Closing the Nation's Doors to Immigrant Women: The Restructuring of Canadian Immigration Policy

Sunera Thobani

ABSTRACT

This paper rejects the notion that Canada's immigration program is race or gender neutral in principle. Examining the changes introduced by the *Immigration Act* of 1976-77, I demonstrate how that *Act* represented historical continuities in racializing and gendering the nation and immigrants. Furthermore, the current restructuring of immigration will greatly reduce the access of third world women to enter Canada as landed immigrants who can subsequently make claims to citizenship.

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article rejette l'idée que le programme d'immigration du Canada est en principe neutre sur la question de la race ou de l'équilibre entre les sexes. En étudiant les changements introduits par la Loi sur l'immigration de 1976-77, je démontre comment la Loi a représenté la continuité historique en mettant une importance sur la race et sur les sexes. De plus, la restructuration actuelle de l'immigration réduira énormément l'accès aux femmes du Tiers monde d'entrer au Canada en tant qu'immigrantes reçues et de pouvoir subséquemment demander la citoyenneté.

INTRODUCTION

Canadian nation-building has relied in no small measure on immigration. From Confederation until the 1960s, Canadian Immigration policy organized the migration of "preferred races" - who were to be integrated into the nation - while bordering "non-preferred races" - who were to remain outsiders. The *Immigration Act*, 1976-77, is supposed to have introduced a "non-discriminatory" immigration policy. In this paper, I make the case that while this *Act* certainly represents a liberalization of immigration policy, enabling significant numbers of third world women to enter the country as landed immigrants, the *Act* is a far cry from being "non-discriminatory" in principle or in practice. Instead, it both races and genders immigration, and represents a certain continuity with previous immigration policies. Further, this liberalization of immigration policy has lasted a mere three decades. By tracing the significant historical continuities in the policy, and analysing the current restructuring of the immigration program, I argue that the Canadian nation's doors are being closed more firmly against *immigrant* women in the 1990s.

RACIALIZED FOUNDATIONS OF THE CANADIAN NATION

Canadian immigration policy overtly distinguished between *preferred* and *non-preferred* races from 1876 until the 1960s (Stasiulis and Jhappan 1995; Hawkins 1989; Bolaria and Li 1985; Buchignani, Indra and Srivastava 1985). While the racialization/colonization of Aboriginal peoples and racialized land policies enabled the appropriation of the Canadian "nation's" territory (Green 1995; Dyck 1991; Culhane 1998), racialized immigration policies helped to establish and reproduce the "nation's" population as white. Immigration policy and access to citizenship, as well as access to land and other economic resources, served to integrate white immigrants as members of the nation, albeit in gender and class specific ways. On the other hand, third world immigrants (mainly men) were allowed to enter the country under severely restrictive conditions which discouraged their permanent settlement but harnessed their labour for the "national" economy. Their designation as

non-preferred races ideologically placed these immigrants outside the borders of the nation, even as their labour built key sectors of the economy.

Following World War Two, changed conditions within the global economy, including the decline in immigration from *preferred race* source countries in Europe, led to a re-examination of immigration policies and Canada lifted its previous overtly racialized restrictions on third world immigrants (Hawkins 1989; Green and Green 1997; Jakubowski 1997). Overt references to race became difficult to sustain for a number of reasons: direct colonial rule gave way to "independence" in many third world countries whose leaders were challenging the racial order of European empires (Sivanandan 1990); scientific theories of race lost their previous popular support as the atrocities committed by the Nazis in their pursuit of "racial" purity came to light (Solomos and Back 1996; McLaren 1990); the Civil Rights movement in the United States boosted anti-racist struggles in the entire western world (Omi and Winant 1994); and people of colour in Canada organized against racist immigration policies (Adhopia 1993; CCNC 1992; Buchignani, Indra and Srivastava 1985). Ridding immigration policy of overt racial categorization became necessary as a result of growing pressure for change "from below." Introducing the point system became the Canadian state's pragmatic response "from above."

LIBERALIZING RACIALIZATION, LIBERALIZING IMMIGRATION POLICY IN THE 1970S

In 1962, Immigration regulations introduced changes emphasizing labour market needs and family relationships. These changes, which removed overt references to "race," were institutionalized in the *Immigration Act* of 1976-77. The *Act* contains a specific "non-discrimination" clause on the grounds of "race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion or sex" [Section 3(f)] and organizes immigration into the following major categories: (i) the family class, which defines immediate family members eligible for sponsorship; (ii) the independent class, whose eligibility is decided through the allocation of points for education and skills, and; (iii) refugees, who qualify under the United Nations definition of convention refugees. Sponsors of the family class were to undertake financial responsibility for their relatives for ten years.

The introduction of the *Act* resulted in a significant shift in immigration patterns so that through the 1980s and 1990s, the immigration of third world peoples has been significantly greater in absolute numbers than that of Europeans. Immigration patterns also demonstrate that immigration under the family class has been greater than under the independent class, and while women represent over half of all immigrants, they are more likely to enter under the family class (Boyd 1989; Ng and Estable 1987). This increased immigration of women from the third world has been a significant shift from earlier periods when immigration policies had resulted in the disproportionately greater immigration of third world men.

A number of scholars define the *Immigration Act* and the point system as introducing a neutral, non-discriminatory immigration policy which ended the earlier "Keep Canada White" policies (Green and Green 1997; Hawkins 1989). Feminist and anti-racist scholars, however, have disputed this claim. They point out that while the *Act* makes a commitment *in principle* to ending racist and sexist discrimination, it does not do so *in effect*. The *Act* allowed discrimination to be perpetuated in two major ways: firstly, through the unequal allocation of resources for immigrant recruitment and processing which favoured "developed" countries with large white populations, and secondly, through allowing immigration officers discretionary powers which allowed their subjective prejudices to influence their allocation of points and the processing of immigrants (Abu-Laban 1998; Das Gupta 1995; Jakubowski 1997; Ng and Strout 1977). Immigration officers tend to process the applications of the majority of women under the family category when women accompany male family members, even when they apply as independents. Men, on the other hand, are more

likely to be processed under the independent category as heads of household (Boyd 1989; Das Gupta 1995; Ng and Strout 1977). Furthermore, with sponsorship regulations making sponsored relatives financially dependent upon their sponsors, the processing of women under the family class makes sponsored women subject to increased control by their sponsors (Abu-Laban 1998; Das Gupta 1995; Ng and Strout 1977).

While I am in general agreement with the theorists who conclude that the point system allows the discriminatory treatment of immigrants, the *Act* in fact accomplished more than simply allowing the racist and sexist biases of immigration officers to be exercised. It organized the racialization of the nation and of immigrants, as well as the gendering of immigration.

REPRODUCING THE RACIALIZED NATION

Among the *Immigration Act*'s stated objectives is the following: "to enrich and strengthen the cultural and social fabric of Canada, taking into account the federal and bilingual character of Canada (*Immigration Act, 1976-77*,(3(a) and (b)). It sought not to transform, but to *strengthen* the "cultural and social fabric" and the "bilingual character of Canada." In this objective, the *Act* did not seek, even *in principle*, to end the racialization of the nation which had been the specific objective of previous immigration policies.

In order to fully appreciate the impact of this objective of the *Act*, it is necessary to place it within the context of the political climate of the 1970s. Increasing confrontations between "French" and "English" Canada had led to the appointment of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism in 1963. The commission's mandate was to "develop the Canadian Confederation on the basis of equal participation between the two founding races, taking into account the contribution made by other ethnic groups" (Hawkins 1989). The Royal Commission's Report reinforced the *equality* of the *two charter groups*, and called for a recognition of the contribution of various *ethnic* groups (Hawkins 1989; Palmer 1975). In valorizing this "equality" of the two "founding nations," the Royal Commission reinforced the colonial/racialized composition of the nation by reaffirming the languages and cultures of the two colonizing "founding" races as *the* national languages and cultures. Whereas the English and French had previously been referred to as the founding "races," the Royal Commission institutionalized their re-definition as the founding "nations," replacing the discourse of "founding races" with that of "founding nations" and "founding cultures." In this way, the "whiteness" of the nation became re-defined, strengthened and institutionalized in the form of official bilingualism and biculturalism. The "Keep Canada White" policies which had relied on overtly racialized categories in immigration policy could be transformed once the "whiteness" of the "nation" - as a bicultural and bilingual one - had been secured precisely *because these changes would not fundamentally challenge the established racial order of the nation.*

Theorists of the "new racism" - in the post 1945 period - argue that the discourse of "cultural" difference has come to encode "racial" difference, and to signify membership in the national/racial community (Gilroy 1991; Barker 1981). In a similar vein, the *Act* served to reorganize racialization by articulating "cultural," "social" and "linguistic" definitions of the nation, constructing as outsiders those who did not share these, regardless of their actual legal status in the country. It maintained a commitment to preserving the whiteness of the nation created by previous immigration policies, and in this, served to naturalize the historical national/racial character of *Canadians*. The *Act* expressed a reorganization of processes of racialization in a period when increased immigration from the third world had become critical to providing the "cheap" labour needed for economic expansion. The category "immigrant," meaning literally a geographical "outsider" in the first instance, continued to be ideologically defined by the *Act* as a "social" and "cultural" outsider to the nation: the racialized category *immigrant* drew upon the historical status

of non-preferred races as outsiders, and re-codified it as immigrants who were to remain "outsiders." This racialization of *immigrants* on the basis of their cultural and linguistic characteristics also meant that all people of colour would continue to be ideologically constructed as *immigrants* on these bases. As long as the fact of Aboriginal colonization/racialization remained unchanged, and the underlying social relations which defined the nation as "white" remained unchallenged, the removal of overt references to "race" in the *Act* could hardly be anticipated to end historically embedded processes of racialization.

GENDERING IMMIGRATION

The *Immigration Act* organizes immigration into the two major categories - independent and family - defining the former as a class which contributed to the needs of the economy, and the latter as based solely upon family relationships. This distinction masculinized the independent class as an economically productive category, while feminizing the family class as one of "non-economic" immigrants, "dependents" who had to be sponsored and provided for. The very naming of the independent category organized it as an ideologically masculinized category. In western patriarchal terms, men are defined as independent economic agents, as heads of households, *because they are men*, whereas women are largely defined as the dependents, as the "family," of men (MacDonald 1996; Mies 1986). Whereas earlier immigration policies sought to keep women of the *non-preferred* races out of the country, the *Immigration Act* allowed them entry, but on the condition they were made dependent on sponsors and their economic contributions rendered invisible.

These ideological practices also meant that men who entered under the family category were able to escape their "dependent" status as *men.* In the economy, men are defined as workers and economic actors, socially they are defined as heads of households. This "maleness" of immigrant men, who might in fact be sponsored under the family category, allowed them to overcome their "dependent" status once they were in the country. For sponsored women, on the other hand, their actual status as *women* reinforced their "dependent" status even after they entered paid work, as most of them did.

In separating the independent and family categories on the basis of their "economic" contribution, a ranking of the worth of each of these categories became institutionalized, indeed, was made inevitable, by the *Act.* This categorization ensured that in the ranking of the "value" of immigrants to the nation, the family category came up short in capitalist terms which define individuals by their financial and "economic" worth. Quite literally, applicants under the independent category "scored" points for their skills and experience. Applicants under the family category - according to this classificatory system - became defined as having no skills worth scoring. This classification obscured the reality that most sponsored immigrant women entered the paid labour-force relatively soon after their arrival into the country (Boyd 1992; Das Gupta 1995; Estable 1986; Samuel 1986). Although their participation in paid work could have given the women a measure of financial independence, this independence was undermined by sponsorship regulations which gave sponsors increased control over the women within the family. In addition, the unpaid labour of immigrant women which reproduced *immigrant* families, including future generations of workers for the "national" economy, is likewise not recognized as a contribution to the nation. Although sponsored immigrant women make very tangible contributions through their paid and unpaid labour, immigration categories make this reality invisible. In this, the state "produced" women as *dependent immigrant women* and created the conditions under which they could become easily isolated and more vulnerable to violence and abuse (IMA 1994).

These regulations also institutionalized the unequal access of sponsored immigrant women to social entitlements such as social assistance, housing and job training programs. Although sponsored immigrants were eligible for citizenship after a five year residency, the sponsorship regulations remained in effect for ten years.

Therefore, immigration policy organized an unequal citizenship for sponsored immigrant women even after they become *de jure* citizens. Like sponsored immigrants, sponsors themselves were also discouraged from making claims to social security program - even if they were legally entitled to these. In order to qualify for sponsorship, sponsors had to demonstrate their ability to provide financial support to their sponsored relatives (EIC 1983). Both were made subject to a lesser citizenship through the sponsorship agreement. These regulations further reinforceed the ideological construction of *immigrant* women as "lesser" than Canadians by institutionalizing their "lesser" eligibility to social entitlements.

While immigration policy exempted sponsored immigrant women from access to social security programs, the state did not exempt them from paying the taxes which funded these programs. The welfare state's underlying principle that members of a society, as tax-payers, have a legitimate right to access programs collectively funded by their taxes, did not apply equally to these women. The taxes paid by *immigrant* women into "national" revenues became yet another form of their economic contribution to the welfare of "citizens" who have greater access to these programs. The point, therefore, is not so much that *immigrant* women were not integrated into the "national" economy. It is that they were integrated in a manner which would continue to reproduce their greater exploitation as *immigrant* women, as "outsiders" to the "national" community. The ideological practices of the state resulted in recognizing the "economic," "social" and "cultural" contributions to the nation by the racial and gender identities of the contributor, rather than the actual economic activities of individuals.

As discussed earlier, independent class immigrants were allowed into the country on the basis of their education and skills. However, the "foreign" education and skills of *immigrants* were not recognized by employers and professional associations (Abdo 1998; Bakan 1987; Boyd 1992; Ng 1988; Estable 1986; Samuel 1986). Although these skills were the very basis for their selection, the subsequent non-recognition of their education and skills in the "national" economy resulted in these workers being employed in occupations well below their skill levels. This non-recognition of credentials is part of the process of racializing / bordering *immigrants* by deskilling them and reconstructing their labour as low-wage, low-skill *immigrant* labour. Immigrant women workers became separated from white immigrants who, as *future citizens*, were not subjected to this deskilling.

The *Act* therefore organizes the nationalization of white immigrants on the basis of their social, cultural and linguistic compatibility with the nation so that white immigrant women would not be ideologically constructed as a burden on the nation. Indeed, they become defined as essential to preserving, and reproducing, the nation. The racialized status of these immigrants-as-members-of-the-nation means that they become distinguished from *immigrant* women of colour, even when both groups enter the country under the same legal category. In this way, it is women of colour who have come to be most strongly associated with the family class. We have come to personify this category as outsiders to the nation and a burden on its resources. The conditions under which the sponsorship of the family category was organized actually come to "produce" sponsored *immigrant* women "outsiders" whose "welfare" was not tied to that of the nation. And whereas Canadian-born women of colour have *de jure* equal social entitlements, their racialization as "outsiders" to the nation on the basis of their cultural and social "diversity" associates them with immigrant women of colour. Both have become ideologically constructed as sharing the same "outsider-to-the-nation" status. The race / gender / class nexus embedded in the *Immigration Act*, therefore, constructs *immigrant* women in particular as outsiders to the "nation" and a burden on its resources.

RESTRUCTURING THE IMMIGRATION PROGRAM

The *Immigration Act, 1976-77* has remained in effect into the late 1990s, although it has undergone numerous amendments, the most

significant of these being Bill C-86 in 1992. The Bill introduced restrictive measures, including the imposition of conditions about which regions of the country certain independent category immigrants could take up residence, as well as the adoption of the nuclear family as the norm for the family category (Jakubowski 1997). The *Act*, therefore, remains important in regulating the access of immigrants to residence in Canada and to subsequent claims to citizenship and to membership in the nation.

The federal government launched a review of Immigration Policy in 1994, organizing extensive public consultations across the country. The Review resulted in the tabling of the document, *Into the 21st. Century: A Strategy for Immigration and Citizenship*. The strategy outlined in this document is essentially to increase restrictions upon future immigration for permanent settlement in the country, as well as to further limit the grounds upon which Canadian citizenship can be claimed (Thobani 1998). While a number of the recommendations outlined in this strategy have been implemented by the federal government, a re-introduction of the head tax on immigrants and reducing the overall immigration levels being among the chief ones, further changes which will restructure immigration categories are being currently proposed in another document commissioned by the state, *Building A Strong Foundation For The 21st. Century*. In the next section, I focus specifically on this document in the following areas: the objectives of immigration policy; changes to the sponsorship agreement and the family category; and the redefinition of the independent category.

REINFORCING THE NATION'S BOUNDARIES

As discussed above, one of the objectives of the *Immigration Act 1976-77* was the preservation of the nation's "character." I have argued that this objective enabled the ongoing racialization of the nation on the basis of its cultural, linguistic and social characteristics, while bordering *immigrants* as outsiders. The current set of proposals state that the objective of "enriching through immigration the cultural and social fabric of Canada" is "still supported by Canadians" (CIC 1998). Here, the state is signalling its intention of maintaining the racialization of the nation, as well as *immigrants*, in the proposed new immigration act. Indeed, the official definition of the nation as bilingual and bicultural - English and French - is being given greater currency today as the federal government seeks to contain the sovereigntist aspirations of the Quebec separatist movement.

The Immigration Policy Review, as well as the strategy plan for the twenty-first century, both re-define a national "Canadian" character and national values in overtly racialized terms. Both construct a "national" interest for Canadians in relation to *immigrants,* who are constructed as threatening to "erode" and "degrade" national values and national institutions (Thobani 1998).

SPONSORSHIP AND THE FAMILY CLASS

The current set of proposals also calls for the "reinforcement of the family class as the traditional cornerstone of Canada's immigration program" (CIC 1998). Having stated this, specific proposals are nevertheless made to change this category, including: reducing the sponsorship period from ten years; increasing the enforcement of the sponsorship agreement; suspending the sponsorship agreement in cases where sponsored immigrants, or sponsors, have been convicted for violence; and recognizing common law and same-sex couples for sponsorship.

In maintaining the family category as a separate one with sponsorship requirements, the current proposals seek to reinforce the feminization of this category into the twenty-first century. The proposals demonstrate there is no intention on the part of the state to acknowledge the economic contributions of this category; the proposals seek to maintain it as one of "dependents."

The proposal to reduce the sponsorship period from the current ten year requirement is certainly a step in the right direction. However, the state is simultaneously proposing to strengthen the enforcement of sponsorship regulations to ensure

sponsored immigrants do not claim social assistance, a policy which would erode any benefits from shortening the sponsorship period. The result will be that even if the sponsorship period is reduced, the unequal social entitlements of sponsored immigrants to social assistance programs, and their dependency on the sponsor, will be maintained. Indeed it is to be policed even more closely as enforcement is to be strengthened. One proposal calls to specifically "expand Citizenship and Immigration Canada's power to undertake collection action against defaulting sponsors and share proceeds with the provinces" (CIC 1998). With this, the federal government plans to increase the incentives of provincial governments to police more closely claims by sponsored immigrants to social assistance. Defaulting sponsors could face prosecution from provincial governments, and this would in turn increase the incentive of the sponsor to increase their control over sponsored family members. Further, with all people of colour in Canada being racialized as outsiders to the nation, regardless of legal status or the length of residency in the country, it is possible to anticipate that the claims of all people of colour (and most particularly, women of colour) to social security programs will be policed more closely.

Another significant change proposed to the sponsorship agreement is the suspension of sponsorship if either the sponsor or the sponsored immigrant is convicted of violence. As I have pointed out earlier, sponsorship regulations have the effect of making women more vulnerable to violence and abuse. Therefore, the change necessary to protect these women from violent sponsors is to do away with the sponsorship dependency which creates women's vulnerability to violence. Instead, this proposal seeks not to reduce women's dependency, but attempts to intervene *after* the violence is committed, and even then, only with the involvement of the criminal justice system in the stipulation that sponsorship will be suspended only *after* conviction. Therefore, the state proposes to continue making sponsored women vulnerable to violence. The criminal justice system has repeatedly failed to protect women who have experienced violence and have gone to the police (Jiwani and Buhagiar 1997). Research into violence against women reveals that even when women are experiencing violence in intimate relationships, their priority is to end this violence, not to prosecute perpetrators (DeKeseredy and MacLeod 1997). This is particularly true of sponsored women who rely on their sponsors to bring in other family members. To demand that these women must engage with a racist and sexist criminal justice system and secure convictions against their sponsors before their dependency upon the sponsors can be revoked is to condemn the women to continue living with this violence. Sponsored immigrant women who leave violent sponsors, and who do not necessarily want to engage with the criminal justice system, will also more firmly be denied claims to social assistance programs if the only condition under which they can do so is the conviction of their sponsor. The fear that sponsored family members might pursue criminal charges against a violent sponsor will increase the sponsor's incentive to control their actions even more closely than is currently the case.

The proposal that common law and same-sex partners be covered under the family class could potentially be of great benefit to immigrants. This proposal would certainly challenge homophobic attitudes and practices which define same-sex relationships as less valid and less legitimate than heterosexual ones. However, even as same-sex relationships are to be recognized and legitimized, doing this through the family category means that these couples will also become subject to the sponsorship agreements (based on heterosexual norms) which increase the power of the sponsoring partner over that of the sponsored partner. Sponsored partners will therefore become dependent on the sponsor for their presence in the country. Therefore, rather than working to transform the patriarchal, heterosexual family within Canada, this proposal would subject same-sex relationships to the same relations of domination as within heterosexual relationships by increasing the control of one partner over the other.

The family class has already been subjected to numerous restrictions in the 1990s.

The re-introduction of the head tax of $975 per immigrant in 1995 placed a disproportionate financial constraint on immigrants from the third world, and particularly on third world women who had relatively fewer financial resources. Rescinded early in 2000, the head tax placed an onerous burden upon families who wanted to reunite, making sponsorship even more difficult. In addition, annual levels for the family class were reduced in the five year plan tabled by the federal government in 1995 (CIC 1994b). The new proposals which seek to strengthen the sponsorship agreement and to penalize sponsor default can be expected to restrict further the immigration (as permanent residents who can make claims to citizenship) of all except the most financially solvent immigrants from the third world.

RE-DEFINING THE INDEPENDENT CATEGORY

Emphasizing the need for immigrants to make economic contributions to Canada, the new proposals seek to re-define the independent category by changing emphasis on occupation to, instead, the "generic attributes for success in a dynamic labour market" by calling for "sharper focus on flexible and transferable skills" (CIC 1998). The selection of independent immigrants should reflect the needs of a "knowledge based-based economy such as Canada's" and should "augment the country's human capital base," the document proposes (CIC 1998). Additionally, the proposals call for selection to be based upon "flexibility, adaptability, motivation and knowledge of Canada under personal suitability" (CICa 1998). There is no ready answer in the document to the question of exactly how the state proposes to define and measure "human capital base." Assessing the "flexibility" and "transferability" of skills can introduce extreme subjectivity into the selection process. One can safely anticipate that this change will advantage male applicants, applicants from other advanced capitalist countries, as well as the highly educated elite from the third world. Certainly applicants from these groups could be considered more "adaptable" to the changing needs of the economy, and are more likely to have "knowledge of Canada." Should this change be implemented, the doors will be opened to more discretionary, and discriminatory, evaluations of future applicants.

In 1997, the state attempted to introduce fluency in English or French as part of the selection criteria. This proposal encountered severe opposition from many communities of colour across the country and the Immigration Minister was persuaded to withdraw the proposal. In the new proposals, applicants who "choose" to take language tests will be assessed "more accurately" and have their applications processed much faster. This change, if implemented, will mean that fluency in the "national" languages will become a "voluntary" selection criteria which will favour those applicants who elect to take it. The question is: what will be the consequences for those applicants "choosing" not to take the language test? Will they be deemed lacking in "human capital?" Such a proposal can be expected to have a negative impact on applicants who are not fluent in English or French, and who do not take the test.

In tandem with re-defining the independent category, the state is also proposing to increase "an openness to the entry of temporary foreign workers" (CIC 1998). The proposal seeks to make the processing of temporary employment permits easier and quicker, and to grant employment authorizations through sectoral arrangements. This change will increase the number of migrant workers who enter and work in Canada. Therefore, even as restrictions are being increased on workers who can now enter the country as independent immigrants and who would subsequently become eligible for citizenship, workers on temporary employment permits whose residency in the country will be controlled through employment permits - and who cannot become eligible for citizenship - will be processed more quickly and easily.

CONCLUSION

The *Immigration Act, 1976-77*, certainly marked a liberalization of immigration policies for

certain categories of immigrants, and it enabled a significant shift in immigration patterns so that immigration from third world countries outpaced that from European source countries. However, the *Act* continues to organize the racialized nationalization of white immigrants on the basis of their cultural and social affinities to the nation, their fluency in the "national" languages, and their "contributions" to the nation through the recognition of their skills and education. On the other hand, the racialized bordering of third world *immigrant* women has become organized on the basis of their social and cultural diversity, their linguistic diversity, the non-recognition of their contributions to the nation, and in the deskilling of their labour as *immigrant* labour. Racialized inequalities since the 1970s have been expressed in the state's definition of the cultural, social and linguistic "diversity" of *immigrants* as setting them apart from *Canadians,* as well as making invisible the actual diversity which does exist among immigrant women by homogenizing all non-white women as *immigrant* women. These processes of racialization intersect with the gendering and classing of immigration categories to construct *immigrant* women in particular as an economic "burden" to the nation, and as a "threat" to the nation's social and cultural cohesiveness. The ideological practices institutionalized in the *Act* have meant that even when citizens, future citizens and immigrants share the same legal status, the state's racialized nation-building practices continue to distinguish between them, and to create unequal citizenship rights.

Like its predecessors, the *Immigration Act* of 1976-77 continues to balance contending interests in Canada by ensuring the provision of *immigrant* women's labour to the economy *and* the reproduction of the whiteness of the nation. The *Act* thus organizes the borders of the nation at socio-political, as well as geographical, levels.

The current restructuring of the immigration program is bringing the liberalization of immigration policy to an end. While the changes proposed to the *Immigration Act* will maintain the ongoing racialization of the Canadian nation, they will also restrict the access of third world immigrants in general, and third world women in particular, to enter Canada as permanent residents who can subsequently claim citizenship rights.

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