

# TEMPORARY LABOUR/PERMANENT EXCLUSION: THE ENTRENCHED INEQUALITY OF MIGRANT WORK

Bethany Hastie

April 9<sup>th</sup> 2015

# Introduction

- Wave of media reports concerning April 1<sup>st</sup> 'deadline' for first wave of migrant workers under the 4-year rule in Canada
- NGOs 'fighting' against the rule as unfair to workers and contributing to potential growth in irregular migration
- Businesses apparently opposed to rule as they will now have to re-apply and re-train new workers
- Government allegedly vowing to 'crackdown' to ensure migrant workers eligible under the rule leave Canada
- What does all this say about the state of temporary labour migration?

# Overview

- Historical and contemporary contexts of labour migration in Europe and Canada
- Examining the entrenched inequality of migrant work:
  - ▣ Structural inequality between nations
  - ▣ Constructed inequality in labour markets
  - ▣ Power dynamics and inequality in the individual employment relationship

# A Brief History of Migrant Worker Programs: Europe

- European experiences: 1945-1970s
  - ▣ Experimentation with various models of formalized labour migration
  - ▣ Advent of 'circular' migration schemes (i.e., Germany)
  - ▣ Eventual breakdown of recruitment and rotation systems
- Current trends in Europe towards renewed temporary labour migration programs

# A Brief History of Migrant Worker Programs: Canada

- Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program: 1960s-present
  - ▣ Seasonal migration scheme
  - ▣ Bilateral agreements / government-to-government operation
- Temporary Foreign Workers Program: 1970s-present
  - ▣ Lower-skilled occupations introduced in early 2000s
  - ▣ Decreased government involvement
  - ▣ Significant regulatory changes in past decade

# Canada's Temporary Foreign Worker Programs: Current Figures

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	% increase
Live-in caregiver program	5,028	6,651	7,133	9,079	12,955	11,867	8,756	7,545	5,884	6,242	24
Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program	18,698	19,052	20,281	21,253	22,581	24,189	23,393	23,914	24,500	25,414	36
Low skill pilot program	2,327	2,785	3,769	6,529	15,310	25,664	19,014	14,143	15,167	20,636	886
Other workers with LMO	22,089	22,583	24,242	26,495	30,306	32,312	26,611	22,666	24,065	28,111	27
<b>Workers with LMO ****</b>	<b>49,194</b>	<b>52,369</b>	<b>57,187</b>	<b>65,487</b>	<b>84,129</b>	<b>97,226</b>	<b>80,462</b>	<b>71,139</b>	<b>70,222</b>	<b>80,613</b>	<b>64</b>

\*\*\*\*Labour Market Opinion

Citizenship and Immigration Canada, *Facts and Figures 2012 – Immigration overview: Permanent and temporary residents* (online: <http://www.cic.gc.ca>).

# Global Inequality as Foundational to the Proliferation of Migrant Labour

- Globalization and labour mobility: a key underlying context to accelerated labour migration
- Structural inequality between sending and receiving states as the foundation for labour migration and claims made in respect of their benefits
- The resulting 'other' mentality fostered by the underlying context

# Temporary Labour Migration Programs and the 'Triple Win' Scenario

- The “triple win” promise of temporary labour migration programs:
  - ▣ Receiving state benefits from ‘just in time’ labour
  - ▣ Sending state benefits from remittances and domestic economic development
  - ▣ Migrant workers benefit from higher income and employment opportunities
- Questioning the trip win: development or dependence?



# Constructed Inequality in Labour Markets

- The claim of domestic workers' job rejection
- The creation of a migrant economy: distortion and dependence
- The resulting 'othered' status of migrant workers and allocation of differential rights

# Power Dynamics and Inequality in the Individual Employment Relationship

- Underlying Perceptions concerning Migrant Labour:
  - ▣ Racialized perceptions of migrant workers
  - ▣ Rationalizations for poor treatment of workers and entrenched inequality of migrant labour
- The inherent and exacerbated power imbalance in the employer-worker relationship
- Navigating rights in a landscape of entrenched inequality

# Conclusion

- Temporary labour migration programs are:
  - ▣ Predicated on global structural inequality;
  - ▣ Facilitate inequality in labour market conditions; and,
  - ▣ Produce inequality in individual migrant experiences.
  
- Where do we go from here?