterman & Lehnardt, 2007; Schouten, 2011). Scott Morgensen (2011) refers to this process as "settler colonialism" (85) and describes the process as an expression of

"biopower" that disciplines and orders indigenous populations while excluding them from the wealth produced by their own lands. Just as economic factors, and specifically private financial interests, played a strong role in the colonisation process, they continue to play a strong role in shaping government policies regarding asylum seekers and refugees as governments to seek to reduce costs by erecting barriers to legal status (Morgensen, 2011).

The modern regime of borders is shaped largely by state and private actors seeking to maximize the profits that can be gained through immigration while reducing the costs associated with providing services to immigrants and refugees. Given the reality of globalization, industrialised nations strive to attract immigrants who import either capital or useful labour power and attempt to avoid the provision of social and medical services to immigrants and refugees who require state assistance. As a result, state concern over migration and borders is becoming an increasingly controversial issue in the twenty first century as governments try to control who goes where. As Didier Fassin (2011) puts it, "Ironically, although globalization meant facilitated circulation of goods, it has also involved increased constraints on the mobility of men and women" (213). Under globalization, the mobility of capital is "increasingly unrestrained" (181) but the issue of borders has become an area of great concern for governments that reject asylum seekers (and immigrants in general) who do not serve the interests of capital (Pratt & Thompson, 2008; Silverstein, 2005). Asylum seekers, refugees and immigrants are typically categorized in terms of their degree of desirability; that is, the selection process and pathway to legal status is based on their ability to import or produce wealth.

As the volume of human movement and migration increases under globalization, nations become more concerned with defending their borders against certain migrant groups and asylum

becomes a highly contentious issue. However, this concern is out of all proportion to the actual number of people involved as there are only about 160,000 refugees in Canada (UNHCR, 2014). Given the nation's population of roughly 34 million, the refugee population represents less than half of 1% of the population and slightly more than 2% of the foreign-born population of about 7 million (UNHCR, 2014). Moreover, there are international treaties that commit governments to respecting the rights of asylum seekers. And yet, the arrival of asylum seekers on a nation's border is frequently experienced as a kind of invasion by a foreign entity. Shahram Khosravi (2007) states that asylum seeking seems to represent an act that is inherently threatening because it symbolically threatens government control over borders (Khosravi, 2007, p. 322). But, as my personal narrative will show, asylum seekers encounter borders not only to legal status but throughout society even when they succeed in gaining legal status within a country.

David Lyon (2005) states that for racialized 'others' within society "the border is everywhere" (Lyon, 2005, p. 67). The formal categorization of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants within distinct classes leaves them stigmatized and feeling alien as non-citizens. It seems ironic that countries are increasingly trying to push their borders outward in search of immigrants who can meet labour needs while also turning inward in the sense of controlling borders to exclude 'undesirables.' Frances Webber (2012) indicates that processes of exclusion have become increasingly violent with nations willing to engage in controversial practices such as intercepting ships and forming partnerships with authoritarian countries to gain access to exploitable labour (Webber, 2012). This violence appears to be constructed around a fundamental 'we/they' binary opposition. According to Khosravi (2007), the issue of borders has become an arena of contention surrounding who 'belongs' (we) and who is an 'alien' (they) that

deserves to be rejected on the basis of security concerns, economic factors or community norms and traditions (Khosravi, 2007, p. 322). Khosravi suggests that violations of border regimes by asylum seekers challenge "the sacred features of border rituals and symbols" and are therefore interpreted by many as criminal acts "deserving of punishment" (Khosravi, 2007, p. 322). However, my personal experience as an asylum seeker and refugee in Canada demonstrates that many of the asylum seekers committing border violations in the relatively privileged countries of the West are typically in desperate situations and require state assistance, not rejection and stigmatization as criminals.

CHAPTER II: METHODOLOGY

As the construction of the word suggests, auto-ethnography is an approach to the exploration of an issue that combines autobiography and ethnography. Auto-ethnography is a qualitative method of research that emerged from the anthropological tradition, and which Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) argue can be used for both subjective, descriptive purposes and to develop and test theories (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Auto-ethnography might seem to have little value since it is based on the researcher's personal experiences and therefore may appear to be subjective to the point of meaninglessness. And yet, auto-ethnographic research can offer valuable insights into human identity and the sociological factors that shape identities. One popular form of ethnographic research is anthropological or sociological "participant observation," in which the researcher participates in the lives of the social group or "subjects" being studied (Delamont, 2004, p.89). Auto-ethnography stems from but differs from this approach in the sense that the subject of auto-ethnographic research is the self. Ellis and Bochner (2000) describe auto-ethnography in terms of "autobiographies that self-consciously explore the interplay of the introspective, personally engaged self with cultural descriptions mediated through language, history, and ethnographic explanation" (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 742). That is, auto-ethnography strives to situate the ethnography of the self within the wider social context of the many socioeconomic factors that construct identities.

The choice to explore an issue such as asylum seeking and refugee migration through an auto-ethnographic methodology is based on both practical and political considerations. The practical advantage of this methodology is based on the fact that some topics are suited to autobiographical forms of representation such as poetry, fiction and personal narratives (Ellis &

Bochner, 2000, p. 739). In general, auto-ethnography is a narrative-based research methodology. Boylon and Orbe (2013) indicate that it is sometimes called "narrative ethnography" because it treats research topics "that can best be understood through narrative interrogation" (Boylorn & Orbe, 2013, p. 24). One such topic is the personal journey of an individual such as an asylum seeker searching for legal status as a refugee. This sort of topic demands a narrative-based auto-ethnographic approach because a human journey entails a wide range of personal human experiences. One might say that auto-ethnography addresses the interplay between the personal and social; it situates private experiences within a series of settings and situations in which the subject's journey takes place. This research methodology accounts for the social, cultural and economic factors that shape individual's experiences, but it also addresses the subjective issue of the *meaning* that arises within an individual's journey. Auto-ethnography clarifies what makes a journey necessary, describes the routes taken and the borders crossed, and discusses the obstacles encountered on the pathway to the journey's end (if there is one). It is the subject's personal narrative that enables meaning to be extracted from the journey.

The political aspect of choosing to use an auto-ethnographic methodology is based on the refusal to accept the authority of so-called 'objectivity' in research. As Foucault states, all expressions of knowledge are implicated in political power, including those forms of knowledge that claim the authority of objectivity. John Beverly (2007) asserts that auto-ethnography rejects pretensions to objective analysis that masquerade complicity with power and demands that readers understand personal experience through the eyes of the individuals who live through it, rather than through the eyes of external perspectives such as governmental power or epistemological claims to objectivity (Beverley, 2007). Quality auto-ethnographic research has

the advantage of giving readers a more direct and reality-based understanding of the social factors impacting research subjects such as asylum seekers and refugees (Beverley, 2007). As a research methodology, auto-ethnography undermines the false authority of objectivities that are covertly rooted in power and private interests, and uses personal experience as a way to create new insights and perspectives that typically remain hidden from the view of those embedded in the realities of everyday life (Lefebvre, 2000). Auto-ethnography contains an element of critical theory because it seeks to subvert easy claims to objectivity and authority. Norman Denzin (1999) states that auto-ethnography represents "guerrilla warfare against the repressive structures of everyday lives" (Denzin, 1999, p. 572). In addition, auto-ethnography "displaces the dichotomy of objectivity and subjectivity of modern technologies of power and their subjects" while advancing "a radical project of intersubjectivity" (Butz, 2001, p.156) Perhaps more than anything else auto-ethnography supports autonomous voices and enables the subjects of research to speak for themselves and their own experiential journeys.

CHAPTER III: PERSONAL NARRATIVE

Zimbabwe: Leaving Home

The story of my journey as an asylum seeker and eventually a refugee with legal status in Canada begins with the migration that took my ancestors to what is now Zimbabwe. They were members of a mostly landless group, the Xhosas from the Eastern Cape of South Africa that was promised some land by the British South Africa Company in hopes of pacifying areas dominated by the aggressive Ndebele tribe (Nyathi, 2005). Migration was easier then than it is today, when even friendly African states such as South Africa and Zimbabwe have huge tensions around border issues. But in the travels of the Xhosas we already see modern governmentality at work, exercising "a complex form of power, which has as its target a population, as its principal form of knowledge political economy, and as its essential technical means apparatuses of security" (Foucault, 1991, p. 102-3). For Foucault, one of the essential elements of modern power is the replacement of state practices rooted in ideas of justice and punishment with practices rooted in systems of administration (Foucault, 2007, p. 144). The British South Africa Company's use of land distribution to calm a population and create security was a well-designed strategy of governmentality.

The Xhosa newcomers were concentrated in a small area in the Matebeland region of Mbembesi. Their distinct arrangements with the administration and their long prior experience maintaining cultural identity within a kind of diaspora ensured that they were able to maintain their language and identity. In this, they were accommodating the colonial policy which viewed the acceptance of ethnic and tribal distinctions as a useful way to administer colonised spaces since it minimized indigenous resistance (Pels, 1997; Tapper, 2001). So, looking back to my

ancestors, it would appear that the colonial practices of governmentality used in South Africa were responsible for my being Zimbabwean, and for my being a member of a distinct and tiny minority in that country.

This might not have been of great importance, except that Zimbabwe's post-colonial regime of Robert Mugabe has continued to support and implement the ethnically-divisive policies of previous colonial governments for its own governmental purposes. In colonial Rhodesia, access to most important resources (land, education and employment) was based on people accepting the discipline of being defined by their ethnic identities. This process could be formal in some ways. For example, the right to claim land in one's village and district of ancestral origin entailed proving one's identity. Or it could simply reflect discriminatory colonial convictions about ethnic 'character' and therefore suitability for different jobs. In the mines, for example, "Shangaans were stereotyped as 'the best workers above and below ground,' Zulus as the 'best drillers,'and Ndebeles as the 'best foremen'" (Muzondidya & Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2007, p. 279). So, I grew up in Zimbabwe as a member of the Xhosa minority which constitutes less than 1% of the population and whose ancestors had migrated and settled there around the beginning of the 20th century.

After liberation from Britain's colonial rule in 1980, the politics of what is now Zimbabwe became dominated by the nation-building attempts of Robert Mugabe. This man sought to consolidate his power through a very modern exercise in nation building which involved creating a national identity based on Shona identity and land ownership. Life became more difficult and dangerous for members of other ethnic groups as a result. The danger was not constant, however; it was dependent on time and place, and reflected clear government attempts

to consolidate power among Shona while excluding other groups, especially the Ndebele (Muzondidya & Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2007). Life was always most dangerous at election times. During the 1985 election, many Xhosa homes and businesses were burnt down including my own home. Danger also arose when economic conditions raised political pressures and demands in a country organised on the basis of corruption and clientism. For example, when the spread of neo-liberal economic polices subjected Zimbabwe to the 'structural adjustments' of the early 1990s many people, including me, lost their jobs. The imposition of a strict neo-liberal form of governmentality based on multilateralism and market authority reshaped life for millions of Zimbabweans and it is clear that both economic and political factors contributed to this change (Ferguson & Gupta, 2002).

Poverty and insecurity represent social factors that play strong roles in forcing people to make difficult choices and, with a daughter to support on my own, my choices were constrained. I decided that I would have to leave the country with my daughter. I did not consider going to Britain, the destination of many exiled Zimbabweans, since I had previously been refused entry there and there would certainly have been a record of this. With a young daughter to look after, I was hoping not to have to hide under trucks or cross the Mediterranean in a leaky boat. So I decided to travel to the United States in search of a better life.

In November 1998, I experienced my first encounter with the abstract borders protecting wealthy countries. I went to the American Embassy in Harare, Zimbabwe to apply for a visa with the proper form and payment for the application. Then I experienced what some writers describe as the border 'Confessionary Complex' scene (Salter, 2007; van Houtum, 2010). This term is taken from Foucault and refers to the docility and anxiety that people are conditioned to feel

when they face the agents of state power who guard the border security of western states. I was grilled in a way that was very similar to the interrogation I would later face when applying for asylum and legal refugee status in Canada. I was asked why I wanted to visit America, how long I intended to stay, whether I had property in Harare and what kind of property it was, and how much money I had in my bank account. After this interrogation, which took less than 10 minutes but felt much longer, I was told that I would not be given a visa because the embassy felt that I would not leave the US after I had been allowed to enter.

I demanded to see the Manager or to be given my money back, and expressed my anger at paying an exorbitant fee only to have my visa application rejected. I was allowed to speak to the Manager, a woman who told me she was still new in the office as she had arrived just a month ago from the US to take up the post. She told me that my visa application had been denied because my lack of a husband created the possibility that I would not return. I was being defined and categorized according to a well-established set of criteria. This form of "social sorting" plays a role in many aspect of modern administration ranging from surveillance of borders to shopping mall security to identifying people for credit card special offers; it represents a central pillar of the modern governmental regime (Lyon, 2002; Lyon, 2006).

On being told that my visa application had been rejected because I was not married, I asked the Manager if she was married. She told me she was not. I asked her if she had been given a hard time by the Zimbabwean border control because of this fact, and she said she had not. I had an invite to the US, I had money in the bank, I had property, but still I was deemed a risk because of the fact that I might not return because I was not married. There were so many unspoken assumptions informing this encounter that I just left the embassy. I went straight to a

women's organization based in one of the suburbs in Harare and described what had happened and the reasons why my visa application was denied. The Executive Director of the organisation called the American Embassy and asked the woman I had spoken to what she meant by saying that my lack of a husband disqualified me from visiting the US. Did this mean that unmarried women were no longer allowed to visit even if they could afford it? Their conversation went on for a good 45 minutes and, to cut a long story short, the Embassy Manager called me the next day and I was treated with respect and given a visa.

The Director of the women's organisation had told the Embassy that she was going to take my case to the press and ask, via the newspapers and broadcasters, whether it was now the rule that single women were no longer allowed to travel to the US. The intent was to apply pressure by asking embarrassing questions such as: Was the policy of rejecting single women applied selectively to African women but not to British or French women? Although my visa application was ultimately accepted, it was clear that I was not wanted in the US. Sherene Razack's (2002) article, "When Place becomes Race," comes to mind in connection to this experience because Razack indicates that social spaces are monitored and controlled through racial divisions (Razack, 2002). Of course, I also encountered gender-based divisions.

This first encounter with border crossing revealed two basic facts. First, it showed how western countries use methods of deterrence to prevent certain people from crossing their borders and obtaining legal status (Cook, 2008; Cross, 2009). Frightening stories of people drowning while trying to travel to western countries, forced repatriations and convenient excuses for refusing visas all represent forms of deterrence designed to exclude 'undesirables.' Deterrence is a more politically savvy and less costly way to prevent people from migrating than

the use of fences and security personnel. This is why I view borders as multi-pronged processes rather than singular geographical places; borders are not just lines on a map but also psychological processes of exclusion. Non-state actors are also involved in preventing certain people from crossing borders. For example, private agencies such as Frontex have agreements with states to prevent the entry of unwanted people in western countries.

The second thing that my experience with border crossing revealed was that evading the West's efforts to keep its borders sealed required individual skill, perseverance and even a dose of deviousness rather than appeals to fundamental principles of justice that apply to people as a whole. The individual seeking asylum and legal status must strive to achieve his/her own personal goal. Thousands or even millions of people might be suffering exactly the oppression or violence or natural disaster that asylum seekers hope to escape by obtaining legal status in other countries. But the individual who manages to arrive in Canada, Sweden or Britain must advocate on behalf of his/her own needs and rights, and must be willing to accept that border crossing processes are not designed to help the thousands or millions of people seeking legal status. Shahram Khosravi (2010) writes that refugee border crossings involve "performances" but my experiences suggest that these are individual performances and are not - at least presently - based on group rights or broadly applicable principles of justice (Khosravi, 2010, p. 38).

Underlying the need for performance is the fact that the border crossing formalities are largely devoid of ethical foundations. The rules of international conventions define state responsibilities reading refugees but western countries mostly try to evade them despite the fact that some refugees are desperate to avoid torture, imprisonment or death. The act of crossing a border and claiming asylum, and likewise the strategies for keeping people from crossing

borders, are devious and tactical because the rules and principles governing the process are ambiguous and lacking enforcement. However, fear exists only on the side of the refugees while states make political calculations regarding 'national interests.' The only substantive element at play in the process is refugee claims of fear of persecution in the home country- are these claims based on fact or are they a strategy for gaining admission into a more privileged country? Ultimately, asylum seekers hoping to obtain legal status as refugees and the wealthy countries both base their shifting tactics around this issue; some asylum seekers have justified claims to the need for safety from persecution, while western countries want to prevent asylum seekers from using false claims to gain entry through bypassing formal immigration criteria. In my case, I was trying to escape very dangerous persecution based on ethnic strife in Zimbabwe, and I was able to gain admission into the US on a visitor's visa. But I was not 'legal' for long.

United States: Fear

I received my visa to enter the US on December 9, 1998 and I left Harare international airport on the December 13th of that year. Entering the US with a valid visa was relatively easy at that time and the primary method of deterrence - the refusal of visas to people who might be tempted to stay - was viewed as sufficient. Still, the arrival and questions I had to answer were threatening and placed me very much in a performance mode as I tried to appear as wealthy and haughty as possible- nothing like a refugee. Khosravi (2007) describes the profound dichotomy between a world traveller and the position that I was trapped in:

> A legal journey is regarded as an honourable act in the spirit of globalism and cosmopolitanism. The legal traveller passes the border gloriously and enhances his or her social status; whereas the border transgressor is seen as anti-aesthetic and anti-ethical (they are called 'illegal' and are criminalised). We live in an era of 'world apartheid' according to which the border differentiates between individuals (Khosravi, 2007, p. 328).

From the day I arrived in the US in December 1998 until the day I left in March 2006, I lived in fear of being caught as undocumented immigrant and deported. Not a day passed without my thinking about being caught and what that would mean. I had arrived on a visitor's visa that limited my stay to no more than 6 months. I ended up staying in the US for nearly 8 years, and throughout those 8 years I lived in fear of discovery, of being stopped by the police, of being informed on, of someone finding out, somehow, that I was living in the country illegally. I held a series of employment positions and made a positive contribution to the country while struggling to build a comfortable life for my daughter and myself, but the fear of deportation never left me.

Perpetual, omnipresent fear is a large part of every illegal immigrant's life, even the lives of relatively successful middle-class immigrants who work hard and contribute to society. Fear takes many different shapes and changes from one day to the next. Fears about a child's cough and medical needs are multiplied and conflicted by fear of going to a hospital emergency clinic and being discovered as an illegal immigrant (Asch et al., 1994). Fear of dismissal at work or nervousness around asking for a raise are multiplied by the threat of an employer looking more closely at one's documentation papers, work history or references. Any brush with the police, a broken tail light, or police response to a crime for which you are the victim all pose more fear due to the nearness of disaster (Menjivar & Bejarano, 2004; Kittrie, 2005). Human relationships are compromised and unnatural. A workmate, landlord or neighbour with a grudge can inform the authorities and have an illegal immigrant deported. One cannot claim a tax rebate. Illegal immigrant status means a life shaped by fear and insecurity. It can create a need to avoid contact with others, including people from one's home country who might hold a grudge. And, as a vast

literature shows, living with constant fear and insecurity can have many negative consequences

for one's mental health (Furneaux & Cook, 2007; Mahalingam, 2013).

In order to gain at least some footing in the US, I built a social network with other

'undocumented aliens,' mostly Mexican people who were my neighbours and who put me in

contact with a Mexican man who was in the business of printing and selling forged social

security cards. I paid a fee for the fake social security card that I used for all the years that I lived

in America. My purchase of fake documents in order to remain in the US represents an

experience shared by many illegal immigrants. Ellie Vasta (2010) describes how immigrants

buy, borrow or rent documents in order to negotiate the borders that demand these documents.

She indicates that some immigrants actually purchase new identities in order to avoid detection

and deportation (Vasta, 2010). The importance of a social network for immigrants has long been

universally recognised (MacDonald & MacDonald, 1964; Lee, 1970). However, establishing

social connections can be far more difficult for illegal immigrants as they are often in situations

where the people from their own homelands can represent the greatest danger. I tried to solve my

problems by becoming part of a social network of undocumented Mexicans who happened to be

my neighbours, and who were the inheritors of a cumulative knowledge on how to deal with the

realities of illegal existence in the US.

During my second year in the US, this social network explained that I could apply for

political asylum and gave me the name of a charitable organisation, the Catholic Charities, which

provided free advice on legal issues connected to immigration. My hopes were high as I believed

I had a good chance of being granted refugee status, but these hopes were quickly dashed. I was

told that I was no longer eligible to apply for asylum because the one year window for doing so

had passed. At the time I had no knowledge of formal immigration laws and processes. I was completely naïve and it was all I could do to support myself and my daughter as a single working mother without documentation.

I got my first job in the US March of 1999 performing administrative work at an insurance company. I found this job through a 'temp' agency. After 6 months the company wanted to hire me as their employee, rather than hiring me through the agency. This would have meant better pay and more job security, but I could not risk going through the process of presenting my fake social security card to this company. I knew that they would recognise it as fake and conclude that I was an illegal and therefore was not permitted to work in the US. Also, I could have been deported. It was well known that 'temp' agencies paid much less attention to issues of documentation so, like countless other undocumented workers, I was trapped in a cycle of economic exploitation and excluded from full participation in the job market (Anderson, 2010; Caro, 2001). Of course, many other illegals had it far worse than I did in this respect, but the structural realities of fear, risk and a lack of recourse functioned to limit my opportunities and imposed forced workplace exploitation.

I soon found another job in the Dallas area as a data entry clerk. This time I did not go through the temp agency because at the initial interview I learned that the Human Resources person I was dealing with was a British woman who was new in America. I took a chance that she did not know much about American documentation and just went ahead and presented her with my fake social security card, of which she made a photocopy. She gave me the federal employment forms to fill in which included a section that asks whether you are an American citizen or working on a Green Card. I had to tick the box that said I was an American citizen;

ticking the Green Card box would have complicated matters for me since I didn't have one! I

ended up working at this company for nearly 2 years and then my job was terminated due to

layoffs which took place because the company and the economy were struggling.

Looking back, there were a surprising number of ways in which America was a

welcoming society. I had a job, the fundamental requisite for living and sustaining oneself. I had

a nice enough apartment; I had managed to build social networks; my daughter was in school and

in cases of illness we could go to a hospital Emergency Room for treatment, although a hefty bill

would soon arrive in the mail. I always paid medical bills in instalments and no one ever

demanded that a hospital bill be paid up front. In the US, I was given a chance to make it on my

own, there was no welfare, and I paid my taxes while having access to all the requirements of

healthy living. So I lived with the terrible contradiction of being in a society that was welcoming

in many important ways but also imposed a burden of relentless fear of discovery. Somehow this

burden grew bearable and I just got on with life. As a person living outside the law, I felt

gratitude that America gave me a chance to work for a living and support my daughter. There are

an estimated 10-12 million illegal immigrants in the US, as calculated by organisations like US

Homeland security and the Pew Research Center (Hoefer et al., 2011; Passel et al., 2013). While

some interest groups try to politicize the issue of illegal aliens and states like Arizona pass

discriminatory laws to 'solve' the problem, the reality is that the authorities leave the millions of

illegal immigrants in the US alone to get on with their lives. There are individual hardships, but

there have been no mass round-ups or deportations.

Eventually I discovered that the US government knew about my presence within

American borders. An immigration lawyer I consulted told me that the government knew of my

existence since I was paying taxes. He advised me to never break laws and to just keep my head down and attend to my own business. He emphasized that even a minor traffic infraction could lead to deportation. 'Deportation' was the one word I had learned to fear the most in my years living in the US, and would continue to fear for many years to come. Such is the price paid by those who lack legal status in a country.

In 2001, I obtained another job through a temp agency, this time working in a financial institution in downtown Dallas. I was working at this job on September 11, 2001. The company employees were all glued to the television set in the office of a company Vice President. Like everyone else, I was shocked by the horror of the terrorist attack and it was only afterwards that I realised how the events of 9/11 would affect my life. A great deal has been written about how 9/11 changed attitudes and policies concerning borders and immigrants, legal and illegal. Until that day, the US business community was largely in favour of immigration. The states exerted some pressure to address the large numbers of documented and undocumented immigrants in the US and claimed that huge costs were involved in providing services to immigrant families, but the states had no power to deport immigrants as this was a federal power (McKenzie, 2003) So the status quo remained.

Everything changed after 9/11. Following the attack by foreigners who hated America's freedoms, as the official line went; the federal government quickly sprang into action to protect the country from all nasty and threatening foreigners, including those who lived inside its borders. The Patriot Act was passed, which included many provisions that directly affected illegal aliens. The power and responsibility to conduct background checks on people of interest was hugely expanded, and this quickly ballooned into a vast empire of surveillance and control,

primarily focused on people of foreign origin, and termed, in the bland terms of non-partisan think tanks, as "interoperable databases" (Mittelstadt et al., 2011, p.95). Indeed, the whole immigration infrastructure was ultimately incorporated into the Department of Homeland Security. This implied that all immigrants, foreigners and 'illegals' represented potential threats to national security. Visitors to the US were faced with far more thorough examinations, even those from countries whose nationals did not require visas.

Among immigrants, the effects were felt not just by Muslim and Arab Americans as there was significant 'collateral damage' amongst all immigrant communities. By 2008, more than three times as many non-citizens were being removed from the country than were removed only a few years previously (Department of Homeland Security, 2009). It became harder to obtain driver's licenses and healthcare without risking deportation. Anti-immigration feelings began to influence local and state politics, and there were movements to pass laws that would exclude illegal immigrants from all public services, and this included exclusion of their children from the right to attend public schools (Lax & Phillips, 2012).

For those who faced the realities of life as undocumented immigrants, after 9/11 things started to get tougher and tougher. It was no longer easy to find jobs or to perform everyday acts such as renewing driver's licences. There was now a lot of scrutinizing of documents that did not previously exist. Even when driving, the police would stop a person and ask for documentation or licences based on nothing other than the driver's physical appearance. This was the most fearful time of my life in the US and I knew that things would never be the same again. The bank where I worked asked me to come aboard and be a full-time employee after I had worked 6 months as a temp. But I could not accept the offer because banks did a lot of background-

checking and I knew they would find out that I was someone who was not legally entitled to work, or even be in the country. So once again, I had to leave a job that I enjoyed and where I had performed good work that pleased my employer.

After the bank job ended, I was once again in the all too familiar position of looking for yet another job. I had to find a job, for how would I survive and support my daughter without one? There is no welfare system in America, least of all for undocumented immigrants. I found employment at a call centre, but I had to leave after 2 weeks because I simply could not endure this type of work. Finally, I found another job in a hospital in Dallas working as a front office/data entry clerk. The story of the past repeated itself once again. After working for 6 months, I was offered full-time employment and had to decline. After this job, I got hired by a University OB-GYN clinic, doing data entry work for a study on contraceptives. This was 2002, and this is basically where my real problems started. I received a call from human resources asking me to bring in my social security card. I knew that this meant trouble. Once again, I faced the fear of losing a job due to the need to avoid deportation.

This time I decided to offer an explanation to my manager and the doctor in charge of the project. I came clean to them and told them about the Human Resources call and my situation. They were sympathetic and told me not to present my fake social security card. They felt that Human Resources should have come to them first rather than approaching me directly. I did as they suggested and continued working until I got another call from HR. After the second call, my manager arranged for me to speak to an immigration lawyer. I was hoping for support and encouragement but this lawyer scared the hell out of me! She started off by informing me that I was committing a felony by being employed in a government institution with false

documentation and that the FBI had to be involved in the situation. Somehow, I posed a grave

threat to the national security of the United States of America while struggling to feed myself

and my daughter! The lawyer then went on to say that she could work out a deal for me- if she

brought in the FBI and I was willing to inform on all the people that I knew who didn't have

papers, my social network, my friends, then the FBI would give me proper documentation and

my daughter and I could stay in the US. Isn't that a nice position to be put in?

I know now that promises such as those made by the FBI are seldom kept and that

accepting the deal might have put me in a condition of endless subordination. As Yolanda

Gonzalez Gomez (2014) states:

> "Federal government agencies use and abuse undocumented confidential informants for
> years, trample their rights with impunity, promise them permanent residency and never
> deliver on it," said [immigration attorney Jodi] Goodwin. "And they know they don't
> have to deliver on it. But they keep pressuring them with that promise so they will keep
> cooperating" (Gonzalez Gomez, 2014, p. 1).

The programme of recruiting informants from the immigrant community during this period

focussed mainly on the Muslim and Arab communities where it sometimes took extreme forms

(Baumann, 2014). But my experience confirms Emily Stabile's (2014) view that the programme

also targets people from other communities, including single mothers with children (Stabile,

2014).

It would have been a mistake to accept the deal but I didn't even have to think about it; I

declined the lawyer's offer and left her office wondering how she could expect me to betray my

friends, who by then I considered as family. When I declined the lawyer's deal, she suggested

that I contact an NGO in Michigan called *Freedom House* and she gave me the organization's

contact information. After talking to the lawyer, I felt I had to leave my job immediately since

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words like 'felony' had been used to describe what I had always simply considered as a relatively benign 'breaking of the rules' in order to work, be self-sufficient and provide for my daughter. My manager at the university, with whom I remain in touch today, always tells me that she regrets ever having referred me to this lawyer. But she understood the fears that I had, so we had to part ways. This manager was part of the professional network that I built for myself, and represents another reason why I always say that despite the actions of its *government*, America was a welcoming *society*, even for undocumented people within its borders.

After I left my job with the university my life changed fundamentally. I went six full months without real work of the sort I'd been used to doing and my modest savings quickly evaporated. I could find other undocumented people who would ask me to watch their children, or pick them up from school, and this enabled me to earn a little bit of money. During this time, I also worked in a factory where the majority of the workers were undocumented immigrants from Mexico. But this job lasted for only 4 weeks. Shortly after, I found another assignment with a temp agency working as a data entry clerk. While working at this assignment I found another job in Plano which was also basically data entry work. I accepted both jobs, working at one in the morning and the other at night.[1] I needed all the money I could lay my grubby hands on. Having two jobs was not easy for me as a single parent, or for my daughter. My lack of presence in the home caused my daughter's school work to suffer and her grades dropped. I had to quit one job for the sake of our mental well-being but I continued working in Plano until, at the end of 2004, the staff members were advised that all our jobs were being outsourced to India.

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1   I have not mentioned the names of any of the organisations or individuals that figure in this story because I do not have ethics approval to do so.

There is a vast literature on the ways that globalisation is changing the relationships between undocumented immigrants worldwide and the societies in which they live (Burgers & Engbersen, 1996; Bacon, 2008; Munck, 2013). As competition for jobs increases and creates a generalised economic insecurity and sense of betrayal, local populations become angry about illegal intruders taking their jobs. Of course, these 'illegal intruders' lived in India but they were still taking our jobs. Or, American firms were taking our jobs and willingly giving them to foreigners as a way to cut labour costs and increase profits? My situation was contradictory in ways that were partly sad and partly laugh out loud funny; on the one hand, I was an illegal taking a job away from a 'real American' but on the other hand my own job was being outsourced to someone in India! This situation shows how the issue of borders has become complicated in a world that is increasingly linked not only through economic globalization but also through technologies that enable local neighbourhood businesses to hire employees who live and work on the other side of the world.

Although my situation exemplified vast worldwide changes that have been explored through many complex theories, all I really cared about at the time was that once again I didn't have a job. At the beginning of 2005, I got one job in Dallas and another one in Fort Worth. But I felt less and less like I had any hope for a better future for myself and my daughter. The need for change was in the air. It was during this period of doom and gloom that I remembered the paperwork the lawyer had given me about the NGO in Michigan. *Freedom House* had been set up by volunteers from Detroit and Windsor to help people seeking legal refugee status in Canada during the US-funded civil wars in Central America. At the time, the clients were mainly people who encountered problems achieving legal status in the US for political reasons. Since then,

Freedom House has evolved into an agency that helps refugees from all around the world. It concentrates on helping people claim asylum in the United States, people who, unlike me, have not defaulted on that possibility (Freedom House, 2014). However, I learned that *Freedom House* still helps people in the US seek asylum and legal status in Canada.

I called *Freedom House* and received an explanation of the procedures involved in applying, through them, for a claim for legal refugee status in Canada. Towards the end of 2005, I started the process and I mailed my application to *Freedom House* at the beginning of 2006. On March 6, 2006 I received a letter notifying me that my daughter and I had an appointment to enter Canada as refugee claimants on March 29, 2006 at 8:00 am. I was asked to make a donation towards the NGO which I willingly did, knowing that many people who needed their services were in far worse circumstances than I was. We had three weeks to close down our 8 years of life in the US before making the trek to Detroit and then into Canada. As I left the American side, I was struck by the fact that US Immigration did not stop us, or ask any questions, demanding only that we pay a $2.75 toll to cross the border. Yes, it is much easier to leave a country than to enter one, but the vital thing was that a hopeful new stage in our journey had begun.

Canada: Borders Everywhere

On March 29, 2006 I arrived at the Canadian border crossing and was assigned a female immigration officer. I was suddenly back in the middle of a scenario that I had almost forgotten, being bombarded with questions that I knew were not innocent or well-meaning; they were intended to categorize and exclude. Feeling nervous and guilty, I went through every stage of the confessionary complex with this officer yet again, just as I had at the American Embassy in Harare and upon arriving in the US. She wanted to know the reason why I needed protection,

how long I had been in America, whether I had applied for protection while I was in the US, and the reason why I left my home country in the first place. *Freedom House's* letterhead has the Universal Declaration of Human Rights printed on the top right hand corner, which states that "Everyone has a right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution." I was looking at this statement as I was being interrogated and thinking to myself, "It can't be true that this officer is interrogating me in this way." As an undocumented person, I did not have the right to seek and enjoy asylum in other countries. So, I had to face interrogation in order to prove that I warranted permission to cross the border into Canada.

I was not water-boarded, thankfully, but this was the most intense and aggressive interrogation I had ever experienced. I realised that I was now in a new category as an 'asylum seeker.' I was one of those people that borders were designed to control, not a nice traveller spending money and taking in the sights but a 'foreign entity' threatening the border hygiene and happy narrative of the multicultural nation with my demanding, troublesome, racialised otherness. Many writers assert that the mechanisms of governmentality that constitute the function of borders are interested above all in the process of categorising people and then subjecting them to more sophisticated technologies of control (Pratt & Thompson, 2008; Silverstein, 2005). Borders are singular points where political narratives of state protection and threats to the dominant order of things, almost always imaginary, intersect.

The last stage in my journey illustrates that asylum seekers continue to face borders everywhere within host countries even after they have obtained legal status as refugees. Thus, the concept of the border does not describe a literal physical space, or line in the sand, so much as it signifies a process that never ends for those with the social position of a refugee. After enduring

a long, intimidating interview with the immigration officer, I was eventually allowed to proceed into Canada. However, I was heavily laden with a whole lot of paperwork that I did not understand. I'd been forced to leave all my own documents at the border, including the fake social security card and my passport. The only things I was allowed to bring with me into Canada were my driver's licence and, fortunately, my daughter. Among the documents issued to me by immigration was one addressed to the "Port Director of the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service" from the "Regional Manager, Canada Immigration Ontario West Region." The subject of the document was specified as: "Return of Non-Resident Alien *****Reciprocal Agreement Section 111.2C*****." This document included my name and my particulars and stated that the "above subject has been denied admission and may subsequently be ordered removed from Canada." I had been defined and categorized not only as an "alien" but also as a "subject"; I might as well have been a visitor from Mars!

In any case, the document made no bones about the fact that my status in Canada was profoundly insecure. I had physically arrived in Canada but I was being told in no uncertain terms that I had no rights whatsoever. Not only that, but I once again faced the dreaded threat of deportation. The aggressive imposing of insecurity and threats seems to be a strategy closely related to Alison Mountz's (2001) "long tunnel thesis." Mountz argues that the arbitrary detaining of asylum seekers at ports of entry is a strategy designed to deny legal rights that can be claimed once admission into Canada is obtained (Mountz, 2011). Although the letter I had received was not exactly a "port of entry" it served the same purpose of magnifying control over my person by permitting me into Canadian space while explicitly defining my status as "not admitted." It was kind of like saying, 'You're in but you're out.' I still have that letter, and it still

sends a shiver down my spine since it effectively defines me as a non-entity without rights or power. And yet, rights are the only power that an individual has when facing the authority of the state. Even *before* I had been given any chance to present my case to a judge, I had already been symbolically deported, reinforcing Khosravi's (2010) assertion that the exclusionary actions of states at borders are not only literal but also symbolic (Khosravi, 2010).

After the interview I was allowed to proceed to Toronto. Or rather, I was told to proceed to Toronto, without being given any information as to how to do so. With that letter in my hands, telling me that my deportation had already been arranged, the order to travel to Toronto without directions on how to get there was like something out of Franz Kafka. So far, this part of my journey seemed like a trial. Perhaps the immigration officer was not willing, or not allowed, to tell me anything? I do not know. The taxi drivers parked outside the border station were a thousand times more helpful than the immigration officer had been. A driver took us to a Greyhound bus station where my daughter and I boarded a bus to Toronto. We arrived there around 10:00 pm. *Freedom House* had given me information that included a number to call upon arriving in Toronto to get help finding short-term housing. I called this number and was told that they had no room, but was given another number to try. I called this second number and was told they had shelter for my daughter and me, and to make our way there. I had no idea at all where Scarborough was, but the taxi driver I asked to take us there knew the place and we arrived there at 11 pm. An intake procedure was carried out - yet another border crossing - and then we were put in a second taxi which took us to a motel that the city used as a shelter for refugee claimants with families. It had been a long and exhausting day but instead of feeling safe and free of fear, I was feeling more anxious than ever. At the border, I had been treated like a criminal even though

I had applied through formal channels and presented myself as demanded. I had assumed that the government of a reputedly progressive country like Canada would treat us with respect, but the way I had been 'processed' made it clear that there was no policy requiring refugee claimants to be treated in a dignified manner. Quite the opposite, I experienced a policy regime based on suspicion, criminalisation and discouragement, even though Canada is a signatory to the 1951 UN Status of Refugee Convention that requires participant nations to treat refugees in a humane manner. This experience made it clear to me that I had to adjust my identity and become a person who "performed" life in the manner expected by the government (Khosravi, 2010, p.89). Any small transgression would have enabled the government to justify the denial of my rights and potentially deportation. The Canadian government was not my friend and clearly hoped I'd fail at the task of creating a life for myself and my daughter in Canada. I knew I had to be strong and determined and I behaved almost rigidly in the hope of eventually gaining legal status as a refugee. My situation had to be coherent, consistent, framed in the right terms and presented in a performance that would not be defeated by the means designed to trip me up.

The first few weeks in Canada were dominated by the fact that no one seemed to know the refugee claims process and the specific steps that a claimant is required to take. Given the stark threat of that letter of deportation, I felt like any mistake would be pounced on and used as an excuse to deport me. Again, the document I had been given at *Freedom House* came to my rescue as it explained that I had 28 days, after receiving the documents in the mail pertaining to my refugee claim, to submit my personal information form (PIF) to the Immigration and Refugee Board. It also made clear that I should seek legal help in preparing the PIF. If I had no means of paying for a lawyer, I could go to a Legal Aid office to seek help. After obtaining the Legal Aid

certificate, I took it to a lawyer I had been referred to by a counsellor at the shelter where I was living with my daughter.

I had just as much trouble figuring out how to apply for social assistance, Ontario Works (OW). Government policies did not provide asylum seekers with guidance that would make the process of settling less stressful but the document from *Freedom House* came to my rescue yet again, explaining how to go about applying for assistance. I made an appointment and prepared to negotiate another border. At the social assistance office, I was forced to endure another confessionary experience but, following the interrogation, I was judged to be eligible after showing I was a deserving individual with no money. In Canada, I soon came to realise, the border is interwoven into the fabric of everyday life; food banks, doctors' offices, banks, apartment building managers and so on all pose barriers to asylum seekers. The list of obstacles is endless. I had to negotiate borders in the long process of finding housing and while trying to access settlement integration organizations, and I soon came to realise that borders were everywhere. During this time I was working on the PIF every night, after having spent the day going to all various appointments. I worked hard at it, because 28 days is not a lot of time to write it. But what could I do? I had to submit the form to the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) on time or face unknown, but certainly negative, consequences.

I faced many other tasks in the first month in Canada. I had to go through the Immigration Medical Examination to ensure that I was free of disease and did not jeopardize the health of Canadians. Among all the classes of immigrants, the refugee claimant is the only class that is required to go through this medical examination. I was given a list of doctors approved by the IRB. I had to take 4 passport size photos for myself and 4 for my daughter. I was also

required to provide my address at the shelter to Immigration. The IRB has to know where you are at all times. Constant scrutiny and surveillance represents another example of controlling governmental practice described by Foucault. In my case, it was not real surveillance since anyone who wanted to disappear could certainly do so quite easily. It is more a matter of psychological manipulation designed to make people feel they are constantly being watched and thus internalize a strong sense of self-discipline and conformity. This seemed like a classic example of Foucault's notion of the "panopticon" that keeps prisoners in line. As an asylum seeker, I was a kind of prisoner and it wasn't necessary to literally be watched all the time as long as I felt that I *might* be watched at *any* time. As Foucault (1977) puts it, "the major effect of the panopticon is to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power" (Foucault, 1977, p. 201).

After having submitted my Personal Information Form within the 28 day period, I received a letter from my lawyer dated May 11, 2006. It advised me that my PIF had been submitted and was being processed by the Immigration Refugee Board (IRB), pending my hearing at IRB. I was therefore obligated to gather documentary information and evidence to support my claim. The letter went on to outline what documents were required: documents that proved my identity as well as documents specific to my claims, such as police reports, medical reports and letters from organizations referred to in my PIF, if any.

Prior to arriving in Canada, I didn't realise that a single digit number could be a border. But it was difficult to find housing when I had a social insurance number that started with the digit 9. This number labels an individual as an outsider, as an alien individual that does not belong. Even though landlords had apartments for rent in their buildings, many were not willing

to rent one to me as my SIN number and my immigration identification revealed that I was still going through the immigration process. I was told that I needed someone to act as my guarantor, but I had no way to do this since I was new in the country and did not know anyone at all. Another border; another oppressive form of exclusionary governmentality. It began to seem that everyone I contacted contributed to the government's goal of overseeing my life. And I learned to despise the number nine as employers know that the holder of a number 9 SIN number is still going through the immigration process. Landlords might be expected to suspect and possibly report potential criminal activity if one has too much money and no job. Someone in a government office might wonder why someone with a 9 SIN number keeps missing appointments. My growing fear of the number 9 offers a perfect example of what Foucault means by controlling processes of government administration that may seem benign and yet function as ubiquitous, irresistible and inescapable strategies for controlling people without using direct force.

Throughout the early period of my time in Canada I was never free of an underlying sense of fear. It was based on a combination of uncertainty, never quite knowing what to do, never being told exactly what was required, having to rely on advice from a volunteer organisation in another country, and a feeling that the pathway to legal status was not so much an administrative process as an antagonist one; the countless borders I faced positioned me in a kind of informal trial where I had to prove my case for belonging while the state 'prosecution' trying to prove I was guilty of anything whatsoever. I never felt secure because I did not know what the outcome of my application was going to be. Gender was factor because men and women have different outcomes because men typically arrive on the border as primary applicants and

therefore have a greater chance of gaining admission. I was dying to know even my rough

chances of success: How many single women with children had been successful in their

applications as principal applicants? How many Zimbabweans or people from similar countries

gained admission? How many who had entered via the 'safe third country agreement' between

the US and Canada were allowed to cross the border? And I tried to find meaning in the stories

about asylum seekers and refugees in the newspapers and on the radio and television stations.

What did their stories say about the decision making process? If I had still been waiting for a

decision after the negative media representations of the MV Sun Sea and its Tamil passengers in

August 2010, and the outpouring of racist anger against immigrants, I would have despaired.

As a refugee, I will always be considered an outsider in Canada. This was obvious on the

very first days that I arrived and I feel I will never be able to escape this reality. Borders within

institutions were the most difficult to cross because, as a person who did not have legal status,

many social goods were denied to me. To paraphrase Etienne Balibar (2002), the border was

everywhere (Balibar, 2002, p. 82). After acquiring legal status as a Canadian citizen, I went

apartment hunting and found a community that was going to be safe for my daughter and myself.

But the superintendent gave me the run around. I wrote to the manager of the complex who

explained that I would not be able to afford the rent. She went into a great deal more detail in

terms that forced me to take the correspondence to the Ontario Human Rights Commission. A

decision was made in my favour and the landlord was forced to pay me a sum of money in

compensation and their employees had to take training in diversity issues. But the landlord kept

me out; in reality, the organization paid me not to move in. This represents an example of what

Etienne Balibar (2007) calls the "new racism" which is not grounded in supposed biological

differences but rather in cultural differences. Balibar contends that a new and subtle expression of inequality has emerged which "does not postulate the superiority of certain groups or peoples in relation to others but "only" the harmfulness of abolishing frontiers, the incompatibility of lifestyles and traditions; in short, it is… a differentialist racism" (Balibar, 2007, p. 83). In effect, dominant white society retains its claim to superiority but no longer states that outright.

Citizenship and Yet: Eternal Insecurity

As I was waiting for my refugee hearing I went through a phase of being afraid of hearing the phone ring or a knock on the door. I told my lawyer about this and she referred me to a psychologist and told me I had to mention this in my Personal Information. During my hearing, I realised that I had not attached the psychologist's report, and the judge was not impressed because he said he would have wanted to see it. In America, I was not frightened in this way; I was afraid of being found out and deported, but I was not afraid of the phone or a knock on the door. In 2011, I gained legal status as a refugee and became a Canadian citizen but I do not feel like a citizen. Is that due to exclusionary elements within Canada in particular or is it a universal fact that refugees are treated with an attitude of suspicion and rejection? I still don't know.

My first hearing for my asylum claim was supposed to have taken place on January 4, 2007, after I'd been in the country for 10 months. Unfortunately, my lawyer got sick and I was scheduled for another hearing on September 18, 2007. I was not granted legal rights and protection on the day of the hearing but I received formal legal status 2 weeks later through a letter in the mail dated September 28, 2007. The letter stated that "the Refugee Protection Division determines that the claimants ARE PERSONS IN NEED OF PROTECTION AND THEREFORE THE REFUGEE PROTECTION DIVISION ACCEPTS THE CLAIMS." I will

never forget the two weeks of waiting to find out whether my case would be successful. During those 2 weeks I was a bag of nerves! On June 4, 2008 my daughter and I finally had an interview to finalize our application for permanent residence. We got the document from citizenship titled: "CONFIRMATION OF PERMANENT RESIDENCE" on June 23, 2008 and I took the oath of citizenship on September 23, 2011. The whole process had taken five and a half years. However, although I am now a citizen of Canada with legal status as a refugee I still do not feel the sense of belonging that I experienced in the US as an undocumented alien. Also, I have to live with the insecurity of knowing that my citizenship can be revoked at any time.

CHAPTER IV: ANALYSIS

This chapter of this MRP will attempt to integrate previous chapters by analysing a number of key themes that have risen to prominence through the literature review and my personal narrative describing the experiences of asylum seekers struggling to gain legal status as refugees. The main themes of the paper include citizenship, multiculturalism, colonialism, borders, insecurity and in this section of the paper I will also discuss the nature of modern political discourses around immigration in various countries.

Canada has a formal policy of multiculturalism but my experiences have left me feeling uncertain as to whether it functions to include or exclude. After all my experiences in Canada, I do not feel Canada has completely fulfilled its promise as a welcoming community. It took more than five years to move from asylum seeker status to legal status as a refugee. And now that I am a Canadian citizen jobs are hard to find and I have not worked for the past 4 years going on 5 due to the enduring legacy of racism and discrimination against members of minority races and ethnicities. As highlighted in Reuben Garang's article, the most common barriers that refugees go through are the lack of employment opportunities as was shown by the participants in his study. Also, it has been difficult to build social networks and it seems to me that social networking is an important need for refugees. Khosravi (2010) elaborates on the idea of social networking by saying that one gets information from those who share similar background (Khosravi, (2010, p. 50). My narrative illustrated the idea of social networking that I had with the Mexicans and who helped in providing information and help in times of need. To me, this translates into a sort of our 'own human capital.' Another example is that of the story of Regina who was about to deported back to her home country and possibly to her death. As shown in the

book written by Flynn, the community came together to fight for Regina to stay and members of

her community mobilized a movement that challenged the US immigration system that denies

protection to people like Regina escapeing war in her country. In this case, her social networks as

well as a community that sees itself as one, a search for her to gain legal status was set up by

members of her community on her behalf. But in Canada, the official policy of multiculturalism

functions to keep communities separated rather than promoting a united country.

My experience in Canada is very different from the sense of acceptance I felt amongst the

undocumented Mexicans in the US. In Canada, people are expected to celebrate multiculturalism

and the promotion of cultural differences but, in America, I appreciated the "melting pot"

tradition and the clear expectation that new arrivals were supposed to shed their differences and

adopt American ways. This allowed me to escape an oppressive identity as a refugee; I was

mostly assumed to be an African American rather than an African. I lived as a person rather than

as a refugee in America. The community was welcoming and in most of my places of

employment I was given the opportunity to develop professional networks. No one looked at me

through a multicultural lens that divides cultural groups and classifies asylum seekers and

refugees on the very bottom of the social hierarchy. In Canada, no matter how hard you work

and contribute to the country, if you have arrived as a refugee rather than as a business or family

category immigrant, I sense that you are always viewed as a burden on the system and a person

who is not to be trusted. This raises the question of the meaning of citizenship.

Under Canadian law, citizenship is something that can be taken away from a person and

Canada's current federal government is actually planning to make it easier to revoke citizenship

in a wide range of circumstances (Walkom, 2014). This represents governmentality performing

its work of control and exclusion. The intense 'panopticon' gaze that is reserved for asylum seekers and refugees never leaves the new arrival. I *have* internalized state authority and I always feel I am being watched. Someone is waiting for me to make a mistake or break the law so that my citizenship can be snatched away from me and I can be driven back across the border to where I belong. This is all made worse by poverty and dependence on government agencies for income, because they always *know,* and always will know, that I arrived here as an asylum seeker. And everywhere you go to get on with your life, poverty lays you open to the prejudices of the sort of people who are less skilled at hiding their prejudice and suspicion. Poverty also denies you a voice in society as a conversationalist. Greg Nielsen (2008) indicates that even when the media talks about the poor, and even when it is sympathetic to the needs of the poor, it never *speaks to* the poor. They are a problem, not members of the democratic discussion, and Nielsen states that the poor live in a state of "conditional hospitality" (Neilsen, 2008, p.77).

Colonialism has been a large theme in this paper because colonial attitudes and practices continue to be imposed on asylum seekers and refugees. Colonialism has been formally banished but persists in the form of a neo-colonialism and a bias for the rich and against the poor that naturally impacts most asylum seekers and refugees simply because they are poor. It seems necessary to connect colonialism to political economy since Foucault (1991) identifies political economy as the "principal form of knowledge in the modern power of governmentality" (Foucault, 1991, p. 102-3). Modern governments - embodiments of the new colonialism - seek economic advantage and reject the inclusive state. This goes a long way towards explaining the logic of colonial and post-colonial rule that has been demonstrated in this paper and especially in the narrative of my journey as an asylum seeker. The paper has shown how modern governments

have an obsessive fetish with borders and a discriminatory attitude towards undocumented individuals who do not, or may not, support the basic purpose of modern governmental power-increasing wealth. It is the pursuit of this end that defines what modern political and economic power *is*. Governmental control is as general and impersonal as the spirit of capitalism and, like capitalism, it solves problems by calculating how best to *use* people, not by supporting their endeavours to become free and autonomous citizens.

This paper has placed great emphasis on the issue of borders, describing my many experiences of the ways in which literal borders are reinforced by symbolic borders that show up like figments of the mind at all the turning points encountered by asylum seekers and refugees. For asylum seekers, entering Canada is like entering a labyrinth with threatening beasts around every corner waiting to take away one's freedom. Sturken and Cartwright (2009) argue that the obsession with literal borders is based on failure to understand that they are more of a spectacle than a real form of control (Sturken & Cartwright, 2009). My experiences suggest that borders are everywhere not a mere spectacles but as cold, hard facts and I have described their presence within countries and between countries as states develop more and more effective means of controlling the global flow of refugees. Under globalization we are witnessing a situation where governmentality is reaching beyond the borders of the West and into the spaces of developing countries (Betts & Milner, 2007). Now that colonization has ended, the West is slowly, relentlessly colonizing the rest of the world. Due to the growing power of the state in the age of surveillance following 9/11, literal borders have begun to merge with the countless symbolic borders, which watch and interrogate the undocumented to ensure that entrenched power remains dominant. The documentary film, "Warning: Border in Construction," unambiguously

demonstrates how modern borders function to filter the wanted and the unwanted, offering free passage to the wealthy and the favoured while obstructing and harassing members of under-privileged classes everywhere they go.

One of the primary themes explored in this paper has been the fear and insecurity that are imposed on asylum seekers and refugees, and I truly believe that one must experience this condition personally before being able to understand its physical, psychological and emotional impacts. Even now, the term deportation hits me with brute physical force since it signifies the end of all my hopes for a better life for me and my daughter. It almost signifies a death sentence. The earlier sections of this paper described my experiences of fear and explained that fear and insecurity are linked to the governmentality and state power that invisibly extends government and corporate power further and further into the fabric of people's lives. But one must also ask: What threatens capital? Anything that does not belong to the dominant order, anything that is alien, other, and especially anything that is undocumented and uncontrolled by paperwork or, increasingly, by computerized systems of information gathering, storing and processing. Somehow, the security of the state demands the insecurity of the vulnerable. As an asylum seeker or refugee, one learns to understand the nature of fear and insecurity all too well. The body seeks ways to escape the pain of fear but the borders that are everywhere in society prevent the pain from leaving body, so it grows and irritates. This paper has demonstrated that every asylum seeker and refugee is an expert in the many forms and flavours of insecurity. Hence we see the measures that a lot of undocumented take in their quest to gain legal status. Marriages of conveniences are one way that is being used in the UK as shown by Wray's article, buying and renting documents is another shown in Vasta's article as well as constructing different beings

from what or who you were when presenting cases to immigration judges. Presenting trauma in the ways that the governments want you to as illustrated by Schuman and Bohmer (2004).

Those who have experienced fear understand the need to create a society that reduces fear to the barest minimum. It's easy to clarify the foundations of fear as I have done, but what is the need to needlessly create fear in the lives of those who are most vulnerable? What is it that compels governments to create fear in the lives of certain social groups? It seems to me that power and governmentality face 'problems' by constantly looking for scapegoats on the outside; the sources of problems must be on the outside, not within the existing structures of power and governance. As a result, people who cannot defend themselves, such as asylum seekers and refugees, become scapegoats and excuses for authoritarian policies that defend borders and keep 'threats' at a distance. I believe that modern western insecurity stems from many sources but economic insecurity is rapidly growing. As a wide range of jobs face offshoring or computerisation, and as the living standards of more and more people fall, economic insecurity as well is becoming widespread. But this may be the precondition of change. Perhaps states, like people, need to feel the pain before they can change?

The concept of political discourse has been implicitly present throughout this paper but it is important to elaborate the discourse within Canada since Canadian political discourse pays relatively little attention to the issues impacting asylum seekers and refugees. There is some talk about refugees but other elements of immigration policy are ignored to an extent not seen in other countries. In Australia, France and the United Kingdom, for example, the recent Euro-elections show that issues surrounding immigration are subjects of much political debate (MacLellan, 2014). In the United States, illegal immigration is an extremely hot topic, with

demonstrators at the borders and politicians claiming that America is under assault by 'aliens' and 'illegals' who are taking their jobs (Samsel, 2014). Few approaches are developed in terms of new policies, but the supposed military and security threat presented by immigrants, especially undocumented, is clearly lodged in the national political discourse of the US (Khosravi, 2010). In contrast, issues surrounding immigration have a relatively low profile in Canada.

In Canada, the refugee seems to be the scapegoat of necessity, and dominates the discourse that links politician and naive voters in which it is put to use, often in terms that have come to be described as 'dog whistle politics' (Schipper and Woo, 2014) . Discourse is the relationship, and its meaning determines social reality; we are the discourse that engages us with the world (Foucault, 1977).

It appears as if the continuing insecurity of the refugee in Canada reflects the fact that they play a more central role here than elsewhere, in the form of them being the 'solution', through scapegoating for the purposes of other broader economic and social insecurities. Hopefully, this account of my travels stands on its own as a clear expression of my experiences as the subject of modern governmental power in a variety of its myriad different forms. Reading it, I am struck by the power that the shared discourses of the time and place we are living in tells us who we are. The story begins in my corner of the world, among the Xhosa community in Zimbabwe, describes my experiences as new forms of post-colonial governmentality being imposed on the country, and then describes the striking contrast between the experience of an undocumented existence in the United States and an existence defined by my designation as 'asylum seeker' and 'refugee' in Canada.

What the two have in common is the experience of insecurity and anxiety. Where they differ is in the weight of governmentality that sits on my shoulders as a *documented* refugee. While we are still subject to diverse forms of power as undocumented inhabitants of a country, not least economic realities, it is nevertheless the case that the very fact of being undocumented, and the forms of subversive solidarity it requires, is a form of freedom, collective and individual. It ties in closely with the distrust of the refugee's autonomy discussed above. Having to quit jobs, change jobs, and be cautious about my identity, was stressful, but it was nevertheless an on-going expression of autonomy. And the social networks that I created shared many of these same problems, which united us in a shared project of subversive autonomy.

Finally, it is worth considering that I did not have much trouble crossing the formal borders that define countries, my history is so unlike that of Shahram Khosravi, who it is probably obvious is the inspiration for my choice of this approach. What I have experienced in Canada is the reality of the border that is everywhere, and that stands in front of me not because of who I am in my heart, but because of the role that I have been given, as a refugee. Finally, I would like to look again at the issue of auto ethnography, and its specific claims to speak to the issues that this paper has addressed. As outlined in the literature review, the main reason for using the auto ethnographic approach here has been to stake a claim against the objectifying practises of western thought. After all, if we take Foucault seriously, then we must recognise that even the most critical analysis is simply a form of participation in the project of subjecting the world to analysis. The only genuinely subversive responses are those that aim to talk directly to other people, without appealing to the authority that comes with academic language and the prestige of higher education. I think the examples of Aimé Cesaire and Franz

Fanon are fine ones for me; in Cesaire's case speaking against the layers of hypocrisy that characterise western thought on colonialism, taking it apart and offering in its place only the freedom of colonised peoples to follow his example and speak truth to power. In Fanon's case, adopting the tools of western thought, in his case psychiatry and turning them against colonial power and the pathologies it reflects and creates.   They have been my inspiration.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

The first main conclusion here concerns an issue that was touched on in the previous chapter, and hopefully understood throughout the account of my journey. This is the realisation that life as an undocumented resident can in many ways be seen as defining a more privileged social location than 'refugee'. It only needs emphasising that Foucault's concept of governmentality is an immensely useful tool for understanding the shapes that power takes, and the motives it has for the technologies and discourses, forms of knowledge, that modernity has brought. But the concept is best used if the questions of 'motives' are asked. Approaching governmentality and discursive power in philosophical, 'epistemological' terms rather than in the pragmatic terms of (auto) ethnography can easily lead, it seems to me, to insight giving way to the retention of power/knowledge.

Can the life of an undocumented immigrant really be described as better than that of someone granted the 'protection' and ultimately the citizenship of a liberal democracy? Both my own experiences and especially the project of exploring them as auto-ethnography seem to suggest so. This is true, above all, if the issue is looked at in terms of governmentality and its effects. On the one hand, the issues of 'differentialist racism' that is the resentment of the otherness of the migrant, perpetual scapegoating by politicians and surveillance by agencies of the state are magnified when one is relentlessly a part of the system, and constrained by the limits it puts on one.

The undocumented life is one that the communities of undocumented create, and shape to their own needs, with a degree of autonomy and genuine solidarity that refugee status makes impossible, one has, by becoming a refugee, and placing oneself under the gaze of officialdom,

landlords and hospitals made autonomy not just more difficult but more dangerous, as we know, citizenship can be taken away. The meagre benefits of the 'welfare state' are a pretty poor recompense for these realities.

Finally, what about the auto ethnography itself, as a process and as a way of sharing understanding and insight? I hope that this example serves to do that; it has certainly helped me come to a clearer understanding of my life and the forces that have shaped it. I believe that it is a valuable and effective way for people to talk to each other, share their stories like people might do if they found themselves among the communities of undocumented immigrants in Texas, or in the enclaves of illegal migrants described by Shahram Khosravi (2010). Sharing experience and knowledge that is not discursive, but that aims instead to talk *back* to the dominant discourses of the day seems like a powerful tool for challenging the governmental power that shapes our lives and our subjectivities, and those of our case-workers and nosy neighbours.

As I was writing my auto ethnography, I could not help realising that I was going through a sort of a border again. The whole process of my wanting to attain my Master's degree has a lot of similarities with the process of refugee claiming or applying for political asylum. To me, my auto-ethnography or rather my research paper represented or resembled my Personal Information Form that one has to fill in 28 days and submit to the IRB. My very helpful supervisor, Dr. Henry Parada was my "immigration lawyer" helping me to write my PIF/Major Research Paper in the way that the IRB/Institution of Higher learning wants me to write it, rules that have to be followed. As I would be meeting up with my supervisor for appointments and going through the paper and literature review, I would just be thrown back into remembering this journey all too well. This to me, represented another border that I had to cross, had to go through the

confessionary complex yet again, demonstrating through my Major Research paper whether I was indeed deserving of it or not! My life and experiences in the pursuit of seeking legal status in Canada is all about borders that are built to keep me out until I prove beyond reasonable doubt that, indeed I do deserve to be given protection or in this case, the most important document that I have been coming to this institution for, for the past 5 years, the same amount of time that it took me to finally get my citizenship in Canada.

So, as you can see, I have used Foucault and his theory of governmentatlity in my paper to demonstrate that the practices used by the government in cases of the lives of asylum seekers in their journey to gain legal status. The border is intertwined in everyday life, including at this institution of higher learning. The practices and the times and rules that one is supposed to follow in regards to the major research paper are a form of government or institutional practices that are employed by governments are the same requirements as the evidence that is demanded by the IRB when you come for a hearing. I am still going through my "PIF"/Major research Paper and hopefully it will be accepted by my "lawyer/supervisor" as satisfactory enough – and then we can mail it to the IRB/institution and wait for the day of the hearing/in this case the day of defending the paper in front of the IRB judge/institution personnel.

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