

The Camp: Modernized, But Forever a Landscaper

Iris Rebecca Gatea

Weeded from the flowering gardens of the European Union, Turkey reluctantly roots the refugee surplus in its soil for 6 billion euros in aid: a chance to profit from the normally exclusionary junctures of the eco-politically thriving (Yap, Decker, & Weiwei, 2017). It presently hosts around three million in Syrian migratory cargo in poorly-maintained refugee camps (Yap et al., 2017). Temporary workers from Mexico work in hazardous conditions for the flat rate of \$7.25 per hour to harvest almost a quarter of a billion tomatoes annually in Leamington, Ontario (KingChigbo & Lee, 2003). For them, the risk of deportation and the denial of legal recourse is an insurmountable barrier to seeking better conditions on par with those part of the Canadian *nationstate* (KingChigbo & Lee, 2003).

The *modern camp*, however different from the days of Auschwitz, remains the law's loving creation of a space of exception, to be marginalized until normalized as a mean to protect *Us* from the foreign threat *Other* represents to the clean uniformity the *nation-state* demands (Minca, 2015). To cement it into a single shape ignores the many ways violence acts within to redefine and regulate the *Other* as needed for the project of *nation-building* (Oikawa, 2000). As the *Other* is herded into these carceral spaces by powerful governing bodies, any human quality is calculatedly forgotten (Minca, 2015). The individual becomes exploitable surplus: a way to forcibly extract eco-political gain, as with the refugees in Turkey, or biological labour, as with the Mexican immigrant workers.

The *nation-state's* grand narratives of 'generosity' and 'democracy' at first seem irreconcilable with the *modern camp* and its racializing nature, but they strikingly act as its most powerful legitimizer. Refugees who demand basic human rights are met with claims of terrorism, and increases in secured borders and decreases in humanitarian aid (Cote-Boucher, 2015). Today, less than ten percent of Turkish refugee camps receive substantial global assistance, leaving many

without even the most basic of necessities (Yap et al., 2017). Although around one fourth of the salaries of Canadian migrant farm workers are deducted to fund government social assistance programs like Employment Insurance, these workers cannot access the benefits of said programs and are forced to fund their own deportation if they object (King-Chigbo & Lee, 2003). Ultimately, the *Other* who do not present themselves as thankful for their ‘democratic freedom’ are labelled criminal having the single goal of exploiting the *nation-state* (Cote-Boucher, 2015). The *modern camp* is only one of the ‘necessary’ means of protecting their ‘generosity’ from the undeserving (Minca, 2015).

Shortly before 2015, European Union citizenship rose to a supra-national level where one cannot be a member without a European state membership (Dauvergne, 2007). More effectively than ever before, the *Other’s* migration has been curtailed and illegalized (Dauvergne, 2007). With citizenship by right of blood experiencing “a resurgence of authority”, the status of privileged legality or exploitable illegality becomes a matter of inheritance (Dauvergne, 2007, p. 489; Oikawa, 2000). Thus, the children of temporary workers and refugees can never aspire to fill more than their parent’s shoes; however, those of the nation-born are availed a plethora of economic opportunities. With the aegis of law, the weed the *Other* represents is easily discarded into the *modern camp* as to eradicate any doubt of their illegitimacy (Oikawa, 2000). Ultimately, *Other* – in whichever form it is determined to take by the shifting needs of the *nation-state* – is forever placed in a hierarchal dichotomy against *Us* where it takes on the form of the subordinate, the ‘slave’ (Goldring, Berinstein, & Bernhard, 2009).

With no physical shackles to bind them, why do the *Other* stay in the *modern camp*? It is a commonsensical notion that the *Other* consent to their exploitation through their ignorance of it and the legal potential to thrive elsewhere in the current ‘liberal’ world (Smith, 2005). However, it

is a privileged luxury to presume that a revitalized awareness affords the ability to rebel with a violence equal to the *nation-state's* (Smith, 2005). Those who flee from their countries of origin, like the Rohingya community, do so under siege due to repeated persecution and war and to return is a death sentence (Yap et al., 2017). With limited economic prospects in Mexico, men with less than an undergraduate level of education and families to feed apply for the Canadian Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (King-Chigbo & Lee, 2003). Not only are those who seek better working conditions not permitted to work outside the agricultural sector, but they must also obtain permission from the very employers who exploit them to transfer to another division (Smith, 2005). Pressured by the constraint only limited choices provide, those unfavourably foreign migrate to the *modern camp* despite the looming prospect of dehumanization (Smith, 2005).

As Ustaz Rafik, the Rohingya refugee community leader, speaks of the shame of the label 'drifter', my faith in Lady Justice feels fragile (Yap et al., 2017). It is so easy to idealize and aspire to the power law carries to effect change that I forget it is not an unbiased judge. After all, under its umbrella, the *modern camp* is realized. An ever-amorphous monster, it has one aim: to secure the *nation-state's* social or eco-political dominion. Those who do not yield to the *nation-state's* authority are diverted to this marginalized space to be exploited like cattle. As long as the *modern camp* persists, formal equality can never fully actualize in the global landscape. As Tedaro and nine other impoverished Mexican migrant workers are canned into a small space like 'sardines' to sleep before their shifts begin, I cynically wonder what difference I could make in the face of such a horrifyingly powerful creature (King-Chigbo & Lee, 2003). But, the children of refugee families still play in an almost rebellious act to *meaningfully live* in these landscapes hostile to any provision of security (Yap et al., 2017). So, I promise to look over the splay of law school applications on my desk after getting some rest and turn off the light.

References

- Cote-Boucher, K. (2015). Bordering citizenship in an 'open and generous society': The criminalization of immigration in Canada. In S. Pickering & J. Ham (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook on Crime and International Migration* (pp. 75-90). London: Routledge.
- Dauvergne, C. (2007). Citizenship with a vengeance. *Theoretical Inquiries in Law*, 8(2), 489-508. doi: 10.2202/1565-3404.1158
- Goldring, L., Berinstein, C., & Bernhard, J. K. (2009). Institutionalizing precarious migratory status in Canada. *Citizenship Studies*, 13(3), 239-265. doi: 10.1080/13621020902850643
- King-Chigbo, K. (Producer), & Lee, M. S. (Director). (2003). *El Contrato* [Motion picture].
Canada: National Film Board of Canada.
- Minca, C. (2015). Geographies of the camp. *Political Geography*, 49, 74-83. doi: 10.1016/j.polgeo.2014.12.005
- Oikawa, M. (2000). Cartographies of violence: Women, memory, and the subjects of the "internment". *Canadian Journal of Law and Society*, 15(2), 39-69. doi: 10.1017/S0829320100006360
- Smith, A. A. (2005). Legal consciousness and resistance in Caribbean seasonal agricultural workers. *Canadian Journal of Law and Society*, 20(2), 95-122. doi: 10.1353/jls.2006.0027
- Yap, C., & Decker, H. (Producers), Weiwei, A. (Producer/Director). (2017). *Human Flow* [Motion picture]. Germany: NFP Marketing & Distribution.