

# NEW VOICES

Working together to reduce poverty and enhance newcomer voices



Mennonite  
**new life**  
centre  
Vol. 03, Issue 1

Summer 2011 • [www.mnlct.org/nvoices](http://www.mnlct.org/nvoices)



## International Arrivals

Flights for Thursday, April 15th 2010

14:00 Dubai	BA108	Arrived
18:05 Lusaka	BA254	Arrived
18:15 Mumbai	BA198	Arrived

Flights for Friday, April 16th 2010

05:25 Hong Kong	BA028	Arrived
05:55 Nairobi	BA064	Arrived
06:20 Johannesburg	BA056	Arrived
06:35 Doha	BA124	Arrived
via: Bahrain		
06:40 Muscat	BA072	Arrived
via: Abu Dhabi		
06:50 Cape Town	BA058	Arrived
07:20 Johannesburg	BA054	Arrived
07:20 Buenos Aires	BA246	Arrived
07:20 via: Sao Paulo		
07:30 Mumbai	BA138	Arrived
12:15 Manchester	BA1391	Arrived
12:35 Paris CdG	BA309	Arrived
12:40 Geneva	BA727	Arrived
12:50 Toulouse	BA373	Arrived

13:25 Prague	BA855	Arrived
13:30 Rome	BA553	Arrived
13:35 Warsaw	BA847	Arrived
13:50 Stockholm	AY5927	Arrived
14:00 Munich	BA951	Arrived
14:10 Glasgow	BA1483	Arrived
14:10 Paris CdG	BA315	Arrived
14:15 Zurich	BA713	Arrived
14:25 Geneva	BA729	Arrived
14:30 Hamburg	BA969	Arrived
14:30 Manchester	IB7683	Arrived
14:35 Nice	BA347	Arrived
14:45 Milan-Linate	BA577	Arrived
14:50 Newcastle	BA1333	Arrived
14:55 Frankfurt	BA905	Arrived
14:55 Pisa	BA601	Arrived
15:00 Belgrade	BA889	Arrived
15:00 Copenhagen	BA815	Arrived
15:05 Edinburgh	BA1445	Arrived
15:05 Abuja	BA082	Arrived
15:10 Budapest	BA867	Arrived

15:35 Brussels	BA395	Arrived
15:45 Glasgow	AY5976	Arrived
15:55 Geneva	BA731	Arrived
16:00 Prague	BA861	Arrived
16:00 Sofia	BA891	Arrived
16:05 Istanbul	BA679	Arrived
16:15 Zurich	CX7210	Arrived
16:25 Algiers	BA895	Arrived
16:25 Manchester	BA1399	Arrived
16:30 Nice	CX7236	Arrived
16:40 Athens	BA641	Arrived
16:40 Amsterdam	BA439	Arrived
17:00 Paris CdG	BA319	Arrived
17:05 Milan-Linate	BA563	Arrived
17:05 Dusseldorf	BA941	Arrived
17:15 Edinburgh	IB7509	Arrived
17:15 Munich	CX7164	Arrived
17:15 Stockholm	BA779	Arrived
17:25 Copenhagen	BA817	Arrived
17:25 Kiev	BA883	Arrived
17:25 Brussels	BA397	Arrived
17:35 Berlin	CX7184	Arrived
17:40 Glasgow	IB7529	Arrived
17:50 Frankfurt	BA909	Arrived
18:00 Zurich	BA717	Arrived

Newcomers build bridges

Newcomers give back

Newcomers create jobs

Newcomers improve global security

## NEW VOICES

- 3 Editorial: Time to reciprocate**  
Winnie Ng
- 4 Newcomers build bridges**  
Randa El Ozeir
- 6 Newcomers give back**  
Endrit Mullisi
- 8 Newcomer Speakers Bureau**
- 10 Newcomers create jobs**  
Beliana Yi
- 12 Newcomers and global security**  
Ali Zafar
- 14 Opinion: Who belongs?**  
Lois M. Wilson

### Editor:

Carlyn Zwarenstein  
bleedingheartcommunications.com

### Creative Team:

Tanya Chute Molina  
Adriana Salazar  
Jessica Farias  
H. Ivan Padilla (Design)

### Photos:

Alejandro Neira  
Shan Qia

### The creative team would like to thank:

**METCALF  
FOUNDATION**



**The Atkinson**

Wallenstein Feed  
Charitable Foundation



## Message from the executive director

This winter, I returned from vacation in El Salvador, my second home and my husband's birthplace, to find Canada in the midst of heated debate on the future of immigration and multiculturalism. On TV, I watched Steve Paikin of TVO's current affairs show *The Agenda* ask a series of distinguished guests, "Is the mosaic working?". Later, he posed the same contentious question to Duceppe, Harper, Ignatieff, and Layton during the 2011 leaders' debate.

Indeed, the pre-election efforts by all parties to win over the so-called "ethnic vote" show recognition that multiculturalism is a demographic fact in Canada. More than that, welcoming immigrants and honouring their culture is part of our national identity – something that sets us apart from other nations.

Repeated opinion polls have shown that Canadians hold more positive attitudes towards immigration than people in the US and Europe.

Yet polls also show that attitudes are hardening, reflecting the suspicion and cynicism of immigration policy discussions focused on "bogus refugees" and "fraudulent marriages." Meanwhile, immigrant and racialized citizens are resisting the "ethnic" label, demanding a real voice in the future of the country they call home.

Multiculturalism challenges us to look at issues of power and privilege, democratic dialogue and social change. As Winnie Ng points out in our guest editorial, immigrants and refugees have long played a key role in bringing about progressive change – from the introduction of the Ontario Human Rights code to the increase in minimum wage.

Canada is a better place thanks to the contributions of new Canadians. As our internationally trained writers show, new Canadians are invigorating our democratic debate, building bridges between cultures, giving back to local communities, and stimulating the economy through creative entrepreneurship. Our collective future, urges retired Senator, and former United Church Moderator Lois Wilson in our opinion article, depends on the ability of individuals, institutions and communities to open themselves to both the gifts and the challenges of diversity.

My national family – like my nuclear family – is multicultural. Both of those mosaics work best when we recognize that all of us belong, all of us have a voice, and all of us have important contributions to make.

*T. Chute Molina*  
Tanya Chute Molina, Executive Director

# EDITORIAL: TIME TO RECIPROCATE

**By Winnie Ng,**

CAW Sam Gindin Chair in Social Justice & Democracy, Ryerson University and Co-Chair, Good Jobs for All Coalition.

*“In this land, aside from the First Nation Peoples, we are all immigrants or refugees, or descendants and descendants of immigrants or refugees.”* Rosemary Brown, former Chief Commissioner, Ontario Human Rights Commission.

Rosemary Brown’s words capture the essence of who we are as inhabitants of this land. They recognize the historical and inherent rights of Aboriginal peoples, defining the context and social location of diverse generations of non-Indigenous peoples in Canada.

Every generation of immigrants and refugees dreams of landing back on their own two feet and building a better life for their children. Taking root in unfamiliar terrain takes courage, ingenuity and the will to push on because there is no turning back. Immigrant life experiences have added resiliency, vibrancy and colour to the fabric of our society. Countless unsung heroes and heroines have given back to their communities more than a thousand-fold.

Toronto has been the gathering place for many such generations of immigrants and refugees. Fifty years ago, Italian immigrant workers built the subway system. Portuguese construction workers gained landed status by the calluses of their hands, while immigrant women plied their needles in the Spadina garment district. Then came the Caribbean and Asian domestic workers, the factory assemblers, the hotel workers—the countless, nameless and invisible workers who form the backbone of this great city. They are truly the city builders.

Yet this gathering place is not always a welcoming one. The fabric of diversity is far from power-neutral. Rather, it is laced with the inequalities of race, gender and class. The pain and anguish of being seen as ‘others’ and treated as outsiders is all too common.

The reality of racism, as evidenced in problems of unemployment and underemployment, is a constant challenge for people of colour and their families. Grace-Edward Galabuzi and Sheila Block’s recent study on the colour-coded labour market shows workers of colour earn much less than otherwise comparable non-racialized workers, even when they are second generation, born and educated in Canada.

Study after study has made far-reaching recommendations on improving access to trades and professions for the internationally trained and yet—thirty years later—we are still

tinkering with pilot projects. In the meantime, we have lost a whole generation of talents, skills and expertise.

As new Canadians, we bring to this country more than song and dance, costumes and customs. The term “ethnic” is a code word for race, with some of us deemed “very ethnic.” It can be tiring to keep reminding politicians at all levels that we are not just a photo op and that, like any other mature community with its own internal differences, we seldom vote as a block.

Against all odds, newcomers have survived and given back to the community in abundance. In addition to their education and professional expertise, many have brought rich community-building experiences from their countries of origin. In this newly adopted country, they have organized and mobilized their communities to overcome the sense of isolation.

Giving back to the community has taken many forms, from volunteering and participating in community events, to supporting each other and maintaining dignity through the last recession. These experiences are what make all of us whole. Creating community gives us a sense of belonging—of being at home.

All three levels of government need to recognize the gift bestowed upon us by the presence and contributions of new Canadians, and learn to facilitate their settlement in a meaningful and participatory manner that goes beyond tokenism.

Fifty years ago, community and labour activists of diverse origins went out in pairs to expose racism in housing, leading to a groundswell of support for the introduction of the Ontario Human Rights Code. In the 1970s, the advocacy work of Women Working with Immigrant Women (WWIW) led to more equal access to language training for immigrant women.

More recently, the Workers’ Action Centre has won positive change in regulating temp agencies, while strong community and labour coalition efforts successfully raised the minimum wage for Ontario workers. In each of these instances, immigrants and refugees have played an important role in bringing about progressive legislative change for the greater good of the community.

In spite of the many challenges, generations of immigrants and newcomers have given back—with commitment, dedication, and hopefulness—to their communities and to Canada. It is in this spirit of giving and receiving that we urge the newly elected federal government to foster a more nurturing, equitable and dignified system for new Canadians. It is time now to reciprocate.

## THE TRUTH:

# Newcomers build bridges

By Randa El Ozeir

A few children, clearly representing different ethnic backgrounds, are playing together in Toronto's High Park.

A casual passer-by might not give this scene a second glance. But listen: something should catch your ear. As the children play, they chatter and shout to each other in English. When their parents and grandparents call, they quickly shift to their respective mother tongues.

In a country like Canada, as in other immigrant-receiving countries, some see newcomers as clustering in isolated groups that stick together against the 'outside' world. But the reality I see in the park today gives the lie to the myth of the insular immigrant.

Canada prides itself on being a land of immigrants.

Our citizenship guide boasts of the millions of newcomers who have helped to build and defend our way of life over the last 200 years. Many immigrants have a true feeling of belonging to the country and see Canada as offering a home for themselves, and their future children,

that is free of discrimination on the basis of their origins, their differences.

And yet, racialization is still a reality in Canada. Even established citizens are often assumed to be recent immigrants because of their skin colour. However, mixed marriages are helping to blur the colour line and decrease social distance between racialized and white Canadians.

In 2006, nearly 300,000 Canadians were involved in mixed marriages or mixed common-law relationships; that's a rise of nearly 30 per cent from 2001. The same census of 2006 found that the vast majority of interracial couples (85 per cent) involve a white person and a visible minority individual.

That's just one of the reasons that immigrants must quickly learn to balance back-home-country and new-home-country culture. Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters, or HIPPY, is an international program intended to teach parents to become their children's first teachers. HIPPY Canada has a twelve-year history



Lubna Khalid shares an intimate moment with her children at the graduation ceremony of the Newcomer Speaker's Bureau, held April 27, 2011 at Toronto City Hall.

of helping newcomer children to move comfortably between their home culture and language and their expanded Canadian social world—while also helping parents, especially mothers, to overcome social isolation and make friends across cultures. The key seems to lie in welcoming the new while cherishing the old.

“We do respect our families and their cultures, and we educate them on the Canadian culture as well,” explains HIPPY manager Sylvie Charlie Karam. That Canadian culture is increasingly about dialogue between cultures. “We research very specific celebrations of our 210 families of newcomers, such as Nowrouz, Ramadan and Chinese New Year, and incorporate them in our [multi-ethnic] group meetings,” she says.

At the YMCA’s Newcomer Settlement Program, approximately 70 per cent of the staff are foreign born. Altogether, they speak 45 international languages. Here, integration is the name of the game.

“We find that newcomers generally are very open with each other and want to learn and experience new cultures,” says Teresa Costa, General Manager of Newcomer Settlement Programs at the Y. “They are also very willing to share their culture with others.”

To build on that natural desire to reach out, Costa’s program promotes ethno-specific and faith-based events and celebrations to build awareness and respect for our differences while emphasizing what diverse newcomers have in common.

“We provide newcomers with as many community referrals as possible for services that do not cater to a specific ethnic group unless the client is more comfortable in obtaining services within their own ethnic community.”

Ethno-specific communities can indeed be a first bridge for newcomers, helping them find roots in Canada before venturing further afield. But they’re not the only way.

“Immigrants might stick to their communities only at the beginning when they find themselves in a new place,” explains Lubna Khalid, a medical lab assistant from Pakistan who came to Canada in 2000. Now a Canadian citizen, she has reached out of her home community by becoming a member of the Newcomer Speakers Bureau at the Mennonite New Life Centre.

Through the Speakers Bureau training series this winter and spring, immigrants and refugees from twelve different countries shared their stories, finding strength in shared struggles and hope in shared dreams.

“I spoke about my culture and, at the same time, I listened to the others and was open to the differences,” Khalid says. Working in Canada and being exposed to the issues her clients face has helped as well.

Not that it’s always easy. Carolina Mateo Gonzalez, a psychologist who came as a refugee from Mexico in 2008 and who now works in an Ontario Early Years Centre, needed to adapt quickly to different mores. “I appreciate physical contact like hugs and kisses; however, in Canada, and especially in a multicultural city like Toronto, I have had to learn that not everybody is comfortable with such gestures.”

“An immigrant will always carry a “dual” personality, adding a new perspective to his “old” one,” cautions cross-cultural trainer Julio Pena. “The key to success in such a process is adaptation and being proactive.”

Here in High Park, my daughter and her friends adapt every second, shifting constantly between old and new, abandoning nothing. It’s not so easy for all of us. But for every bridge built between cultures, what we gain is easily worth the effort to connect.

## RANDA EL OZEIR

**Randa is an internationally trained journalist who immigrated to Canada in 2008.**

Randa works as a remote editor for BabyCenter Arabia.com.

Randa’s media experience covers the online, print and broadcast spectrum. She’s interested in political and cultural areas, as well as women’s social issues.



## Newcomers give back

By Endrit Mullisi

As I waited in the hall for them to call number 29, I checked once again that all my documents were in order. It was my first time in the Ontario Works office. Applying for social assistance was the last thing I had in mind when I made the decision to immigrate to Canada. But now, all my savings were gone and my family of three had no other income. Without money, I knew from other immigrants' stories, I would enter the "survival cycle"—working non-professional jobs indefinitely.

The alternative was to accept social assistance, using the time bought this way to build professional networks and volunteer in my field of expertise, gradually accumulating that elusive but all important "Canadian experience." Although I felt ashamed to live on social assistance



Eager to contribute to the Ontario mental health sector, bridge training participants compare notes on internship options and pathways to professional recognition at the Opportunities Fair for Internationally Trained Psychologists.

and knew that it would barely amount to a basic living, I chose this second route. I was not the first immigrant knocking at the Social Assistance door, and I wouldn't be the last. Antony Albert, a university professor from Sri Lanka, confessed to me: "I haven't come to Canada to live on social assistance; I need a chance to earn my own money." Me too.

All immigrants, with their diverse origins and motivations, come to Canada hoping fervently to succeed. Many of them must start learning English from ABC; others need help transferring their skills and experience to a new professional context. Non-profit organizations, like the Mennonite New Life Centre and others, provide essential "first aid" and ongoing support to immigrants searching for that first door of opportunity.

Although social programs like settlement services, social assistance and employment training are often the first to come under the knife in a recession, they are actually the most cost-effective strategy for helping newcomers not only to survive but to give back—as taxpayers, professionals, and entrepreneurs.

The bridge training program "Pathways to Employment in Canadian Mental Health", an offering of the Mennonite New Life Centre, is a perfect example of one such value-for-money program. The program, designed for internationally-trained psychologists and allied mental health professionals who need that leg up to get their start in the professional workforce in Canada, offers academic course work, occupation-specific communication training, and supervised internships. With four months to go before the first graduation, seven participants – over 20% of the first class – have already found jobs in their field. Carlos Charris, a psychology graduate from Colombia, is studying under this program and working part time as a mental health counselor for the Mennonite New Life Centre. He says he feels fortunate being selected, knowing that there isn't space for all the people who apply.

On the other hand, labour market demand for mental health professionals is increasing. *Every Door is the Right Door*, an Ontario government report meant to set the context for a ten-year strategy for mental health and addictions, declares that: "shortages of skilled mental health and addiction workers are common across Ontario and contribute to wait lists, job stress and burnout." The paper notes a particular need for workers who can offer culturally competent care to Ontario's diverse population.

Bridge training programs have an important role to play in filling such labour market gaps. The Ryerson Internationally Educated Social Work Professionals Bridging Program reports a full 90% of program graduates professionally employed within six months of graduation. Still, challenges remain. Program staff report serious concerns about accessibility: program participants must find the means to pay academic fees and support their families during a one year program, with the internship component unpaid.

Limited accessibility can deny Canada the skilled workers we need, while contributing to a cycle of poverty and marginalization for newcomer families. It likewise may force continued reliance on social services for people who are eager to see them as only a stepping stone to better things.

Creating more paid internships may be a promising strategy for the future. “[I wish there were] more internships offered as a practical help to professionals [that provide financial support while workers are] learning and practicing,” Charris explains. The Mennonite New Life Centre has drawn on municipal and foundation funding to create three paid internships within their community mental health program. Unfortunately, most bridge training internships and job placements remain unpaid.

Florimar Andrimago, who holds an MBA and systems engineering degree from her native Venezuela, completed a bridging program with AYCE Employment Services. Through this program, she had a 6 week job placement as an administrative assistant, helping her gain crucial understanding of aspects of administration and communication services work that are specific to the Canadian context. “Bridging Programs are worth trying,” she says, acknowledging that nothing guarantees you a job.

Some are luckier than others. Juli Serjani, an English teacher back in Albania, enrolled in the program “ESL instructors educated outside Canada” while receiving social assistance. “I studied hard, had a 6 week placement and through a mock interview with a York University employee, I gained a contact and then a contract with York University, where I’m working now as an ESL teacher,” she reports.

My own experience – like that of Carlos, Juli and others – suggests that nothing invested in immigrants will be in vain. As soon as we find a job, we start living differently. We begin right away giving back to the community that supported us, volunteering for the same organizations that opened the door when we were alone and without hope.

Ex-social assistance recipients now have become contributors to the Canada economy. As Selman Haxhimanka, an Albanian metallurgy engineer now working at Lester B. Pearson International Airport, tells me, “Once I received and now I’m giving back knowing that other immigrants are depending on my support.”

Now I, too, have a part-time job. Mine came through the City of Toronto’s “Investing In Neighborhoods” program, which helps connect social assistance recipients with jobs in non-profit organizations. It’s a one-year position in my field of expertise, as a Volunteer Program Facilitator. I have developed a professional network and I’m continuing my studies, all because the settlement agencies had resources and connections to give me the chance to show what I can do. Very soon this investment in me will start to yield its first fruits.

## ENDRIT MULLISI

**Endrit was born in Albania and has lived in Toronto for nearly 2 years. He immigrated to Canada as a skilled worker, with 13 years’ experience in NGOs.**

A believer in self-education, he also holds a B.Sc in food chemistry. He loves to be involved in social and holistic initiatives and in his limited spare time writes songs or articles, takes photos, plays with his daughter or reads. Dismayed at the difficulty of finding work in Canada, Endrit updated his skills, enrolled in George Brown College and volunteered before landing his first job. A member of the Mennonite New Life Centre’s Newcomer Speakers Bureau, Endrit believes his voice is not only for singing—but also for speaking on behalf of those who can’t. You can reach him at [immigrantvoice@gmail.com](mailto:immigrantvoice@gmail.com)



# Newcomer Speakers Bureau:

**Venecia:** "I am a cook. My passion is food. Hunger is a big problem in our world. We still don't know how to share the most important thing in life: equal opportunity. My dream in life is to spread the message of the urgent need of re-structuring our "food systems" through responsible consumption."

**Sandra:** "In justice. In Canada, my of life of Latin America"

**Endrit:** "Two words became a nightmare: "Canadian experience" and "Canadian education". How can an international educated individual like me gain Canadian experience if no one will give us a chance? Where are my dreams to come in Canada as a skilled worker? Why do they call me skilled worker, if I need to start all from scratch?"

**Leticia:** "Integration is a sharing process where both newcomers and host society are influenced and in some way both change in order to create a better society. What immigrants need is the opportunity of the first door. This is my main message for all of you. How many of you could become or could contribute to this door and be part of others' dreams."

**Judy:** "When we land ful country. We passed the E evaluations, or give us a cha once an immigrant has land should follow up to help tha

In the spring of 2011, the Mennonite New Life Centre offered a ten week public speaking training series. came together to reflect on their lived experience in relation to public policy and social change. The trai grants and refugees from diverse cultural, religious and professional backgrounds, and the importance of To invite a speaker to address a community group or event, contact Adriana Salazar, at 416-699-4527 ex

# Voices of Challenge, Voices of Change

**Jason:** "In Colombia, I worked for the defense of labour rights, human rights and social justice. In Canada, my new challenge is to work with compassion for the reintegration and quality of life of American youth experiencing mental illness."

**Jason:** "We immigrants come to Canada to have a better future! We leave our past lives behind, embrace the changes we have to go through, and move to work and live in Canada. We bring in all of our families and children, who are the future of this country, we bring in our investment, we bring in our talents and intelligence, and biggest of all, our dreams!"

**Olga:** "Thousands of people are suffering right now poverty in this country, and we need to speak up, we need to take care about our future, about our children, and our community. Right now, we have the opportunity and the hope to change the future and the future of all the people that are living like me."

When we landed in Canada, we hoped to share and contribute our knowledge and experience with this beautiful country, pass the English examination, and had our degrees evaluated. Unfortunately, nobody would recognize these qualifications and we were not given a chance to show what we could do. The reason that I am telling you these stories today, it is because when we landed in Canada, that this is not the end of the procedure, rather it is a new beginning and agencies need to help that newcomer to settle down."

Workshops in partnership with Voices from the Street. Twenty newcomers from thirteen different countries participated in the training workshops created opportunity for collective reflection on shared challenges affecting immigrants. The importance of speaking out about the challenges and contributions, proposals and dreams of new Canadians.

229 ext. 229 – asalazar@mnlct.org

## Newcomers create jobs

Social enterprise turns the immigrant job search on its head

By Beliana Yi

Right now, Yury Wu's office is in her home. But the Colombian-born immigrant lights up as she describes the project that will get her out of her house when it opens this summer.

TASTE OF COLOMBIA will be Oakville, Ontario's first green store. The store, a project of her organization, Fair Trade Colombia, will be Wu's first venture into social entrepreneurship. To the sound of Latin American music and the aroma of fresh fair trade coffee, she says, shoppers will scope out unique artisan-made gifts. Their purchases will make a real difference in the lives of small-scale producers in Colombia.

"I discovered the benefits of creating my own job," Wu explains. "It is linking to my passion that is the most important, so my background and skills merge in a vision to help others. I can work independently and gain the satisfaction of lending a hand to the most vulnerable communities."



Immigrant entrepreneurship is alive and well on Toronto's St Clair Avenue.

Indeed, Wu's business will be a platform allowing her to support small artisan groups to get a fair price from Canadian buyers for their natural fibre baskets, cotton and seed hand bags and paper-based artwork. Wu is working on getting fair trade certification for the Colombian coffee she will sell, as well.

"Our producers in Colombia are affected by forced displacement, internal conflict, human trafficking and land mines. Mostly, they are women who have been forced out of their land or have been left to care for their families as single parents."

While improving producers' quality of life through TASTE OF COLOMBIA, Wu's non-profit supports consumers in becoming responsible promoters of human rights, countering the use of child workers and other forms of labour exploitation.

Altogether, Wu sees herself as a special kind of businesswoman. "I have a model of doing business while doing good," she explains.

### Social innovation: game changer?

Immigrants have traditionally been enthusiastic businesspeople because there are often fewer barriers to entry than in the professions.

In Ontario, an astonishing 97.4 % of businesses are small businesses, those with less than 100 employees. Small businesses account for 52% of net job creation across Canada, according to Statistics Canada. And newcomers start their own businesses at a higher rate than the Canadian-born population. As a social entrepreneur, Wu is part of a real trend towards green and social mission businesses.

These days, social-minded enterprises are gaining popularity as a more satisfying approach to business. Some have a profit/environmental/social triple bottom line. Others play a more direct role as formal social enterprises, using business earnings to fund social programs or employ previously marginalized workers.

Enterprising immigrants with a taste for justice are busily creating alternatives in education, health and culture, as well as promoting a human and green economy. Business, especially social entrepreneurship, requires innovation, persistence, ambitiousness and vision—luckily, qualities newcomers to Canada have in spades.

“We are talking about the invention of new jobs, new enterprises, and in some cases entirely new industries. The best possible hope we have as a country is to tap the potential of newcomers to create greater economic opportunity for all of us,” said Eli Malinsky, Director of Programs and Partnerships at Toronto’s Centre for Social Innovation.

Take Dihan Chandra. He struck out in the new and rapidly diversifying market for green products when he founded Organic Lifestyle back in 2006.

The Sri Lankan-raised immigrant’s virtual store and retail partnerships offer consumers natural and organic clothing, mattresses and bedding, among other planet-friendly products, along with education about healthy lifestyles that help avoid asthma, environmental allergies and chemical sensitivities.

Chandra, who says he’s motivated by a ‘stronger’ drive to succeed, explains: “It is not always easy, but Canada provides a relatively safer, less corruption, less red tape environment for an ethical and socially responsible small business.”

### **Making business dreams happen**

Various labour trend analysts have predicted Canada’s imminent dependency on newcomers to fill labour market needs and create economic development in an otherwise greying workforce. Social entrepreneurship is an appealing twist on the theme. In fact, as settlement centres begin to recognize their clients’ potential as motivated, experienced and innovative social entrepreneurs, they’re increasingly offering services to help their clients not only find jobs, but create them themselves. At the Global Business Centre, part of the Newcomer Centre of Peel, for example, clients can receive one-on-one consultation and in-class training in legislation, business plan writing, IT and business-specific technology, taxation, resource management, marketing and business communication and networking.

The Global Business Centre also offers mentorships for entrepreneurs in many different areas—projects to date have run the gamut from a dry cleaning business to an IT consulting firm to a spa for pregnant women—and tracks its students’ success through alumni gatherings. Often business owners return for help expanding further after a successful start-up.

“The fact that newcomers start their own business means that they are creating their own jobs. The other point is that their business success means that they are creating job opportunities for Canadians,” explains Zoheir Hasanbhai, a Business Language Instructor with the Global Business Centre, and himself an immigrant from Hong Kong. “Such a program is a win-win situation for the newcomer and the community in which they do their business”.

## BELIANA YI

**Beliana, Venezuelan journalist based in Mississauga, has worked in media relations, corporate communications, public affairs and corporate social responsibility.**

Beliana has worked extensively in the Hispanic print media in the GTA, including with *Abanico* magazine and *Correo Canadiense*. Beliana has also collaborated with Rogers TV, ACCES Employment and the Chinese Association of Mississauga. As a communications consultant, Beliana published a collection of four books under the banner of *The Venezuelan Success*, emphasizing competitiveness and excellence in organizations and communities. Beliana is the recipient of awards and recognitions from the Miranda state government in Venezuela, and UNICEF, among others. She graduated in Communications from Central University of Venezuela, UCV, and holds a Corporate Communication and Image Management Certificate from IESA School of Senior Business.



THE TRUTH:

# Newcomers improve global security

By Ali Zafar



© Alejandro Neira

Inspired by events in Egypt, new and established Canadians join together in Toronto to demonstrate for democracy at home and abroad.

Mahassan Mahmoud was in a work meeting in Toronto when Egyptian leader Hosni Mubarak's thirty years of rule came to an end on February 11th. As soon as the meeting let out, Mahmoud, who was born in Egypt and came to Canada in 1996, rushed to check her email. Then she began to cry.

"I cried because it was liberation, it was the end of darkness for the Egyptian people," says the 45-year-old Canadian citizen and program manager.

Canadians from Egypt cheered the end to Mubarak's rule that came about through peaceful, mass demonstrations. The democratic era to come is something Mahmoud had not seen during the three decades she lived there.

"It's a police state where people don't have legal rights, where you have emergency law, where people could be jailed without any charges," Mahmoud says of Mubarak-ruled Egypt.

Born to a father who was politically active and also the head of a labour union in the port city of Alexandria, Mahmoud was raised to fight for justice. That's a passion she—like many other newcomers to Canada—brought with her from Egypt when she moved to Toronto. And, also like other immigrants and refugees, it's a passion she quickly began to share with her new community. She started by identifying local issues critical to social justice and security.

"I started volunteering for the homeless community because I was shocked by the homelessness in Toronto," she says.

Mahmoud shatters the well-worn stereotype of newcomers to Canada as a security threat, a contentious myth that continues to pop up in the post-9/11 era.

Indeed, she actually chose Canada as a refuge from the corruption and dictatorial rule in Egypt, because, she says, she cherishes the democratic values Canada espouses.

And while becoming involved in promoting those values in her new country, like many newcomers to Canada from the regions where democratic uprisings are spreading, Mahmoud also did whatever she could to push for democracy in her homeland.

Pro-democracy work for Mahmoud ranged from attending demonstrations in downtown Toronto to keeping people up-to-date on events via social media.

Sima Sahar Zeheri, a professor at Toronto's Humber College originally from Iran, has worked with other newcomers to Canada.

To her, individuals like Mahmoud demonstrate that immigrants and refugees are an integral part of Canadian society, building —not threatening —our democracy.

“We don't have any facts in Canada that show we need to worry about newcomers being a security threat.”

In fact, with the democratic uprisings across the Middle East, images of Arab youth rallying against despotic leaders have flooded TV news channels and newspapers.

“I think in the aftermath of these revolutions, there is a new image that is coming out of a young Arab not as a terrorist but as a revolutionary,” Zaheri says.

“The average Canadian will have a very different notion of these communities than they did during the aftermath of 9/11.”

It's a notion that Mohamed Boudjenane has seen change firsthand over time. Originally from Morocco, Boudjenane came to Quebec City to study at Laval University when he was twenty. It was 1983 and Boudjenane says integrating into Quebec was an easy task at first.

But after 9/11 (even more than during the Cold War-1980s) it really got difficult for people coming from the Middle East and Muslim parts of the world, Boudjenane says. “Arabs and Muslims were all considered potential terrorists.”

Boudjenane says newcomers face the brunt of scapegoating, which he blames in part on “the lack of political vision” by the Canadian government.

That's what spawned his interest in politics. Boudjenane ran as the NDP candidate for the Etobicoke North riding in 2007. He didn't win, but continues to remain active in the government, currently working as the French-language services coordinator for the Ministry of National Resources and Aboriginal Affairs.

While Canada's diversity remains under-represented in Parliament, Boudjenane values the opportunities he's had to participate in advancing democracy here.

He says that this is something he would like to see in Morocco. Like other countries in the region, Boudjenane's home country is not immune to the wave of protests pushing for democracy.

“At the end of the day if we have the freedom here in Canada, we want the same back in the countries we came from.”

## ALI ZAFAR

**Ali is a journalist currently working as a copy-editor for Metro News in Toronto.**

Ali has written for an assortment of newspapers and magazines including the National Post and Huffington Post. With a sincere interest in the rights of minorities across the Muslim world, Ali hopes to write a book on sectarian violence faced by religious minorities in Pakistan. His profession has allowed him to report from the Middle East, South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.



# Who belongs?

By the Very Rev. the Hon.

Lois M. Wilson.

Retired Senator and former United Church Moderator

A CNN camera crew visited a woman who had just experienced the San Francisco earthquake. "First I heard the cups rattling in the cupboard.

Then I noticed the hinges had fallen off. Then the front door hanging unevenly! Looking out my door, I saw a huge cleft in my front yard, and I knew the earth had moved."



This story tells the spiritual and cultural history of North America in the last forty years. Institutionally, the cups began to rattle in the 70s. The cupboard doors fell off in the 80s. During the 90s the kitchen door fell unevenly. In the year 2001 a deep crack emerged, and by 2011 we knew that the earth had moved.

Jane Jacobs, in her book *Dark Age Ahead*, writes, "sometimes people are confronted with such radical jolts to their culture that their institutions cannot adapt adequately, and so become irrelevant."

So the question of "who belongs in Canada?" faces a very different landscape than before. We know what the cracks are: an increasingly polarized world since 9/11; democracies in trouble due to voter apathy; the polar ice cap melting; internationally agreed covenants on treatment of refugees being abandoned; the gap between the rich and poor widening; countries building walls to keep others out; 32 armed conflicts raging within 27 states worldwide; child soldiers used with impunity. The human community is being cut to shreds at many levels.

How is it possible to imagine a new landscape? Can we propose a view of the human being and of community that can withstand Jane Jacob's radical jolts? Can we initiate a new national narrative around immigrants and multiculturalism?

Canada is experiencing the arrival of significant numbers of people fleeing social violence, civil war, ecological disaster and economic collapse; and seeking a better life. Some immigrate. Some come as refugees. History is asking

us to widen our circle. Unprecedented movements of people bring to Canada religions, cultures, races, classes, skills and values very different from what we know in our small circles.

How to respond? Have you a fortress mentality that persists in circling the wagons? Do you isolate yourself by the choices you make? Would you think of attending a Ganesh festival in Toronto? Do you have any aboriginal friends? Do you make an effort to learn to pronounce the name of the refugee from Sri Lanka? To know a Buddhist by name? To identify on a map that African country from which this refugee hails?

I believe that what defines a person is relational; that is, one's relationship to other humans, to the earth, and to the Divine. And second, that a human being is fully a person primarily in community. So the question becomes, "Where can I find sustainable authentic community that honours my particularity, my gender, my language, my race, my religious orientation, but yet facilitates my entry into life-giving and life-sustaining relations with people quite different from myself?" Many today are asking the fundamental question, "Where can I find authentic human community?"

Canada has such a splendid opportunity to demonstrate such a community by seeking out new forms of provisional community. It begins when we start to make friends outside our circle, and accompany them regularly and deliberately to gatherings where our class, our religion, our point of view may be a minority.

Hard to do, but we may discover that many come to escape totalitarian or fascist regimes and seek a voice in a democratic political landscape that sorely needs people committed to democracy. We will certainly find some who bring skills and gifts that will build our economy, which seriously needs to be sustained. We will be surprised by the rich cultural and religious mosaic that newcomers bring to help Canada become a truly world class country, able to demonstrate to the world the interdependent, socially cohesive human community that is our common future.

Our institutions are capable, in fact, of slowly adapting to this new reality. Whether they do so is partially our choice.

The earth has moved. Can we move with it?

# NEWCOMER SPEAKERS BUREAU

Looking for a dynamic speaker for your next meeting, conference or special event?

Interested in a workshop on civic participation, to mobilize members of your community to be the change they want to see in the world?

Need a board or committee member with leadership skills and lived experience of migration and integration?

The Newcomer Speakers Bureau offers all this and more!



**Voices of Challenge.  
Voices of Change.**

**Please contact us for more information or to book a speaker.**

416-699-4527 X 229 / [asalazar@mnict.org](mailto:asalazar@mnict.org)



In this edition of New Voices,  
internationally trained writers show how  
new Canadians are invigorating our  
democratic debate, building bridges between  
cultures, giving back to local communities,  
and stimulating the economy through creative  
entrepreneurship. Canada's future depends on  
the ability of individuals, institutions and  
communities to open themselves to the  
gifts and challenges of diversity.  
Newcomers give abundantly.  
It is time now to reciprocate.



Welcome to  
**Canada**  
Toronto 02 10 10  
Please enjoy your stay!