

the Catalyst

Citizens for Public Justice

Summer 2020

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What COVID-19 is Teaching Us

By Willard Metzger

The COVID-19 pandemic has provided an opportunity for reflection. Things once blurred within the frenzy of activity have sharpened into focus. Priorities have become simpler and clearer. There is an emerging call for change.

As a public policy organization, CPJ has considered what we have learned as a society and how those lessons can help us rebuild a healthier future.

There have been obvious lessons.

Inequities have become more apparent. Not all essential services and workers have been substantially recognized and equally compensated. This has resulted in hazardous vulnerabilities allowing a virus easy access to those most susceptible to infection, especially in our long-term care homes.

The importance of immigration to Canada has further manifested itself. Most of the frontline health workers caring for the vulnerable elderly are immigrants. We need to improve their working conditions. Medical professionals that were sidelined have been allowed to practice temporarily. In the aftermath of the pandemic, Canada needs to work to permanently rec-

ognize the foreign credentials of these immigrant professionals in the health and other sectors. Furthermore, we must work to end systemic racism in Canada.

We have learned that there is a cost to achieving a clean environment. Less travel has made a noticeable difference resulting in cleaner air. But this has come at a huge financial price, both in loss of business and significant, necessary government grants. We must pursue a vision of climate justice that enhances, rather than neglects, people's well-being.

COVID-19 generated a collective response. Neighbours showed concern for each other. People embraced sacrifice for the sake of the most vulnerable. These are the marks of a healthy society. But this communal unity is starting to fade.

General welfare for all is being pitted against the need to re-establish a strong commerce-based economy. But this would maintain the unjust disparities of buying power. These old norms are not acceptable.

There is an increasing criticism that businesses and civic society groups alike appear to be taking advantage of the pandemic. Some are accusing them of using the

pandemic to force big, societal, structural changes.

But these accusations miss the point. This is an opportunity for change. In fact, we know that change is necessary and inevitable. Structural changes are coming whether we like it or not.

The future to which we return must look different from the past. Not just in defending against an infectious virus, but also in resisting a society marred with poverty and ecological devastation. Some things we have gone without—daily commutes to office jobs, frequent short-haul air travel, unnecessary face-to-face meetings, disposable fast fashion—we should probably continue to abandon. While things we have embraced—spending more time with family, gardening and cooking together, supporting local businesses—we should continue to hold on to.

This is an important time for reflection. Let us use this time to reconstruct a society where all of life can flourish together.

Willard Metzger is CPJ's executive director.

In Review

On the Hill

Despite the fact that many parliamentarians are back home in their constituencies, CPJ has been able to stay connected through letters, phone calls, and Zoom meetings.

The **Dignity for All Campaign** wrote to Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau** and Minister of Families, Children, and Social Development **Ahmed Hussen** to check-in on our 2019 *Chew on This!* campaign. Our letter highlighted some of the encouraging actions that they have taken to support people during the COVID-19 pandemic; called for these positive steps to be extended into long-term solutions; and identified critical gaps that need to be addressed.

Natalie Appleyard, CPJ's socio-economic policy analyst, attended the Campaign 2000 Symposium in **Toronto** in March. The meetings included a roundtable with Minister **Ahmed Hussen**. Natalie also had the opportunity to contribute to Campaign 2000's open letter to the COVID Cabinet Committee regarding the needs of children and families during the pandemic and in recovery plans, which led to another meeting with Minister Hussen in May.

In June, **Natalie**, along with CPJ interns **Keira Kang** and **Karel Hermans**, attended an online meeting of the All-Party Anti-Poverty Caucus, hosted by Liberal MP **Nathaniel Erskine-Smith**. The caucus discussed how Canada's COVID response should be strengthened and extended.

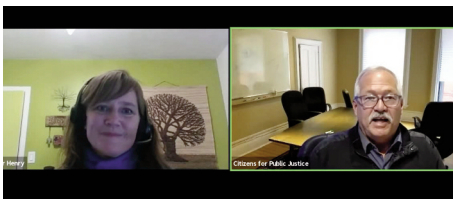


CPJ is proud to be part of a massive pan-Canadian coalition calling on the federal government to pursue a just recovery to COVID-19. Collectively, nearly 200 or-

ganizations worked together to develop six **Principles of a Just Recovery**. To put these principles into practice, CPJ is submitting key policy recommendations for each principle to several parliamentary committees and the federal government's COVID Cabinet Committee. Read CPJ's recommendations at cpj.ca/just-recovery

For the Love of Creation

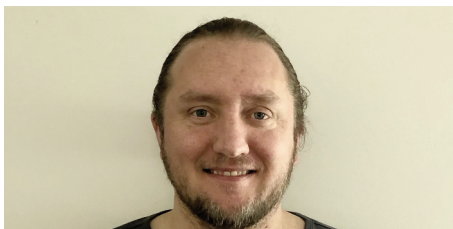
On April 22, CPJ and several Canadian churches and faith-based organizations launched **For the Love of Creation—A Faith-based Initiative for Climate Justice**. The campaign will engage people all across the country in a climate conversation centred on theological reflection, congregational engagement, and political advocacy. CPJ's executive director, **Willard Metzger**, and **Jennifer Henry**, the executive director of KAIROS (below), announced the initiative together during a cross-Canada Earth Day webcast. To learn more, read Beth Lorimer's article on page 11.



Give it up for the Earth!

This year's *Give it up for the Earth!* campaign had organizers in over 200 faith communities across Canada, the highest number the campaign has ever seen. Between them they had over 13,000 postcards. Unfortunately, many churches closed mid-March in the face of COVID-19 which prevented many from distributing and collecting their postcards. Stay tuned for online engagement opportunities from CPJ later this year.

Welcome Karel



In May, CPJ welcomed **Karel Hermans** to our team as our social work placement student. He is completing his Masters in Social Work at Carleton University with a focus on public policy, including the impact of climate change on the most marginalized people and groups in Canadian society. Karel will be contributing to CPJ's climate justice work this summer.

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Citizens for Public Justice's mission is to promote public justice in Canada by shaping key public policy debates through research and analysis, publishing, and public dialogue. CPJ encourages citizens, leaders in society, and governments to support policies and practices which reflect God's call for love, justice, and the flourishing of creation.

CPJ annual membership fee includes *the Catalyst*.
Suggested donation of \$50

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This Pandemic Discriminates by Gender and Race

By Leila Sarangi, Leila Edwards, and Natalie Appleyard

When COVID-19 triggered orders for social distancing and regular handwashing, we immediately started hearing of the disproportionate risk facing people who had no home to go to, or whose homes are not safe; those with no clean water with which to wash their hands; and those living in crowded housing or institutions. The idea that “we are all in the same storm, but we are not in the same boat” draws attention to how this public health crisis impacts certain people and communities.

A wave of articles from feminist economists, academics, and activists shows that none of this is really surprising. In fact, we have been warned of these risks and pre-existing crises for decades or more. We know that poverty, housing insecurity, and food insecurity are in and of themselves public health crises and that they impact certain groups of people more than others. Unfortunately, our knowledge has not been paired with commensurate action.

While many consider these issues to be a question of charity, this alone does not fully explain our lack of ambition. Demonstrations of incredible empathy, compassion, and generosity have often lifted our spirits during this time of pandemic. Governments have rolled out new emergency benefits and enacted policy changes. The Prime Minister said that no one should have to worry about paying for food or rent because of COVID-19.

But why is it seen as acceptable—unavoidable, even—that people are unable to meet even the most basic needs when our economy is in full swing? And what are we to do about it?

To answer these questions, we need to better understand who is most affected by these crises and who has the decision-mak-

ing power. This requires an intersectional gender-based analysis. We need to understand how diverse women and gender non-conforming people’s experiences are shaped by combined factors such as Indigenous identity, race, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, ability, age, amount and source of income, immigration status or lack thereof, and other equity grounds.

The Ontario Health Coalition reports that more women than men are dying of COVID-19 in Canada. This is, in part, because there is a higher proportion of elderly women in long-term care homes. Also, racialized and immigrant women are more likely to be employed in care work with greater exposure to the virus. A high proportion of people working in the food supply and other essential services are racialized, immigrant, Indigenous women, and/or women with disabilities. They are paid some of the lowest wages with little or no access to benefits. This often leaves them ineligible for employment insurance and the Canadian Emergency Response Benefit.

For parents, the closure of schools and daycares is also disproportionately affecting women. They traditionally take on greater responsibility for child care and other unpaid labour in the home. This is exacerbated by gendered and racialized wage gaps and the lack of accessible, affordable childcare. As a result, more women than men leave work in order to take on child care responsibilities.

Gendered and racialized wage and employment disparities combined with the costs of raising children make women particularly vulnerable to poverty, especially in female-led lone parent families. This in turn makes women more vulnerable to intimate partner violence and exploitation. Recommendations to shelter in place and

practice social distancing exacerbate this risk, as many women and children have nowhere to seek safety. Even for those not facing violence, disturbing reports of landlords soliciting sex for rent have increased during the pandemic.

Unfortunately, merely lifting the restrictions of social distancing and going back to business as usual won’t hold the same promise of recovery for all people. Labour Force Survey data released in May show that as the economy starts to re-open, men are going back to work at more than double the rate that women are, further contributing to gender employment gaps. Whether we are talking about eradicating COVID-19 or eradicating poverty, we need robust disaggregated data and community consultation to inform distinctions-based targets, strategies, and accountability mechanisms.

Ending gender and intersectional inequity is essential to ending poverty. Ending poverty is essential to individual and public health. We must leverage our existing knowledge and lessons learned during this pandemic to build a more equitable, sustainable, and resilient future for all.

This summer, we are pleased to welcome Campaign 2000 as an official co-lead of the Dignity for All Campaign.

Leila Sarangi is a community organizer who spent more than 20 years working with diverse homeless women and women fleeing violence in Toronto and is currently the national coordinator of Campaign 2000.



Leila Edwards is the staff lawyer and outreach coordinator at Canada Without Poverty.



Natalie Appleyard is CPJ’s socio-economic policy analyst.





A Continuing Welcome for Refugees

By Stephen Kaduuli

Canada resettled more refugees in 2018 than any other country according to a United Nations refugee agency. Most of them were resettled through the four-decade old Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program. The internationally-acclaimed program has facilitated over 327,000 refugee resettlements and won the people of Canada the UN Nansen Medal.

But there are many inherent barriers in refugee sponsorship. In 2018, Rudy Ovcjak of the Archdiocese of Toronto felt frustrated by the backlog of 45,000 privately sponsored refugees. Debra Simpson, a member of the Canadian Council for Refugees, told a Parliamentary Committee hearing that:

“People get very excited about this program. They respond because they know that someone’s in need, and then they wait. Very often, as a sponsorship agreement holder, I am not able to explain to the sponsoring group why this is taking so long. So people move on. It’s true. We have seen a decline in interest in the program primarily related to the fact that it has taken so long for people to arrive, and there’s no good explanation.”

CPJ has released two reports examining the challenges refugee sponsorship agreement holders (SAHs) face in resettling refugees. In 2014, *Private Sponsorship and Public Policy* reported on the political barriers to church-connected refugee resettlement in Canada. *A Half Welcome*, released in 2017, found that the top concerns of SAHs were long application wait times and backlogs, complexity of the application process, sponsorship allocation limits, and the burden of travel loans. They recommended that the government process applications and resettle refugees in a timely manner;

clear backlogs at global visa posts; provide a multi-year immigration levels plans; and waive travel loan repayments for all refugees. At the time, the Catholic Register reported that average processing times for privately sponsored refugees varied wildly. Church-sponsored refugees in Iraq arrived in Canada within 15 months while refugees in Ethiopia and South Africa had to wait for averages of 69 months.

This year, on World Refugee Day, CPJ published *Continuing Welcome*, a progress report on the impact of advocacy efforts since the release of *A Half Welcome*. In this report, CPJ has tracked progress on delays in refugee sponsorship, the government’s immigration levels, and program monitoring.

Since 2017, there has been a marked improvement in the processing of applications and clearing the backlogs. Currently, there is no difference in processing times of Syrian and non-Syrian cases. Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) aims to reduce the processing times to an average of 12 months. However, backlogs still do persist and the 12-month goal of processing applications has not been achieved. Erin Pease of the Catholic Diocese of Hamilton has said that, “a key problem that must be rectified is ensuring that processing timelines for all PSR applicants are in closer alignment, irrespective of the country of asylum in the world where a refugee finds herself.”

Canada had not provided multi-year levels immigration plans since 2014. CPJ and other stakeholders have been advocating for their return. As stated in *A Half Welcome*, multi-year figures help SAHs plan for how many applications they will be able to handle in advance. A day after COVID-19 was declared a pandemic, IRCC released the 2020-2022 Immigration Levels Plan in which Canada will aim to settle 49,700 refugees this year. However, the intake target may not be achieved due to the prevail-

ing global COVID-19 pandemic.

While SAHs support the monitoring of private sponsorships by IRCC, it does present challenges for them. It can be difficult for sponsors to demonstrate that they are meeting their financial obligations since some of their support is in-kind. Monitoring adds to SAHs’ workload. Many of them are understaffed and rely on volunteers.

In *Continuing Welcome*, CPJ presents a list of policy recommendations that will address these ongoing concerns in Canada’s refugee sponsorship program. We call for government to continue reducing processing times and backlogs; to totally waive the loan repayments for all refugees; to further improve communication with stakeholders; and to streamline quality assurance to guard the integrity of sponsorship programs.

Regarded as the global role model for its private sponsorship of refugees, Canada should work with stakeholders such as the SAHs to achieve more fairness in systems that affect the refugees.

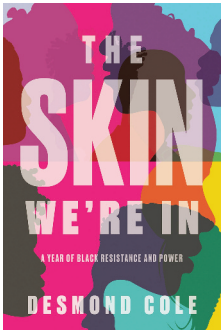
CPJ published *Continuing Welcome: A Progress Report on A Half Welcome* and partnered with the Christian Reformed Centre for Public Dialogue to develop an online advocacy alert. Read the full report at cpj.ca/continuing-welcome.



Stephen Kaduuli is CPJ’s refugee policy analyst.

Book Reviews

Summer book suggestions from Citizens for Public Justice



The Skin We're In: A Year of Black Resistance and Power
By Desmond Cole
Doubleday Canada, 2020

Reviewed by Leila Edwards

Canada's national narrative, in contrast to that of our American neighbours, tells a story of global peacekeepers, apologetic citizens, and liberal multiculturalism. Nowhere is our purported difference to the U.S. witnessed more than in conversations about race and racism. The axiomatic belief in Canada's multicultural values and historical innocence is often used to dismiss the experiences of racialized Canadians and camouflage the white supremacy inherent in Canada's systems and institutions.

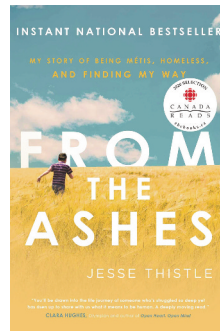
The Skin We're In actively contests Canada's national narrative by following a year in Black encounters with and resistance to white supremacy. Desmond Cole raises a wide range of stories and experiences including microaggressions in employment, anti-Black racism in education, the oppression of Indigenous Peoples, and violent police brutality. He presents the stories and experiences of Black Canadians in a way that validates; it makes our stories accessible and our emotions palpable for readers.

I enjoyed that Cole uses an intersectional approach to analyzing white supremacy and anti-Black racism. He places a spotlight on the stories of the Black queer and trans community, neurodivergent Black people, Black migrants, and Black women. Further, he consistently reminds readers that these stories are neither ahistorical nor individual. He weaves the history of anti-Black racism in Canada throughout each chapter, demonstrating that contemporary experiences are a mere continuation of state violence and oppression towards the Black Canadian community.

What I feel is most important is that Cole recognizes Canada as an ongoing settler-colonial project, relying on land theft and genocide of Indigenous Peoples. He respectfully illustrates the distinctions and parallels of Black and Indigenous oppression throughout Canada's history. Importantly, he also identifies the Nations and treaties that govern the geographies in which the stories of anti-Black racism are situated.

Overall, *The Skin We're In* forces readers to encounter Canadian settler colonialism and white supremacy by telling the stories of Black people throughout history, up to contemporary times. This book forces readers to confront Canada's historical and contemporary narratives and reflect on what exactly is being celebrated.

Leila Edwards is a Black, queer human rights lawyer, with lived experience of poverty, from Toronto.



From the Ashes: My Story of Being Métis, Homeless, and Finding My Way
By Jesse Thistle
Simon & Schuster, 2019

Reviewed by Mike Bulthuis

"Things happen in life that tear us apart, that make us into something capable of hurting other people. That's all any of the darkness really is – just love gone bad. We're just broken-hearted people hurt by life."

Such was the insight shared by one of Jesse Thistle's prison-mates, a powerful reminder to us as readers, of our shared—and interconnected—humanness. And a crushing acknowledgement of the missed and misplaced love Thistle had experienced over too many years. Thistle had been hurt by life.

In *From the Ashes*, Thistle recounts his story as a Cree-Metis man, from his first few years in Saskatchewan to Ontario, where he now resides. It's a story of hope, but also abandonment, trauma, and addiction—and the painful internalization of a shame projected onto him by others. He seeks out ways to recreate the missed presence of his mother's touch and longs for word of his dad's whereabouts. He tries to exercise control and self-determination where he can, as destructive as it may be.

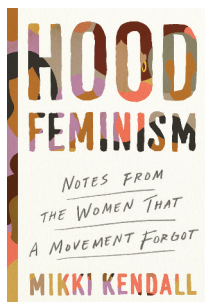
Too often, we see failed systems: crisis supports unavailable through his job because of wait periods, the collection of over \$3,000 in various fines, or the challenge of leaving hospital—still with a serious leg infection—without a place to go. He writes, "that was supposed to be the plan: get arrested and go to jail, so I'd get taken care of, so my foot could be fixed, and so my life would be saved."

Ultimately, Thistle's journey shifts. His determined spirit, his desire to make right, a promise he makes to his dying grandmother, a supportive and loving partner, and an invitation to reconnect to his Cree-Metis past—each come together to carry him forward. Upon visiting the remains of his maternal grandparents' home in Saskatchewan, Thistle writes, "I remembered them; I remembered who I was."

Not all stories shift in this direction, but *From the Ashes* helps us understand the work needed—both systemic and within each of us—to break the patterns of homelessness, discrimination and addictions—and to light the darkness of love gone bad.

Mike Bulthuis resides in Ottawa, where he works (from home) in public policy with the federal public service.

Book Reviews



**Hood Feminism:
Notes from the
Women That a
Movement Forgot**
By Mikki Kendall
Viking, 2020

Reviewed by Natalie Appleyard

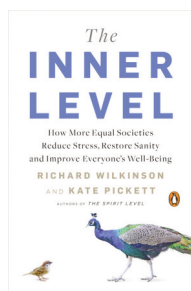
Mikki Kendall writes from the perspective of a cis-gendered, able-bodied Black woman who grew up in poverty in the United States and is now a published author with two degrees. She speaks from her experiences of domestic violence, of single-parenting, of living through more miscarriages than live births, and of now having a healthy marriage and two children going through middle school and college. Where she cannot speak from personal experience, she shares her research and learning from and about those whose identities and experiences are different from her own.

While her personal anecdotes lend insight and empathy to the reader, she consistently pulls away from an individualistic focus to the experiences, needs, and strengths of the community. “It’s not a question of ‘Why can’t they do what you did?’” she writes, “It’s a question of ‘Why can’t we give everyone else the same support and access?’ That’s the battle feminism should be fighting.”

Kendall turns the gaze of those in positions of privilege who self-identify as “feminist” to frequent blind spots that compromise equity for all who present as feminine and their communities. If you have never heard of, or examined concepts such as respectability politics, fetishization, corporate feminism, carceral feminism, or the place of disability rights within feminism, prepare to have your mind and heart opened.

The need to “do the work” has been a consistent message for would-be allies, particularly in the past few months. This book is an excellent resource for those willing to take up the call.

Natalie Appleyard is CPJ’s socio-economic policy analyst.



**The Inner Level:
How More Equal
Societies Reduce
Stress, Restore
Sanity and Improve
Everyone's Well-Being**
By Richard Wilkinson
and Kate Pickett
Penguin Books, 2018

Reviewed by Willard Metzger

COVID-19 has revealed aspects of our society that need repair. We have the opportunity and responsibility to establish a healthier and more sustainable norm.

The Inner Level is a good entry into this debate. The book questions the notion that healthy societies are the outcome of enshrining individual freedom. According to the broad research provided, the greater the gap between the rich and the poor, the unhealthier the society will be. Inequality increases stress, anxiety, depression, and addiction. And these are not just ailments experienced by the poor. Inequality damages us all.

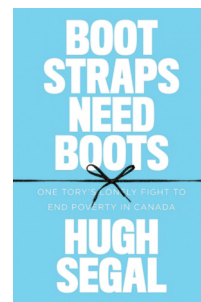
Relying heavily on psychology, but presenting a breadth of accumulated research, the book reveals how inequality affects how we think, alters how we feel, and influences how we behave.

The conclusions might elicit critiques of oversimplification. *Will all the ills of society really disappear if equality is achieved and maintained?* Yet even the skeptic must acknowledge that given the economic growth that has brought us “unprecedented luxury and comfort, it seems paradoxical that levels of anxiety have tended to increase rather than decrease over time.”

Wilkinson and Pickett propose a way to foster more egalitarian societies in terms of income, class, and power. The authors invite us to abandon the false sense of well-being generated by materialism and replace it with a way of life that is more fundamentally consistent with our human need and responsibility for healthy community.

As communities of faith, guided by commandments to care for the ‘other,’ such a vision should be easy to embrace.

Willard Metzger is CPJ’s executive director.



**Bootstraps Need
Boots: One Tory's
Lonely Fight to End
Poverty in Canada**
By Hugh Segal
On Point Press, 2019

Reviewed by Chloe Halpenny

As a leftie and basic income supporter, I began Hugh Segal’s *Bootstraps Need Boots* skeptical and curious. In this memoir-meets-case for basic income, the former Senator brings his personal and political experiences into the conversation, resulting in a read that is both enjoyable and informative.

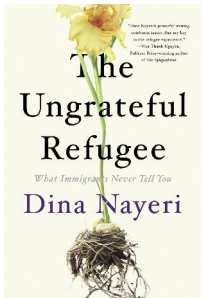
Opening with an anecdote about his cherished childhood toy box being donated to a neighbour by his father for firewood, Segal leaves readers doubtless that his fight against poverty is a sincere one. Here enters basic income, an idea supported by the author due to his desire not to address the symptoms of poverty, but rather the cause: a lack of money.

Resurfacing throughout the book, basic income captures Segal’s imagination from his time at university at a PC Party conference until the book’s conclusion, where he reflects—mournfully—on the Ford government’s premature cancellation of the Ontario pilot. In this way, readers get the sense that the book isn’t merely a rallying call for basic income, but also one against the hyper-partisan politics that impede change.

Bootstraps Need Boots may not be for everyone. It’s best read with some background on poverty, basic income, and Canadian politics. Moreover, it requires a certain level of comfort with disagreeing, be it on political ideology or the best tools to combat poverty. For those who do crack the cover, Segal presents a book of bridges: between autobiography and policy, left and right, and frustration and hope.

One thing is for sure: the book has heart.

Chloe Halpenny is a researcher at the Social Research and Demonstration Corporation and co-chair of the Basic Income Canada Youth Network.



The Ungrateful Refugee: What Immigrants Never Tell You
By Dina Nayeri
Catapult, 2019

Reviewed by Andriata Chironda

The Ungrateful Refugee is an exile narrative that includes personal reflection and accounts of others' stories of flight. Dina Nayeri's own story tells of how, together with her mother and brother, she fled Iran in the late 1980s. Her family was eventually resettled in the United States. This was after the family faced persistent persecution for apostasy after her mother converted from Islam to Christianity.

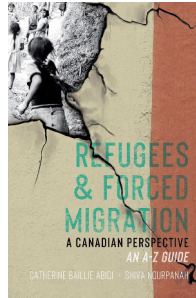
The book shows how storytelling is key to formal recognition as a refugee and an important step to social inclusion and acceptance in the receiving country. Refugees must tell compelling stories and supplicate before state, refugee protection officers, and humanitarian organizations.

Nayeri's account and stories destabilize and critique assumptions and dichotomies that subsist in mainstream discourse about refugees. One assumption is that "unlike economic migrants, refugees have no agency," that they "can be pitied," and that they are "rescued cargo" who must continue to "prove, repay, transform." On the flip side, "if you dare to make a move before you are shattered," Nayeri writes, "your dreams are suspicious [and]... you are reaching above your station."

In this dichotomous frame, refugees are compelled to contain their hopes and dreams and perform a particular role: the grateful refugee. They "can't acknowledge a shred of joy left behind or they risk becoming migrants again."

However, an "ungrateful refugee" recognizes and escapes this false dichotomy, in life and discourse. Storytelling offers a space for self-determination—to define one's humanity beyond the confines and limits of categories and saviour tropes—and a means to participate in the new society as equals seeking "friendship, not salvation."

Andriata Chironda (PhD) works for the federal public service and has researched and taught the history of international migration and refugee protection.



Refugees & Forced Migration: The Canadian Perspective: An A-Z Guide
By Catherine Baillie Abidi and Shiva Nourpanah
Nimbus Publishing, 2019

Reviewed by Stephen Kaduuli

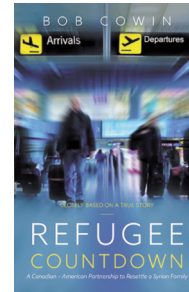
Scholarly practitioner Catherine Baillie Abidi and social anthropologist Shiva Nourpanah have masterfully woven together the key terminologies and concepts that relate to refugees and forced migration. This book is a compilation of contributions from refugee activists, scholars, and practitioners. Although its focus is on Atlantic Canada, this easy-to-read 144-page book contains some universal terms and concepts that are relevant to the rest of Canada and the whole world. The A to Z guide proceeds from activism and advocacy through to "Generation Z" (youth). Apart from defining or explaining certain terms, it outlines processes and procedures asylum seekers go through once in Canada.

Marianela Fuertes gives a historical overview of how the world took on the role of protecting refugees and the law concerning the right to seek asylum. The guide discusses several topics including the hot button issue of racism. In contextualizing the Safe Third Country Agreement, Katie Tinker provides the lived experiences of asylum seekers who cross the border into Canada from the U.S.

The major omission is Canada's acclaimed Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program which should have been a stand-alone topic since the largest number of resettled refugees come to Canada through it.

Although it gets too academic in discussing some issues, I would recommend this guide to all settlement practitioners, private sponsors, and advocacy groups. Universities, colleges, and high schools introducing students to refugee and forced migration issues would find this guide very useful. It can also be useful in generally debunking negative rhetoric about refugees in Canada.

Stephen Kaduuli is CPJ's refugee rights policy analyst.



Refugee Countdown: A Canadian-American Partnership to Resettle a Syrian Family
By Bob Cowin
FriesenPress, 2019

Reviewed by Erin Pease

Refugee Countdown unfolds during an unprecedented period in Canada's recent past, immediately following Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's rise to power in 2015 and his ambitious campaign to expedite the resettlement of 25,000 Syrian refugees. In addition to describing an atypical Canada-U.S. sponsorship alliance, Bob Cowin focuses on the experience of the sponsors before the refugee family set foot in Canada.

The journal-like style makes for easy reading. Its pages shed remarkable and honest light on the spectrum of emotions, practical considerations, and settlement and integration issues (the good, the bad, and everything in between) that can manifest while preparing for "arrival day." The book effectively evolves the conversation from one of program participation as an act of global citizenship into an exercise in how sponsorship challenges sponsors to embrace their human agency to feed the human family, both literally and figuratively. The result is that the sponsors learn and receive and grow in return, becoming more human in the process.

Subsequent print editions would benefit from including a forward to situate this sponsorship story within the more formal, contextual, and technical domain of Canada's federal resettlement program and enlightening the reader as to the different sponsorship program streams, related program requirements, and processing distinctions. Doing so would allow for a more constructive comparison and debate when considering similar publications on the market.

For anyone interested in a window into the messy, complex, beautiful, and hope-filled world of refugee sponsorship in action in church halls and living rooms, this book is for you!

Erin Pease is the director of the Office for Refugees at the Roman Catholic Diocese of Hamilton.

Book Reviews



No One Is Too Small to Make a Difference
By Greta Thunberg
Penguin Books, 2020

Reviewed by Keira Kang

Many people worry about the climate crisis and want to drive positive change, but often feel restricted in their inability to influence society and government leaders. That's how 15-year-old Swede Greta Thunberg felt. Until one day in the fall of 2018, when she decided to take to the streets of Stockholm and march in front of the Parliament building, all alone, urging leaders to act on the climate crisis.

In a matter of weeks, her lonely vigil garnered widespread support from youth and leaders around the world. From the World Economic Forum to the United Nations Climate Change Conference, this book is a collection of eleven powerful speeches made by Greta Thunberg, a now global climate justice activist and *Time's* 2019 *Person of the Year*.

Through her lived struggles with Asperger's syndrome, obsessive compulsive disorder, and autism, Greta shares how her disabilities have gifted her the unique ability to see the climate crisis as a "black and white" issue. Enraged by the hypocrisy of world leaders, Greta fearlessly points to the stark irony of large decision-makers who are aware of temperatures rising, forests burning, and ice caps melting, but intentionally turn a blind eye by continuing to invest in the oil industry.

Urging political figures, global businesspeople, and youth that there are absolutely no grey areas when it comes to climate change, Greta's message is loud and clear: We must act now, and no one is too small or too powerless to make a difference.

Keira Kang is CPJ's public justice intern.



On Fire: The (Burning) Case for a Green New Deal
By Naomi Klein
Penguin Books, 2019

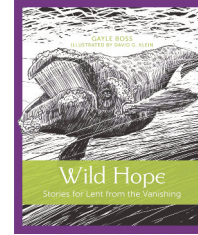
Reviewed by Karri Munn-Venn

I was feeling a little uneasy as I began Naomi Klein's *On Fire*. It felt simultaneously like too much in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, and that it would be not quite enough with all that has changed in the brief period since the book's publication. Thankfully it was just right.

I've read several of Klein's previous books. They are consistently well-researched, engagingly written, and informative. Previous volumes, however, had an ideological edginess to them that I worried would alienate the people who had the most to learn from Klein's analysis. It may have been here too, but I didn't hear it.

In this collection of a decade's worth of essays and presentations, Klein expresses grief, fear, and a deep well of hopefulness as she reflects on pivotal moments in the push for climate justice: meeting Pope Francis, the election of Donald Trump, the 2017 B.C. wildfires, the rise of Greta Thunberg and the youth climate movement, and calls for a Green New Deal in the U.S. and Canada. Her writing resonates with me, in part, I think because I've written about some of the same events and I've navigated a similar grief. I'm a part of her "we," and I too see an abundance of potential in the vast social movements around the world that are calling for transformative change not only to address the climate crisis, but the interconnected crises of racism, inequality, poverty, and greed. A worthy read.

Karri Munn-Venn is CPJ's senior policy analyst.



Wild Hope: Stories for Lent from the Vanishing
By Gayle Boss
Paraclete Press, 2020

Reviewed by Leona Lortie

Wild Hope is a beautiful collection of short stories exploring the beauty of creation, framed in an invitation to act. The stories of endangered animals featured in each chapter, which draw us into worlds of amazing complexity and dire threats, are woven together with stories of humans who passionately care about their future.

Through each week of Lent, readers discover the realities of four animals on the brink of extinction, grouped in sets describing the source of their common suffering. The animals, representing a wide range of species and environments, all suffer from factors which can be traced back to human intervention. These factors include a changing climate, population growth, and maybe most devastating, complacent human minds. Intricately and intimately, their stories strike at the heart of the predicament of our interconnectedness. In the introduction, Boss invites the reader to consider what the future for most of these creatures steeped in uncertainty might tell us about our collective future.

Because of wild hope and a lot of unrelenting hard work, animals like the takhi, having been saved, nursed, and protected, are once again found in the wildness of Mongolia. Through these stories, Boss inspires us to learn more about endangered species, but even more importantly, she aims to invite us and spark in us the wild hope that drives the passion of those humans who take on the seemingly impossible tasks of saving animals from the brink of extinction.

Leona Lortie is the public engagement and advocacy coordinator at MCC's Ottawa Office.



Recovering to Net Zero Emissions

By Karri Munn-Venn

Everything has changed. The COVID-19 pandemic, and the world's response to it, has led to a dramatic drop in oil use and rising unemployment. This, paired with record-low oil prices, has many now asking, "how do we build back better?"

While some are eager to get to the way things were, many of us welcome the space these strange times have created for exploring bold new ideas about how we live, work, and play together.

In Canada, all levels of government have demonstrated a willingness to set aside political differences and roll-out new financial supports. They have demonstrated what is possible with political will. Now, in addition to our solid response to the pandemic, we must address the ongoing climate crisis.

In December 2019, the new Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, Jonathan Wilkinson, pledged to introduce federal legislation for net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. As we recover from COVID-19, we must determine how that will be achieved.

The October 2018 report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change stated clearly that even meeting the temperature goals of the Paris Agreement requires, "rapid and far-reaching transitions in energy, land, urban and infrastructure (including transport and buildings), and industrial systems."

It is clear that, fundamentally, a societal shift is required.

CPJ recently joined a broad coalition of civil society organizations that presented Principles for a Just Recovery, urging the federal government to prioritize human health and wellbeing; strengthen social supports; support workers and communities; build resilience, solidarity, and equity; and, honour Indigenous rights.

The system change we need will be achieved when we begin with what matters

most: health, wellbeing, community, and nature. Economic systems, technological developments, and public policy should then be created in ways that get Canada to net-zero emissions by 2050.

A 2019 report published by Nature Climate Change suggests that in the 18 developed economies that reduced emissions between 2005 and 2015, two factors were key: the replacement of fossil fuels by renewable energy and decreases in energy use. They achieved these changes with a breadth of (up to 81) complementary policies and regulations. In other words, "a complete suite" of measures focused on the promotion of energy efficiency and renewables.

Consider this in the Canadian context where the economy—especially in the West—is defined by oil. For some, work in oil and gas is part of their identity. We have the second highest per capita energy use among OECD countries, and 81 per cent of national GHG emissions are energy-related. Of course, a big part of this transition is mindset. Are we willing to imagine ourselves differently?

Norway is Europe's largest oil producer. It is also a global leader in the adoption of electric vehicles. Over 75 per cent of new cars sales are electric. Electricity generation in Norway is nearing 100 per cent renewable. And, in 2019, the country grabbed international headlines when it divested \$13 billion from oil, gas, and coal.

Norway isn't a perfect model, but they have succeeded in bending the curve and demonstrated that significant change is possible.

The United Kingdom also has some valuable lessons to share. In 2008, they passed their Climate Change Act (UK CCA). Since then, GHG emissions have been reduced 44 per cent below 1990 levels, attributable largely to the inclusion of accountability measures (budgets, audits, and other tools similar to those used in financial

planning) in the UK CCA legal framework.

Canada, by contrast, has yet to meet one of its international climate action commitments—ever.

Drawing on the UK example and subsequent legislation in other countries, Ecojustice (working with several Canadian environmental NGOs) has identified international best practices that they recommend guide the development of a Canadian Climate Accountability Act:

- long-term emissions reduction targets paired with clear Ministerial oversight and responsibility;
- regular planning and reporting that includes legislated time-bound obligations;
- five-year carbon budgets with corresponding regular impact reports; and,
- the establishment of an authoritative, independent expert climate advisory panel.

Fortunately, models for climate action accountability already exist in Canada. Namely, Manitoba's 2018 Climate and Green Plan Implementation Act, British Columbia's revised 2019 Climate Change Accountability Act, and Quebec's forthcoming climate bill.

Decisions will surely need to be made about the specific suite of policies required to decarbonize the Canadian economy. First, however, we need to be clear about what we aim to accomplish, the values we hold, and the priorities we have for our families, our communities, and our country.

Let's not endeavour to "get back to normal," but rather to build back better, putting people and the planet first.



Karri Munn-Venn is CPJ's senior policy analyst.



Justice for Immigrant Frontline Workers

By Deborah Mebude

It's clear that some immigrant classes experience times of crisis differently than others in this country.

A survey from Statistics Canada, conducted between March 29 and April 3, 2020, showed the disparities. When it came to health-related concerns, 49 per cent of immigrants were “very” or “extremely” concerned about their own health,” compared to 33 per cent of Canadian-born individuals. Meanwhile 69 per cent of immigrants were concerned about the health of “other household members,” compared to just 50 per cent of non-immigrants. Immigrants were also more likely to feel the crisis would have a “major” or “moderate” impact on their finances, at a rate of 36 per cent, versus 27 for non-immigrants. This is significant since socio-economic status is a major determinant of health.

Based on the data from previous economic downturns, we know that various refugee classes have experienced periods of economic instability in different ways. Between the years 2005 and 2014, government assisted refugees (GARs) have consistently

“Migrant workers and refugee claimants play an essential role in Canada’s employment landscape.”

fared the worst compared to other immigrant classes. Privately sponsored refugees (PSRs) also experienced considerable economic losses during the 2008-2009 recession and continue to fall below refugee claimants in more recent years.

With this in mind, it makes sense that the current global pandemic would exacerbate the existing issues at the intersections of immigration status, class, and race. Fari-

borz Birjandian, CEO at the Calgary Catholic Immigration Society, notes that PSRs and GARs have been able to benefit from some of the social and financial supports that have been available during this time. Many refugee claimants, however, have been left in a place of particular precarity due to a combination of social and economic factors brought on by COVID-19.

First, there are those refugee claimants who’ve been unable to get to Canada as a result of new restrictions. Since March 20, 2020, the Canada-U.S. border has been closed to non-essential travel. Despite the urgent, essential nature of seeking asylum, an untold number of refugee claimants have been barred access to Canada’s refugee process, conflating existing restrictions caused by the Canada-U.S. Safe Third Country Agreement along our land borders.

But during the present crisis, we have also seen that many frontline workers in long term care homes are among those in Canada with “precarious” immigration status. This includes many refugee claimants who are serving alongside temporary foreign workers in essential industries, including farm work and healthcare, notably in parts of Quebec. In High River, just south of Calgary, it’s well-known that many immigrants, temporary foreign workers, and refugees were among those employees most significantly affected by a COVID-19 outbreak at the Cargill Meat plant. This was the largest outbreak in Canada to date, with over 949 workers infected and over 1,500 cases linked to the plant.

So many racialized and newcomer communities face disproportionate risks of contracting COVID-19. This is why immigration advocates in Montreal took to the streets in Prime Minister Trudeau’s riding of Papineau this spring. They demanded that the federal and provincial governments grant permanent residence to those working on the frontlines in the fight against COVID-19.

These protesters believe it to be unjust that foreign workers continue to put their lives at risk in service to Canadians without the security that comes with permanent residence. Many across Canada have similarly begun to insist on fair, livable wages for all frontline workers. The pandemic has illuminated the essential roles that so many play in our economy, be they grocery store clerks or long-term care nurses.

Migrant workers and refugee claimants play an essential role in Canada’s employment landscape. Should the present border restrictions continue late into the summer, there are bound to be significant impacts on the agricultural sector and Canada’s food supply. If refugees and migrant workers are barred entry to Canada, it will certainly mean labour shortages across an industry so dependent on underpaid seasonal workers. Meanwhile refugees unable to access Canada’s asylum system continue to face very dire and urgent risks.

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the federal government should take note of the fundamental role that foreign workers, including refugees, play in our food and health care systems. Beyond being the backbone for the economy, migrant workers and refugees deserve to have their rights and safety upheld both on and off the job. By opening the border to allow refugee claimants access to protection, granting a pathway to citizenship for the migrant workers that keep us healthy and fed, and by ensuring that these workers receive fair wages and safe working conditions, the federal government would be doing a noble thing for migrant workers both during and after this pandemic.

Deborah Mebude is a public policy researcher, journalist, and a former CPJ staff member now based in Calgary.





Together for the Love of Creation

By Beth Lorimer

In 2018, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warned that the world had 12 years to act on climate change or bear the consequences of ecosystem collapse and biodiversity loss. Two years later, this deadline now looms amidst the global COVID-19 pandemic and tipping points in the struggles for racial equality and Indigenous rights in what is called North America. The pandemic has laid bare the interconnectedness of all these issues and has exacerbated pre-existing crises of colonialism, human rights abuses, social inequity, and the climate crisis. We know we cannot go back to the way things were, and we are being called to work in new ways towards a sustainable future for all life on this planet.

“We draw inspiration from the rich history of ecumenical and faith-based collaboration in social justice movements.”

It is in this moment that a coalition of churches and faith-based organizations have come together to make a meaningful contribution to climate justice in the next decade. Launched on Earth Day (April 22, 2020), *For the Love of Creation – A Faith-based Initiative for Climate Justice* has, to date, brought together 30 Canadian churches and faith-based organizations, and it continues to grow. These organizations have pledged to collaborate more deeply and engage more broadly than we ever have before.

While we, as faith communities, have come together under a unified banner, *For the Love of Creation* is situated in a much

broader movement for climate justice. Our work honours Indigenous Peoples’ resilience and wisdom and the work of global partners who show us a sustainable way forward, even in this time of crisis. We look to social movements, here in Canada, that have worked so diligently for accountability and change. We are inspired and motivated by young people, whose transformative work is changing everything. While there is an urgency to this work, there is also recognition that we can leave no one behind. We must develop plans that reflect the needs and priorities of the world’s most vulnerable populations.

The work of climate justice is not new for the organizations in this coalition. But the urgency of this decade is requiring us to work together in new ways. We draw inspiration from the rich history of ecumenical and faith-based collaboration in social justice movements. From churches in North America leading the campaign against apartheid in South Africa in the 1980s to the ecumenical Jubilee 2000 campaign calling for cancellation of third world debt, there are numerous examples where people of faith came together to turn the wheels of justice. The unified message of those campaigns was hard to ignore then and it will be hard to ignore now.

For the Love of Creation will weave together reflection, education, action, and advocacy to advance meaningful responses to the climate emergency. Together, we will create a space for collaborative responsive theology, exploring our relationship with the Creator and creation, and encouraging theologically-grounded and relevant dialogue about climate justice and global warming. We will endeavour to increase dialogue and reduce polarization in the climate change conversation in Canada; to build consensus on the actions needed to build a sustainable future for all. As people of faith, we will urge the government of

Canada to meet and ultimately exceed our Paris climate commitments by investing in a just transition and establishing a fair and inclusive economy.

This national-level initiative is open to all faith communities and faith-based organizations who wish to take meaningful action for climate justice in the next decade. We will engage people individually and in community, as congregations and organizations, all across the country. We have entered that crucial decade where immediate and collaborative action for justice by communities of faith is needed now more than ever. We hope you will join us.



For the Love of Creation

CPJ and KAIROS are excited to join a growing list of national churches, Christian international development agencies, and faith-based organizations in launching **For the Love of Creation – A Faith-based Initiative for Climate Justice**. For more information go to cpj.ca/love-of-creation.

Beth Lorimer is the ecological justice program coordinator at KAIROS Canada and the convener of the *For the Love of Creation* Working Group.





The Canadian Church Must Break Ties with White Supremacy

By Bernadette Arthur

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed that humanity and nature are inextricably interdependent and interconnected. The apostle Paul's metaphor of the human body in 1 Corinthians 12 offers brilliant imagery that illustrates this reality:

We are parts of a whole (verse 12). Everyone has been called upon to engage in physical distancing and quarantine measures in order to flatten the curve.

If one member suffers we all suffer (verse 26). The impact of COVID-19 on the long-term care industry has revealed that the suffering of our community's elders means the suffering of our healthcare professionals, families, etc.

A member's assertion around not being a part of the body does not nullify their belonging to the whole (verse 15). Canadian protestors who demanded a right to return to work amidst a shelter-in-place order were reminded of this reality.

This pandemic has also revealed what many activists, advocates, and prophetic voices have been saying for decades: this country continues to deny the level of inequities that exist for people who are racialized as other than white. Characteristic of Canada, there was a reticence to collect race-based pandemic data. Recent data indicates a high prevalence of COVID-19 in predominantly racialized minority neighbourhoods in the Greater Toronto Area. This means that Canada's inability to accept systemic racism has once again resulted in racialized minority community members experiencing increased vulnerabilities.

In the midst of all these realizations, many churches are grappling with questions around identity and relevancy. They are asking themselves: Who are we outside of our physical weekly gatherings? How do we practically develop and support disciples that act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with God and others? (Micah 6:8).

The church may have difficulty in responding to these questions in healthy and authentic ways because it hasn't yet interrogated its own role in upholding racist systems and practices.

Canada has a history of stealing Indigenous lands, controlling the migration patterns of people of colour mainly based on labour needs, and of creating direct and indirect policies of assimilation. The Canadian institutional church has been instrumental in helping to culturally and structurally maintain these racist practices sometimes through silence and oftentimes by creating programs and communities that uphold white supremacy culture and neo-colonial worldviews. This results in communities which unintentionally protect the interests of white supremacy and commodify and paternalize communities of colour. Most Canadian churches resemble colonial enterprises, even those that boast of multi-racial congregations. Our churches have largely refused to interrogate how they have participated and been complicit in discriminatory practices that marginalize and oppress racialized members of the body of Christ.

In "Decolonized Discipleship" public theologian Ekemini Uwan asks, "Do the minds and the lives of... urban disciples reflect a baptism of faith in the marginalized brown-skinned Palestinian God-man, Jesus Christ, who was bludgeoned and hung naked on that rugged cross at Calvary? Or does their baptism reflect faith in a capitalist white Jesus, clothed in a Polo blazer, khakis, and loafers?"

Uwan continues, "There are grave consequences for worshipping the latter, which is no more than an idol (Exodus 20: 3-4), and discipling people of color to do the same."

Growing up as a first generation Canadian (born and raised a settler on Anishnabeg and Haudenosaunee territory), I spent my formative years attending predominantly Black Caribbean churches. In these churches I learned the art of public speaking, event planning, and about active community engagement. I was able to develop as an individual and contribute in a thriving community of people who looked like me. I didn't realize how important this was until this last decade of living.

As an adult I have existed in predomi-

nantly white Christian spaces. I've experienced micro-aggressions, which largely come in the form of polite tolerance or paternalistic pride. In these communities, I realized that I wasn't really part of the family and that my contributions would be scrutinized in ways that my white Christian siblings were not. Thanks to my foundations in the Black church, I didn't feel the need to assimilate into white ways of being or knowing, but I did feel profoundly alone and like my identity was always being attacked in subtle ways.

In his book *Wretched of the Earth*, Frantz Fanon writes: "The church in the colonies is the white people's Church, the foreigner's Church. She does not call the native to God's ways but to the ways of the white man, of the master, or the oppressor. And as you know, in this matter many are called but few chosen."

It is time for the Canadian church to break ties with the systems of this world (Romans 12:2) and do some critical examination about how they are participating in systems of racial oppression. It is only through this introspective work and subsequent repentance that the church will be able to meaningfully engage in racial justice and healing work. There is a collective cry for a culture shift that moves towards equity and justice for racialized minority communities. Will the Canadian church join in this movement or will she deny that she is a part in the whole? May the Holy Spirit use this pandemic to awaken the parts of the body that have been numb to life so that whether our physical doors are open or not, it can be undoubtedly said that the Canadian church stands for justice and righteousness.

Bernadette Arthur (she/her) is a Black woman born on Turtle Island and engaged in the work of racial justice in Christian spaces. She is the owner of A Shared Table, a social purpose business that curates authentic and inclusive cross-cultural spaces.

