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# Canada, white supremacy, and the twinning of empires

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## Abstract

Taking a transnational approach, this essay explores the dynamic circuits of global racisms, resistance, and imperial politics that obliged Canadian policymakers to secure racist exclusions while simultaneously obscuring them. The case studies examined in this essay—British Columbia's denial of the franchise to First Nations and Chinese, adoption of the Natal Act, and the comprehensive federal exclusions adopted after the 1907 white race riots in Vancouver—illustrate how racist immigration policies, both provincial and federal, had to take into account resistance and international factors as perceived by the British Colonial Office. Taken in conjunction with Indigenous history, the history of transpacific migration to Canada offers important insights into the role of white supremacy in a colonial settler state such as Canada.

## Keywords

Pacific Canada, immigration, racism, anti-racism, exclusions, empire, Natal Act, franchise, 1907 Vancouver riot, white supremacy

Wherever we turn, we are confronted by Canada's colonial past: Idle No More, court decisions regarding land claims, the murdered women inquiry, and revelations about residential schools and scientific experiments on First Nations peoples are constant reminders of the country's colonial legacy. The revelations of social history regarding indigeneity, patriarchy, and elitism are like burrs in the saddle of traditionalists—irritatingly disrupting the narrative of Canada's smooth transition from colony to nation.

Seldom integrated into the critique, however, are the intersections of social history with the politics of race and empire. As legal historian Constance Backhouse

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reminds us, Canada's political and academic landscape is marked by an "ideology of racelessness."<sup>1</sup> Fortunately, postcolonial scholars have begun to address these questions, and there is a greater focus on the intersections of gender, class, and race. This essay offers a postcolonial perspective on the local/global connections in Canadian history with particular focus on how transpacific events and relationships shaped the country. The emerging history of Pacific Canada supplements the growing understanding of Indigenous history and its aftermath. Together, the two illuminate how colonialism and racism came together to fundamentally shape both Canada and the modern world. Paradoxically, probing this difficult terrain also allows us to identify alternative role models in all communities, the lived lives that illuminate paths to a better future.

## Indigeneity and Pacific Canada

Canada's consolidation as a white settler state was not pre-ordained: on the Pacific edges of the empire there was for many years a great mingling of peoples.<sup>2</sup> There, Europeans were a minority in the pre-confederation era. However, racial anxieties and the desire of male, British elites to consolidate control soon gave birth to the demand for a "White" Canada.

Thus, in 1872, when the new province of British Columbia's provincial legislature convened, a sharp debate focused on whether male voters had to be able to read. In an attempt to enlarge their support among whites, the legislators had eliminated property ownership as a qualification for voting; but for some, the literacy requirement was a means by which to restrict aboriginal and Chinese residents from voting. As one early legislator put it, he did "not wish to put ourselves shoulder to shoulder with the untutored savage. He thought our position with respect to the Indians was very anomalous."<sup>3</sup>

Another opponent of removing the literacy requirement went further, asserting, "we might, after next election, see an Indian occupying the Speaker's Chair, or have a Chinese majority in the House."<sup>4</sup> The vote to eliminate the literacy requirement passed 12 to nine. What turned the tide was the suggestion that another way could be found to prevent the "others" from voting. A statute excluding "Indians and Chinese" from registering vital statistics (births, deaths, and marriages) had been debated the day before (clarifying that "any person with any white blood in his veins was not an Indian") and passed third reading earlier in the afternoon. With that exclusion already on the books as a precedent, the 21 legislators easily and unanimously passed a subsequent bill "excluding" the Indians and Chinese from voting.<sup>5</sup> And so it was that propertyless and illiterate white men gained the

1. Constance Backhouse, *Colour-Coded: A Legal History of Racism in Canada* (Toronto: Osgoode Society for Canadian Legal History/University of Toronto Press, 1999), 14.

2. Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race, and the Making of British Columbia, 1849–1871* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001) 13–15.

3. "First Provincial Legislative Assembly," *The British Colonist*, 6 April 1872, 2.

4. *Ibid.*, 2.

5. *Ibid.*

right to vote, and BC's others, the Chinese and "Indian" males, saw their franchise taken away. Racial categories and exclusions that had begun as a white-Indigenous binary had expanded, adding to strong gender biases.

The legislators who passed this bill expressed noble sentiments of equality with the poor and illiterate and believed that they were very much on the side of the angels. But this was not egalitarianism so much as racial solidarity in an age of anxiety, when "white" Canadians numbered about 20,000 in the face of an Aboriginal population of 45,000.<sup>6</sup> As migration from Asia continued, so too did racial hardening. Japanese and South Asians were added to Indians and Chinese on the list of those ineligible to vote. In the eyes of the law, all Asians became part of the unassimilable other. And although women had begun to lobby for the franchise, they did so only for white women.

Throughout this process, First Nations and those of Asian heritage, often with support from allies, challenged white supremacy in various ways. For example, in 1900, Tomey Homma, a naturalized Japanese Canadian, challenged the ban on voting. After he won in the BC courts, the BC government appealed to the British Privy Council and the justices ruled against him.<sup>7</sup> The judgment relied on precedents regarding the exclusion of women from voting and US law designed to "accommodate the demands of slave states to preserve local control over the attributes of citizenship in order to maintain racial boundaries."<sup>8</sup> The BC and British governments relied on the biases of gender and race to enforce the politics of white supremacy.

Resistance such as Tomey Homma's and Indigenous assertions of fishing and hunting rights prompted further measures of control. Taking the "Indian out of the child" in residential schools, created by virtue of the 1876 Indian Act, was one solution. Stopping Asians from coming to Canada altogether was another.

## Globalizing exclusions

In the winter of 1908, two Japanese men attempting to land in Vancouver were arrested and detained under the terms of the British Columbia Immigration Act. They contested their detention in an appeal to the BC Supreme Court. In his ruling of 21 February, Justice C.J. Hunter noted that the two men were "subjects of the Emperor of Japan" and questioned the validity of the BC legislation "which I shall refer to as the Natal Act."<sup>9</sup> Why would a judge refer to a provincial law as the

6. Accurate statistics remain somewhat elusive for this era. For a detailed discussion, see Perry, *On the Edge of Empire*, 9–14.

7. For a detailed account of the challenge and the Privy Council decision that denial of the franchise was legal, see Andrea Geiger Adams, "Writing racial barriers into law: Upholding B.C.'s denial of the vote to its Japanese Canadian citizens, *Homma v. Cunningham*, 1902," in Louis Fiset and Gail M. Nomura, eds, *Nikkei in the Pacific Northwest: Japanese Americans and Japanese Canadians in the Twentieth Century* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005), 20–43.

8. Andrea Geiger, *Subverting Exclusions: Transpacific Encounters with Race, Caste and Borders, 1885–1928* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), e-book version, position 3000.

9. *Re Nakane and Okazake*, British Columbia Supreme Court, 13 B.C.R. 370.

Natal Act when Natal was in Africa? A close examination reveals that a global circuit existed for the construction of racist exclusions.<sup>10</sup>

Between 1887 and 1937, the British government convened 15 colonial and imperial conferences.<sup>11</sup> At these conferences, the British secretary of state for the colonies met with the prime ministers of Canada, New South Wales, Victoria, New Zealand, Queensland, Cape Colony, South Australia, Newfoundland, Tasmania, Western Australia, and Natal. This was a white man's club of the settler colonies with the other "coloured" colonies unrepresented. One of the main topics of discussion at the 1897 conference was "Alien Immigration" and, in addressing the subject, Joseph Chamberlain remarked, "We quite sympathize with the determination of the white inhabitants of these Colonies which are in comparatively close proximity to millions and hundreds of millions of Asiatics that there shall not be an influx of people alien in civilization, alien in religion, alien in customs, whose influx, moreover, would most seriously interfere with the legitimate rights of the existing labour population."<sup>12</sup> Chamberlain cautioned, however, that overt discrimination could cause problems:

The United Kingdom owns as its brightest and greatest dependency that enormous Empire of India, with 300,000,000 of subjects, who are as loyal to the Crown as you are yourselves, and among them there are hundreds and thousands of men who are every bit as civilized as we are ourselves, who are, if that is anything, better born in the sense that they have older traditions and old families, who are men of wealth, men of cultivation, men of distinguished valour, men who have brought whole armies and placed them at the service of the Queen, and have in times of great difficulty and trouble, such as for instance on the occasion of the India Mutiny, saved the empire by their loyalty.<sup>13</sup>

To avoid giving offence, Chamberlain suggested, assertions of racial difference were to be avoided: "It is not because a man is of a different colour from ourselves that he is necessarily an undesirable immigrant, but it is because he is dirty, or is immoral, or he is a pauper, or he has some other objection which can be defined in an Act of Parliament, and by which the exclusion can be managed with regard to all those whom you really desire to exclude." This, Chamberlain emphasized, had been achieved in Natal, where they had adopted legislation that required Asian immigrants to undergo a language exam. This legislation allowed an immigration officer to impose a proficiency test in a European language on arriving South Asian

10. For details on Natal, see Jeremy Martens, "A transnational history of immigration restriction: Natal and New South Wales, 1896–97," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 34, no. 3 (September 2006): 323–344; and chapter 5 in Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men's Countries and the Question of Racial Equality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

11. For a summary of these conferences, see Maurice Ollivier, ed. *The Colonial and Imperial Conferences from 1887 to 1937*, vols. 1–3 (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1954).

12. Ollivier, *The Colonial and Imperial Conferences*, vol. 1, 139.

13. Ibid.

immigrants, and it became a benchmark colour screen for British colonies, including Canada, acknowledged by public officials throughout the empire. Obscuring racism while securing racist exclusions became a hallmark of the British Empire.

This case also highlights how the BC immigration bills (Natal Acts) were not simply local outbursts of local nativism but rather part of an intricate and global web of white supremacy in the settler colonies, coordinated through the Colonial Office in London. Indeed, Joseph Chamberlain had communicated directly with Canadian representatives on the need to emulate the Natal Act.<sup>14</sup> Further research has shown that the Natal Act was modelled on US “Jim Crow” legislation in Mississippi. Prevented from disenfranchising African Americans because of the 14th and 15th Constitutional Amendments passed during the civil war, the Mississippi Constitutional Convention passed a literacy test that could be used to limit voting. British legal scholar and future ambassador to Washington James Bryce (author of *The American Commonwealth*) transmitted this precedent to British colonial officials in southern Africa and later reported that the Cape had introduced a literacy test to limit African voting rights.<sup>15</sup> From the American south to Africa, from London to British Columbia, Britain’s Colonial Office managed to globalize white supremacy on an unprecedented scale.

Limiting Asian immigration had begun in 1885 with the imposition of a head tax on Chinese migrants. This exacerbated gender issues, and Chinese women had little opportunity to join their migrant husbands. By 1908, the federal government had expanded the gendered and racist restrictions into a differential yet comprehensive system for excluding Asians. Thus, for imperial Japan, a “Gentleman’s Agreement” was reached in 1908 limiting Japanese immigration. For South Asia, the government used administrative orders-in-council (including the infamous Continuous Journey Act) because of British fears that overtly racist prohibitions would fuel anti-British agitation in India. And in the case of China, regarded as the “sick man of Asia,” the Canadian government employed blatantly discriminatory measures, including the head tax and the eventual outright ban on Chinese immigration in 1923.

From the beginning, Asian Canadians fought these restrictions. In 1885, the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association was formed in Victoria to contest the head tax. And in 1914, the Indo-Canadian communities in BC came together to protest the government’s refusal to allow the 376 Indian passengers on board the *Komagata Maru* to disembark when the ship arrived in Vancouver. Among the leaders of the support movement were Rahim Hussein and J.E. Bird, who set important precedents in white-Asian solidarity. Neither is acknowledged in Canadian history.

The measures to exclude Asians, and similar measures taken to exclude those of African heritage, assured white domination. However, preventing Asian immigration also reduced the pool for labour and for settlement. Canada opened its doors to eastern and southern Europeans, groups that hitherto had been considered

14. Geiger, *Subverting Exclusion*, e-book edition, position 2137.

15. Lake and Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line*, 71–72.



second-class whites. The golden age of immigration under the Liberals' Clifford Sifton was predicated on Asian exclusion.

## Twinning the empires

Australian historians Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds have posited that "In Iraq, the United States, Britain and Australia fight together in a 'coalition of the willing' that recapitulates the Anglo-Saxon solidarity of earlier times with devastating consequences."<sup>16</sup> The scope of its international alliances is extensive, but at the core we find that the US empire remains wedded to a concept of the West that has at its centre the historically constructed alliances rooted in the opaque but deeply racialized notions of Anglo-Saxonism.

Canada declined to participate in the invasion of Iraq (a point I will return to later). Yet its role historically in constructing the Anglo-American alliance was significant and rooted in the politics of racism.

Immediately after the anti-Asian race riots in Vancouver in 1907, the Canadian government found itself squeezed between London and Washington.<sup>17</sup> In November, Rodolphe Lemieux, Canada's postmaster general and minister of labour, crossed the Pacific to Tokyo in what was arguably Canada's first autonomous foray into overseas diplomacy. Upon arrival in Tokyo, Lemieux first solicited the support of the British ambassador, Sir Claude MacDonald, in negotiating immigration restrictions. MacDonald, upon receiving instructions from London, offered to back Lemieux for "all he was worth." However, Lemieux rebuffed an appeal from the US ambassador to Japan, Thomas J. O'Brien, to join in the negotiations with Lemieux and MacDonald in Tokyo. O'Brien had been tasked by President Theodore Roosevelt to negotiate similar emigration restrictions to the US in the aftermath of the San Francisco school board crisis of 1906. Roosevelt, infuriated by how events unfolded in Tokyo, summoned Mackenzie King, then deputy minister of labour, to the White House in February 1908 where he told King that Lemieux's "ostentatious refusal to have anything to do with the American ambassador had done harm to the situation."<sup>18</sup>

This incident prompted Roosevelt to recruit King to work toward a hemispheric agreement to exclude Asians. It also led him to send the US "Great White Fleet" around the world with the particular goal of intimidating Japan. "The Japanese must learn," Roosevelt believed, "that they will have to keep their people in their own country."<sup>19</sup> White Canada's common interest with the US in excluding Japanese was but the beginning of Canada's role in welding together the old empire and the new.

16. Ibid.

17. See Julie Gilmour, "Interpreting social disorder," *International Journal*, 67, no. 2 (Spring 2012): 483–495; see also John Price, "Orienting the empire," *B.C. Studies* 156 (Winter 2007/08): 53–81.

18. William Lyon Mackenzie King, "The Mackenzie King Diary," 25 January 1908. Note: all references to King's diary are accessible at <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/databases/king/index-e.html> (accessed 13 September 2013).

19. King, "The Mackenzie King Diary," 25 January 1908.

The Canadian government worked assiduously with the British and American governments to police South Asian immigration.<sup>20</sup> This collaboration began with Ottawa hiring a former British Indian policeman, William Hopkinson, to spy on South Asian communities on both sides of the border.<sup>21</sup> Faced with systemic discrimination in both Canada and the US, activists quickly drew the connections between white supremacy on the Pacific coast and British control of India, culminating in the founding of the revolutionary Ghadar Party in 1913. British, Canadian, and US agencies worked collaboratively to both restrict immigration from India and harass the anti-colonial activities of the Ghadar movement.<sup>22</sup> Upon joining the British and Canadians in the First World War, the US government cracked down on South Asian activists and their sympathizers and, working closely with the British, tried 14 Indian activists and their supporters for their attempts to promote uprisings in India against British control in what became known as the “Hindu Conspiracy” trial.<sup>23</sup> The emerging British-American global collaboration prompted anti-colonial activists Taraknath Das and Sailendra Ghose to conclude that their struggle was not just against British rule in India but against “Anglo-Saxon” imperialism, putting a name to the new alliance.<sup>24</sup> Canada also supported US and British efforts to veto Japan’s proposed racial equality clause at Versailles.

Perhaps the most important example of Canada’s commitment to facilitating Anglo-American supremacy was its policy in the Pacific. On 15 February 1921, the Canadian prime minister, Arthur Meighen, wrote to the British prime minister arguing strenuously that further renewal of the Anglo-Japanese alliance, first established in 1902, risked alienating the United States government: “There is a danger that a special confidential relationship concerning the [Pacific] region between ourselves and Japan to which she was not a party would come to be regarded as an unfriendly exclusion and as a barrier to an English speaking concord.” He concluded: “We should terminate the Alliance and endeavor at once to bring about a Conference of Pacific Powers... for the purpose of adjusting Pacific and Far Eastern questions.”<sup>25</sup>

A few months later, Meighen travelled to London for the imperial conference (prime ministers’ conference) of June–July 1921. He argued formidably for an end to the alliance and the convening instead of the Washington Conference

20. This period is documented in chapter 2 of Reg Whitaker, Gregory S. Kealey, and Andrew Parnaby, *Secret Service: Political Policing in Canada from the Fenians to Fortress America* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012).

21. For a concise and well-referenced biography of Hopkinson, see the Simon Fraser University website *Komagata Maru: Continuing the Journey*, at <http://komagatamarujourney.ca/node/14691> (accessed 10 September 2013).

22. Seema Sohi, “Race, surveillance, and Indian anticolonialism in the transnational Western U.S.-Canada Borderlands,” *The Journal of American History* 98, no. 2 (September 2011): 420–436.

23. This crackdown is often referred to as the Hindu-German conspiracy because the German government was helping to fund rebellion in India, a point not raised by Sohi in her study referenced here.

24. Sohi, “Race, surveillance, and Indian anticolonialism,” 436.

25. Governor General to Colonial Secretary, 15 February, 1921. *Documents on Canadian External Relations*, Vol. 3, 1919–1925 (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1970), 163.



in November. Historians differ on Meighen's personal impact, but there is no denying that at the Washington Conference, the Anglo-Japanese alliance came to an end, replaced by the four-power treaty (US, British Empire, Japan, and France) in which Japan was rendered a junior partner to Anglo-American hegemony in the Pacific. This and further US and Canadian immigrations restrictions against Japanese from 1923 to 1928 provided real grist for the propaganda mill and fired the Japanese imperial imagination.

When first confronted with the Japanese invasion of China in 1937, Canada's prime minister Mackenzie King mused, "The animal instincts are asserting themselves, & are best left to work themselves out, & others to abstain therefrom. It is an appalling [sic] world situation—but not worth the lives of white men for 'Business Interests.'"<sup>26</sup> Appeasement began long before Munich, and racism was a contributing factor. Such views prompted Hugh Keenleyside, a secretary in Canada's Tokyo embassy at the time, to remark that the "inscrutability of the Orient and the 'oriental mentality' were largely a fiction of lazy minds."<sup>27</sup>

By the 1930s, support for racial stereotyping was waning even among whites, yet the institutional underpinnings of white supremacy remained unchanged. This would create a dilemma for muscular coloniality in a time of crisis.

## The paradoxes of change

The Japanese Canadian experience during the Second World War is important not because it paints Canada in a negative light but rather because it highlights important paradoxes in Canadian history. Canadian identity is often tied to being different from the United States—for example, we supposedly have a more benign past. Yet the persecution of Japanese Canadians exceeded Washington's ill treatment of Japanese Americans. In Canada, not only were all Japanese Canadians uprooted from their homes but their property and worldly goods were seized and sold off. Such a seizure did not occur in the US. Japanese Canadians were not allowed to join the armed forces; Japanese Americans were. Japanese Americans began returning to their coastal communities beginning in early 1945, before the war ended; the Canadian government tried to deport Japanese Canadians and, failing that, prevented them from returning to the coast until 1949.

Yet in early 1942, the feminist Nellie McClung, who had moved to Victoria in 1935, wrote a feature piece in the *Victoria Daily Times Magazine* in which she argued that the "Canadian Japanese are not to blame for the treacherous attack on Pearl Harbor," and that it was a time to respect human rights and democracy.<sup>28</sup> "We must have precautions, but not persecutions," she asserted. A number of others also raised their voices against the uprooting of Japanese Canadians, but to no avail. Herein lies a paradox of history.

26. King, "The Mackenzie King Diaries," 30 August 1937.

27. Hugh Keenleyside, *Memoirs of Hugh Keenleyside*, vol. 1, *Hammer the Golden Day* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1981), 424–425.

28. Nellie McClung, *Victoria Daily Times Magazine*, 10 January 1942, 7.

The hegemony of the racist state was breaking down as ordinary people were changing their views regarding Asian Canadians. Intermingling, Co-operative Commonwealth Federation campaigns for the franchise, and other factors had created a wellspring of empathy. Thus, when colonial masculinity tried to demonize Japanese-Canadians in a time of crisis, as occurred in the male-dominated provincial legislature and Victoria City Council in early 1942, it met resistance. The result was a vitriolic campaign against Japanese Canadians that silenced the opposition and led to the cataclysmic uprooting described above.

Although Canada took longer than the US to end its attack on its Japanese citizens, as wartime fears dissipated and the brutality of the Nazis became apparent, fewer people were willing to buy into the racisms of the past. Thus, Victoria City Council's 1945 appeal to exile all Japanese Canadians to Japan after the war found little support when sent to other municipalities. A few years after the war, the Chinese Exclusion Act was repealed, and Asian Canadians gained the franchise. This rapid *volte-face* could have occurred only because attitudes had already begun to change.

## Reinventing the "West"

In post-war international affairs, global decolonization meant that overt racism had to be contained. Winston Churchill's speech in Fulton, Missouri is famous for its "iron curtain" reference, but history has forgotten his call at that time for a continuing alliance of the "English-speaking peoples" under American leadership. The Cold War and the politics of anti-communism reinvented and enlarged the Anglo-American imperial quest in the name of the "West."

Through its support of NATO, NORAD, and its reluctant participation in the Korean War, Canada's post-war Liberal government proved its worth as a US ally. It became part of the core, of an Anglo-American bloc within an enlarged alliance—*Pax Americana*. Yet the need to nurture a distinct Canadian identity prompted the federal government to display some degree of autonomy, and Ottawa often proclaimed its solidarity with newly independent states. This stance was recognized by countries such as India and China when they nominated Canada to serve on the International Control Commission for Vietnam at the Geneva conference initially in 1954. Canada's role here had the unintended consequence of allowing the Canadian government to forego troop deployment to Asia in support of the US war in Indochina. It laid the groundwork for Canadian peacekeeping and strong support for the UN, values that many Canadians regarded as an integral part of their identity. The massive demonstrations against the invasion of Iraq in Quebec and the rest of Canada in 2003 reflected this tradition and created the space for the Chrétien government to reject US appeals for Canadian participation in the invasion.<sup>29</sup> Not surprisingly, peacekeeping and the UN quickly became the target of the Conservative Party of Canada's muscular nationalism.

29. To be sure, the Liberal government supported US intervention in other ways, including military involvement in Afghanistan, a move that became the thin edge of the wedge for the Conservatives once they came to power.

Persistent lobbying on the part of Asian Canadians and their allies, including Asian countries and newly independent countries of the Caribbean, finally put an end to racist immigration preferences in 1967. However, by that time white Canada was reproducing itself exponentially. Euro-Canadians increased by 6.5 million between 1941 and 1961, those of Asian heritage by just 48,000.<sup>30</sup> Over 1 million European refugees came to Canada after the Second World War while Asian refugees continued to be excluded.<sup>31</sup>

Only now are we beginning to see the dramatic changes in demographics brought about by immigration reform. This process accompanied but remained quite distinct from the nationalism of Quebec's Quiet Revolution that gave birth to multiculturalism in the 1970s and 1980s. Even 30 years after the introduction of multiculturalism, and despite major demographic shifts apparent in large cities, the legacies of white supremacy and colonialism continue to haunt Canada.

First Nations peoples experience this legacy daily, and their resistance often strips away Canada's liberal veneer, revealing a deep-seated and virulent racism. Nor has anti-Asian racism disappeared—consider the contortions the Bank of Canada went through to justify not depicting an Asian woman on the new \$100 bill, or the accusations by the head of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) that Chinese-Canadian politicians were agents of the Chinese government. The temporary foreign workers program adds another layer to a segmented job market in which people of colour continue to be channelled into lower-paying service jobs.

Eurocentrism continues to dominate our education system. As Luke Clossey of Simon Fraser University and his colleagues recently demonstrated, 85 per cent of historians at Canadian universities still teach Canadian, European, or American history. The histories of 85 per cent of the world's population remain on the periphery.<sup>32</sup>

Despite Canada's decision to opt out of the invasion of Iraq, continuing economic integration with the US assured Canadian participation in the US-led war on terror. The treatment of Omar Khadr, the Canadian child soldier, is only the latest example of Islamophobia that has accompanied this campaign and led to the harassment of Arab/Muslim communities.

Five years ago in this journal, Henry Yu outlined the great potential that Pacific Canada offered.<sup>33</sup> A younger generation is prepared for change, but whether we

30. Statistics Canada, Table A125–163, *Origins of the Population, Census Dates, 1871 to 1971*, available at <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11-516-x/sectiona/4147436-eng.htm> (accessed 16 September 2013).

31. On postwar European immigration from Europe, see Franca Iacovetta, *Gatekeepers: Reshaping Immigrant Lives in Cold War Canada* (Toronto: Between the Lines Press, 2006); on refugees from China, see Laura Madokoro, "'Slotting' Chinese families and refugees, 1947–1967," *Canadian Historical Review* 93, no. 1, (March 2012): 25–56.

32. Luke Clossey, "The Wider World in the Peripheral Vision of Historians in Canada," *ActiveHistory.ca*, 19 June 2013, <http://activehistory.ca/2013/06/the-wider-world-in-the-peripheral-vision-of-historians-in-canada/> (accessed 22 July 2013).

33. Henry Yu, "Global migrants and the new Pacific," *International Journal* 64, no. 4 (October 2009): 147–162.

can move forward depends on whether we can shed a past in which whiteness became the standard and everything and everyone was measured against it. The histories of indigenous peoples, Asian Canadians, and their many allies are part of a global process of decolonization that offers us valuable lessons—and opportunities to reshape our destiny.

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**Author Biography**

John Price is a professor of history at the University of Victoria. He is the author of *Orienting Canada: Race, Empire and the Transpacific* (UBC Press, 2011).