An Interview with Haneen Zoubi, the only female Arab in the Knesset

Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo: A Textbook Pincer

Quebec and Integrating Immigrants: Discrimination (Not at Work)

Continued from last issue: South African ANC vet Ronnie Kasrils on Apartheid... in Israel
Who Breaks a Wheel Upon a Butterfly?

MICHAEL RYAN WISEMAN

It can come as no great shock when, after giving your credit card number and assorted personal details to a late-night television psychic, their subsequent prediction is that you will become a victim of bank fraud.

And what, pray tell, happens when public money is given to resuscitate myopic and amoral private enterprises that are proving to be shrewd and rather discriminating paupers in spite of their dismal records of commercial ineptitude? Heads they win, tails we lose. There is a renewed poignancy to the tragedy of the commons, which began sometime in the distant past with a much-ballyhooed cake-cutting ceremony and is still being played out as the slivers and crumbs are quickly— and mostly needlessly— being devoured. Some, though lacking any immediate requirement, take more than they could ever eat under the justification that they do not know if there will ever be any more; most, starve.

If consumer-confidence is said to be down, to what depths must citizen-confidence have plunged? Thus far, the governments of the world have been— to use the most generous of words in order to match their profligacy likewise— uninspiring in their bid to play white knight to our paradigm’s damsel in distress. The G20’s roundtable pledged one trillion dollars to slay the dragon. A large sum, granted— a nice round number for all the headline writers, which if nothing else (and there is little else) will help push a little paper in a struggling industry. The only problem is, the paradigm is not the damsel— it’s the dragon. It needs to be put to the sword and a trillion dollars coupled with a mixed bag of national stimuli are as many acupunctural needles for the ailing beast.

The Canadian government provides an excellent example of the ham-fisted responses that have been typical of our dear leaders in this time of crisis. The Canadian government is essentially forcing a Canadian government-funded entity (the Canadian Broadcast Corporation) to shed 800 Canadian jobs while simultaneously promoting a stimulus package designed to create Canadian jobs precisely because there are so many Canadian jobs being lost. Got that? Oh no, I seem to have caught fire— how irksome. How shall I best fight the fire? Not to worry, it’s for situations like this that I always keep my trusty bucket of fire handy.

A structurally maladjusted international economy comprised of structurally maladjusted national economies is in crisis— it’s about time. Although money undoubtedly has its uses, In Money We Trust has lost its lustre— it’s also about time. Like the cat who drowned in a tub of gold fishes, we are learning the hard way that not all that tempts our wandering eyes and heedless hearts is lawful prize.

Humans are not attuned to subtlety; we don’t change until we must. Here’s hoping our step backward comes with two swiftly forward. Where are we now? Well, we haven’t yet hit rock bottom. At least we don’t seem to have— surely it is the sort of thing that would be remarkable enough to be known for sure. We are, therefore, embroiled in a rather delicate predicament: the best is yet to come but not before the worst is over— and it’s been due for quite some time.

Anything left? Time. Time is not money. Time is infinitely more precious than money. Whereas money can be accumulated indefinitely in an account, we are born with only a fixed amount of time and each moment is another withdrawal. Moreover, you can never know what your balance is— maybe you are a billionaire, maybe you are already overdrawn and you will soon hit your credit limit: insufficient funds— may you rest in peace.

I hope it was worth it; all that time, wasted again.
The Great Lakes’ Grand Alliance

Giving Peace a Chance

COLETTE BRAECKMAN

In Africa’s Great Lakes region, fifteen years removed from the genocide, shadows still loom large. Although most Rwandans have returned to a life of normalcy, thousands of Hutus have remained in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) where they are led by veterans of the 1995 genocide in a group called the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR). For fifteen years they have fought in a series of wars that have devastated the DRC. Established in North and South Kivu, in the eastern part of the country just across the border from Rwanda, the FDLR, besides being hostile to the Rwandan government, have been a menace to the DRC’s population as well: taking control of many of the region’s valuable coltan mines, confiscating harvests, and submitting the local female population to sexual and domestic slavery.

General Chaos

The presence in the DRC of armed Hutu groups like the FDLR was, ostensibly, the raison d’être of a Tutsi-led Congolese military force whose rebel leader, Laurent Nkunda, was a former general who refused to bow to the DRC’s government in Kinshasa and enter into the fold of the Congolese army. His movement, the National Congress for the Defence of the People (CNDP), controlled a 200km strip of land along the border with Rwanda. The CNDP recruited its members from the Congolese who are Kinyarwanda speakers (both Hutus and Tutsis), from refugee camps, as well as from demobilized Rwandan soldiers. Nkunda had many friends and admirers within the Rwandan armed forces, in which he had previously fought.

At the end of 2008, General Nkunda constituted a real threat to the RDC’s president, the democratically elected Joseph Kabila. By this time, Nkunda controlled a swathe of territory twice the size of Belgium while he welcomed an increasing number of Western emissaries and forced Kabila into negotiations.

Strange Bedfellows

At the beginning of this year, the situation turned on its head. Joseph Kabila, along with his opposite number in Rwanda, Paul Kagame, agreed to unite their efforts and neutralize their common enemies by launching a joint military operation called Umoja wetu, or Our unity.

On your marks, get set, peace

Why this sudden agreement between two men who recently admitted that they had not spoken in months? Pressure. Kabila’s star was fading amongst the Europeans, who were upset over the 9 billion-dollar/10 million-tonne copper mining contract the DRC negotiated with China. After which, no European country felt especially inclined to send a military force to Kivu to help shoulder some of the UN’s load there in protecting civilians. On the African front, normally friendly countries such as Angola were

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hesitant to fight alongside a Congolese army that was seen as ineffective and unreliable.

If the Kabila administration in Kinshasa was isolated and vulnerable, so too was Kagame’s in Kigali. Holland, Norway, and Sweden, after a report from the UN highlighted the support Nkunda received from— and in— Rwanda, threatened to suspend their cooperation with Kagame and freeze European aid. Besides tarnishing the image of Rwanda, Nkunda was also becoming a little too popular amongst Rwanda’s Francophone Tutsis, who he was playing off against the Anglophone Tutsis— former refugees from Uganda.

Further ratcheting up the pressure on the capitals was an insistent message received from Washington. Barack Obama personally urged Kabila and Kagame to find some common ground, end the chaos in long-suffering Kivu, and sort out the FDLR.

The first feelers went out in December. Rwanda’s Chief of General Staff, James Kabarbe, went to Kinshasa, while General John Numbi paid a visit to Kigali. Under the strictest of seccrecies, they prepared an operation that took everybody by surprise— most notably the UN mission in the DRC.

Right up until the end of February, the two countries’ militaries combed North Kivu, dismantling FDLR positions and severing their lines of communication. Thousands of rebels capitulated, returning to Rwanda to be registered and re-assimilated into society. Most notably, the operation resulted in the arrest of Laurent Nkunda, who was returned to Rwanda, while his former chief of staff, Bosco Ntaganda, agreed to integrate the CNDP into the Congolese army. The collaboration of Bosco Ntaganda with Kinshasa, however, has provoked an outcry amongst human rights organizations because of an outstanding International Criminal Court warrant for war crimes. President Kabila has thus far refused to extradite Ntaganda, intimating that between peace, the security of his people, and international justice, he would save the latter for last.

In a matter of days, the rebel movement, which had already begun setting up a parallel administration, was flushed out and the authority of the DRC reestablished itself throughout the province. President Kabila, in a grand gesture of symbolism, then convened his council of ministers in Goma— a city formally threatened by Nkunda.

Diplomatic relations between Rwanda and the DRC have continued to improve; plans are in motion to appoint ambassadors and set up consuls. If the peace holds between these oft-embattled neighbours, thereby guaranteeing the safety of civilians and allowing for the return of the more than one million displaced people in North Kivu, it would be the best news the region has received in fifteen years. Will the bloody page of history on which the 1994 Rwandan genocide is written finally turn to reveal a new chapter of peace and prosperity in this, one of Africa’s richest and most dynamic regions?

Colette Braeckman is a journalist with the French-language Belgian newspaper Le Soir and a frequent contributor to Le Monde Diplomatique.
Quebeckers at Heart

Integration is Only Skin-Deep

ALYKHANHTHI LYNHIAVU

The statistics speak for themselves. In Quebec, the unemployment rate among those of North African origin is 29% compared to a rate of 7% among the general population. Discrimination exists, and the Quebec government is struggling to tackle it.

A Quebecker of North African origin, Nacer, 50 years old, has lived in Montreal for 20 years. Despite his best efforts, he and his family have been unable to break off of the path of poverty. With an elegance and softness that are out of place with the harshness of the acts of racism that he recounts, he speaks of the employment discrimination of which he is a victim.

In September, Nacer enrolled in a two-month training program for security guards funded by Quebec’s employment ministry, Emploi-Québec. At the end of November, following an unpaid two-week internship, he found himself—again—jobless. Nor was he the only one. In fact, half of his class—3 Arab and 6 Black—have found nothing. The other half—8 White Quebecois—have had no such problem. Yet the training center boasts “of a privileged relationship with security agencies” and a placement rate of 100%. Nacer summarizes: “From the beginning, it was clear that the school was committed to finding us an internship and a job. It promised us, as well as Emploi-Québec. Native White Quebeckers had no trouble finding a job without going through an internship. In contrast, the ‘Quebeckers at heart,’ as I like to call us—Blacks and Arabs—have had nothing.”

In December, an official from Emploi-Québec attends the end of the course. The teachers, who speak on behalf of the students, lead him to believe that the school has fulfilled its promises. Though the Ministry of Employment and Social Solidarity (MESS) organizes such visits, surely it should demand greater accountability from the professional training schools to which it allocates significant subsidies. Is it natural that public funds continue to be poured into these training centres from which, when all is said and done, only native White Quebeckers benefit? With a touch of indignation in his voice, Nacer remarks: “Do you think I would want to spend two months taking a course in order to, at the end, find myself in a trickier situation than before? Even after a financial investment from Emploi-Québec, I find myself empty-handed once again, back at square one, on welfare!”

A petition, signed by the students who were discriminated against, was twice presented to one of the school’s managers by Nacer and a fellow pupil. The school did not want any trouble: “With guaranteed contracts, the school does not want any trouble: $2,300 multiplied by 17 is a lot of money.” Supported by the Centre for Research-Action on Race Relations, a Montreal-based organization that fights against racism, he filed a complaint with the Quebec Human Rights Commission.

Help Needed

If it is seeking integration for all, the government of Quebec must reassess its assistance programs, which are not adapted to immigrant populations. In general, immigrants are educated and live in two-parent households. However, assistance programs are developed according to a “profile,” that of the majority in Quebec, where poverty is associated with single parents and people with little education, as shown in a study by sociologists Rachad Antonius and Jean-Claude Icart. These programs therefore contribute to the systemic exclusion of newcomers.

That is not all. While the Ministry of Immigration and Cultural Communities recognizes the existence of a process of exclusion or disqualification of immigrants and visible minorities, the Ministry of Employment ultimately refers to the individual’s responsibility to emerge from unemployment. Barriers are not related to the system, but rather to individual shortcomings. Thus, on the Emploi-Québec website, the MESS provides tools for “income simulation” through which “the recipient of financial assistance as a last resort” can assess “the financial benefits of following a path that leads to integration into the workforce.” In sum, the barriers that prevent the individual from emerging from unemployment are those that he imposes on himself, a sort of desire on the part of those affected by unemployment to settle into a life of poverty.

In order to integrate and find work, immigrants need improved programs that take into account their specific circumstances and a friendly openness that runs counter to racism. As long as the MESS considers the principle of racial discrimination as a separate object and secondary to policies of
Haneen of Nazareth

Alternatives’ EMMANUEL MARTINEZ recently interviewed Haneen Zoubi, the first woman to be elected on an Arab party list to the Israeli Knesset. She is a member of the Balad party, and the former director of the I’lam Media Center.

A: Being the first woman elected from an Arab party, what does that mean to you?

Z: First of all, it’s a huge responsibility and I think I could be a good model and a good example for Palestinian women.

Of course, I will be more sensitive to women’s issues and women’s discrimination and the position of women, but this will not be my only issue— I don’t believe there are women issues. Women issues are issues of a society. The women’s problem is also the problem of all of Palestine. The Palestinian women’s experience in Israel has a lot in common with the Palestinian men’s experience because Israelis share out their discrimination—it is a national discrimination.

A: A lot is heard about Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, but what is the discrimination that Arabs are facing within Israel?

Z: You cannot think of any topic in which you wouldn’t find discrimination. For example, jobs: the percentage of Palestinian women working is 19%, the percentage of Jewish women working is 65%. And it is not because Palestinian women don’t want to work; no one wants to be poor, no one wants to live in poverty, but more than 50% of Palestinian society is below the poverty line so of course we have the drive and the motivation—a very big motivation, including women, to work. The fact that we don’t work is the real explanation for our poor situation. There are no investments from the side of the state… the percentage of the industrial investment amongst the Palestinian society in Israel is 1% although we are 18% of the society… I will give you more statistics in order also not to give you the feeling that I’m talking just ideologically… The percentage of investment in Palestinian schools and pupils is one-eighth of the investment in Jewish schools… You can investigate any field, health, education, work, environment— anything you think about… There are 40 unrecognised villages that don’t exist on the Israeli map. They have no electricity—no access to the network—
The Israeli society has chosen the right-wing ideology and the right-wing political option. Since 1997, Israeli society and the political system have gone to the right: more and more to the right, more and more to extremists, more and more to refuse any option that is just and for a real peace with the Palestinians. And also towards more and more refusals to recognize our rights as residents, as citizens of Israel, our rights to equality, whether it’s national equality or civic equality… My problem, the Palestinian problem, is not just Lieberman, it is also all the realist parties who don’t see Lieberman as illegal or as racist or as extremist.

A: Talk a little about the role of media, how are Arab-Israelis and Palestinians depicted by the mainstream Israeli media?

Z: How the Israeli media treats the Palestinians doesn’t differ from how the Israelis treat the Palestinians— the same ideology, the same generalities. The Israeli media and journalists adopt the terminology of the official policies without investigating these policies. When Israel confiscates the land and we make a demonstration to defend the land, the Israeli newspapers construe us as violent against the police, not as people who are defending their land and as people who have the right to defend their land. They portray us as violent people who don’t respect the law, who don’t respect the police, but Israel is breaking international laws and sometimes a lot of its own laws.

A: In the next few years there looks like there will be a bad economic situation added to an unstable government coalition, and there was, just months ago, the war in Gaza. Do you think that the relationship between Arabs and Jews in Israel is going to get worse or better?

Z: I think there will be worse relations. Not because both sides are worsening the relation, but because the Jewish population, the Jewish society and the Israeli policies are getting more and more extreme. We have nothing so we have nothing to change. We are not prejudiced against the Jewish citizens. We don’t have anything to change, we are fighting for our rights. But the Jewish citizens are neglecting or not recognizing our rights… We need our rights. We are asking and demanding not to confiscate our land, not to demolish our houses, not to fire us from our places of work, not to deny our history, not to deny our identity.

A: When you think about your identity, do you see yourself as an Israeli, an Arab, a Palestinian?

Z: I am Palestinian—or Arab—and I am an Israeli citizen so I take my citizenship very seriously. I don’t think that Israel takes my citizenship in a very serious way. I am more loyal to my citizenship than Israel. Israel, when it says that it is a Jewish state, means that it is not loyal to my citizenship.

A: So Israel should change this idea of being a Jewish state?

Z: Rights for all of its citizens, this is my party’s program. Not a Jewish state, but a state for all of its citizens.
Hands Extended Across America

After the Crusades, the Renaissance

CEYDA TURAN

“Let me say this as clearly as I can: The United States is not, and will never be, at war with Islam,” declared President Barack Obama before the Turkish Grand National Assembly. His words came in stark contrast to former President George Bush’s use of the word “crusade” to describe America’s post 9/11 efforts.

Barack Obama’s speech in Turkey was a significant step toward mitigating the tensions that have been stewing between the United States and the Muslim world. His remarks were a marked effort to shake off the mistrusts that characterized the Bush administration’s dealings with Muslim countries.

“I also want to be clear that America’s relationship with the Muslim community, the Muslim world, cannot— and will not— just be based upon opposition to terrorism. We seek broader engagement based on mutual interest and mutual respect. We will listen carefully, we will bridge misunderstandings, and we will seek common ground. We will be respectful, even when we do not agree. We will convey our deep appreciation for the Islamic faith, which has done so much over the centuries to shape the world— including in my own country,” the President told the parliament in the capital, Ankara.

“The United States has been enriched by Muslim Americans,” he said. “Many other Americans have Muslims in their families or have lived in a Muslim-majority country,” he continued, “I know, because I am one of them.”

Time will tell whether Obama is going to instigate a meaningful change in the US’s policy in the Middle East. However his words indicated a definite shift in attitude and language; a belief that conflict need not be the only basis for a relationship between the US and the Muslim world.

“The United States and Europe must approach Muslims as our friends, neighbours and partners in fighting injustice, intolerance and violence, forging a relationship based on mutual respect and mutual interests,” Obama told the EU-US summit.

Obama’s sentiments are in-line with American aspirations: according to a new Washington Post-ABC News poll “[the] majority of Americans… said it is important for the president to try to improve U.S. relations with Muslim nations.”

America’s avowed friendship with the Muslim world will not solely be limited to rolling back the violent ideologies that people of all faiths reject, quoth Obama, “Our focus will be on what we can do, in partnership with people across the Muslim world, to advance our common hopes and our common dreams. And when people look back on this time, let it be said of America that we extended the hand of friendship to all people.”
In January, the Norwegian government decided to exclude Canada’s Barrick Gold from its pensions investment fund, deeming the activities of the mining company in Papua New Guinea as “an unacceptable risk of extensive and irreversible damage to the natural environment.” This sort of indictment is not unique; Canadian mining multinationals in Africa face numerous allegations of environmental damage. Worse, their reputation for a lack of ecological respect pales in comparison to their other alleged activities, such as the violent confiscation of property, tax evasion, corruption, and the financing of armed conflicts.

The Canadian government’s reluctance to sufficiently regulate Canuck mining companies, coupled with the continuous growth of foreign investment in Africa, suggests that the worst is likely yet to come for the people of the Dark Continent. In 2007 the value—spread across 35 countries—of Canadian assets in the mining sector was $14.7 billion (all figures CAD). In September 2008, the 2010 forecast was up to $21 billion. And, even if the current economic crisis forces some companies to temporarily scale back their activities, some sectors—see gold—are currently enjoying record highs.

**Congo’s Rich Veins**

In the vast Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Canadian assets are estimated at $2.5 billion. Mining companies registered in Canada have multiplied their assets in the DRC since the 1996 rebellion of Laurent-Desired Kabila—a rebellion that many of these companies have helped finance. During the ensuing wars, fought between 1997 and 2003, Canadian mining companies such as Kinross Gold, Emaxon, Banro, Lundin Mining, First Quantum Minerals, and the AMFI all signed opportunistic contracts within a war-ravaged country with signatories desperate for cash that could be converted into weapons.

During 12 years of war, the ore trade, for instance, helped finance the efforts of armed factions that carried out a litany of atrocities: large-scale displacement, massacres, rape, sexual slavery, the recruitment of child-soldiers. The UN’s Final Report of the Group of Experts on the DRC of December 2008 clearly establishes a link between the mining of cassiterite, wolframite, and coltan, and the conflicts that occurred in the fall of that year. In a preceding report, several Canadian mining companies were identified by the UN Group of Experts because of their pillaging of resources in the area. The report stressed that “governments with jurisdiction over these enterprises are themselves complicit when they do not take remedial measures.”

**Skulduggery in Tanzania**

In Tanzania, Canada is the principal foreign investor. The aforementioned Barrick Gold and the Tanzania Royalty Exploration Corporation control 50% of the country’s gold-bearing projects. Empowered by the Tanzanian president to “review mining contracts and recommend corrective measures,” a commission chaired by Judge Mark Bomani published its findings last September. He revealed that when opening a mine, mining companies collaborated with local leaders without consulting with the general population that was to be displaced by a given project. These populations did not, for the most part, receive the compensation due to them by law. The commission also reported on cases of rampant corruption involving local leaders and the mining sector. As this report did not cast the mining sector in a good light, Canadian officials in the country
Israeli Apartheid

We Learn From History That We Learn Nothing From History

RONNIE KASRILS

For the liberation movements of southern Africa, Israel and apartheid South Africa represented a racist, colonial axis. It was noted that people like John Vorster had been Nazi sympathisers, interned during World War II - yet feted as heroes in Israel and, incidentally, never again referred to by South African Zionists as anti-Semites.

It is instructive to add that in its conduct and methods of repression, Israel came to resemble more and more apartheid South Africa at its zenith— even surpassing its brutality, house demolitions, removal of communities, targeted assassinations, massacres, imprisonment and torture of its opponents, collective punishment, and aggression against neighbouring states.

Any South African, whether involved in the freedom struggle or motivated by basic human decency, who visits the Occupied Palestinian Territories is shocked to the core at the situation they encounter and agree with Archbishop Tutu’s comment that what the Palestinians are experiencing is far worse than what happened in South Africa, where the Sharpeville massacre of 69 civilians in 1960 became the international symbol of apartheid cruelty.

I want to recall here the words of an Israeli Cabinet Minister, Aharon Cizling in 1948, after the savagery of the Deir Yassin massacre of 240 villagers became known. He said: "Now we too have behaved like the Nazis and my whole being is shaken."

It needs to be frankly raised that if the crimes of the Holocaust are at the top end of the scale of human barbarity in modern times, where do we place the human cost of what has so recently occurred in Gaza and against the Palestinians since 1948 in the nakba (catastrophe) they have endured?

Guernica, Lidice, the Warsaw Ghetto, Deir Yassin, Mai Lei, Sabra and Shatilla, Sharpeville are high on that scale— and the perpetrators of the slaughter in Gaza are the offspring of holocaust victims who are yet again, in Cizling’s words, behaving like Nazis. This must not be allowed to go unpunished and the international community must demand they be tried for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Once more, let me turn to our South African experience. There, as with other struggles such as Vietnam, Algeria, the former Portuguese colonies, the just nature of the struggle was the assurance for success. With that moral advantage, on the basis of a just liberation struggle, we learnt the secret of Vietnam’s victory and strategised according to what we termed our Four Pillars of Struggle: Political mass struggle; reinforced by armed struggle; clandestine underground struggle; and international solidarity.

At times, any one of these can become predominant— and it is not for outsiders to direct those at the frontline of the struggle as to what and how to choose, but to modestly provide the lessons of our experience, pointing out that the unity of the struggling people is as indispensable as the moral high-ground they occupy. For the Vietnamese, the military element was generally primary but always resting on popular mass support.

In South Africa the mass struggle became the primary way, with sabotage actions and limited guerrilla operations inspiring our people. It all depends on the conditions and the situation.

But unquestioningly, what helped tip the balance, in Vietnam and South Africa, was the force and power of international solidarity action. It took some 30 years but the worldwide Anti-Apartheid Movements campaigns, launched in London in 1959, for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions not only provided international activists with a practical role, but became an incalculable factor in (a) isolating and weakening the apartheid regime (b) inspiring the struggling people (c) undermining the resolve of those states that supported and benefited from relations with apartheid South Africa, (d) generated a change of attitude amongst the South African White population generally, and political, business, professional, academic, religious and sporting associations in particular. Boycott made them feel the pinch in their pocket and their polecat status everywhere— whether on the sporting fields, at academic or business conventions, in the world of theatre and the arts they were totally shunned like biblical lepers. There was literally no place to hide from universal condemnation backed by decisive and relentless action which, in time, became more and more creative.

To conclude: we must spare no effort in building a worldwide solidarity movement to emulate the success of the Anti-Apartheid Movement. Nelson Mandela stated after South Africa attained democratic rule that “we South Africans cannot feel free until the Palestinians are free.” A slogan of South Africa’s liberation struggle and our trade union movement is “An injury to one is an injury to all!” That goes for the whole of humanity. Every act of solidarity demonstrates to the Palestinians, and those courageous Jews who stand by them in Israel, that they are not alone.

Whilst many Palestinians have lost their lives the Palestinians have not been conquered or cowed. Repression generates resistance and that will grow. Israeli aggression stands exposed. A turning point has been reached in humanity's perception of this issue. The time is ripe for us to drive home the advantage— we know the times are changing and Zionist hegemony is fast losing control. Like South Africa, this can mean, must mean: freedom, peace, security, equality and justice for all— Muslim, Christian and Jew. That is well worth struggling for!

RONNIE KASRILS is a South African politician. He has been a member of the Executive Committee of the African National Congress since 1987.
assistance, there will be a failure of integration and a perpetuation of unjustified professional discrimination. Like many others, Nacer immigrated to improve his living conditions, and with a desire to integrate: “We all come here seeking peace and the security of a job. Nobody comes here to make trouble, because we are all Quebecers. Our children are witnesses to this injustice. I hope for a change, I hope for it with all my heart.”

Alykhanthi Lynhiavu is an anthropologist and member of the Centre for Research-Action on Race Relations (CRARR)

A SLAPP heard round the world

Meanwhile, in Canada, public debate is being stifled by time and resource consuming SLAPPs (Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation, a term used for dubious civil claims brought by corporations against individuals and community groups who oppose them on issues of public concern) of which the authors of Noir Canada, a book exposing the practices of Canadian mining companies in Africa, and publishing house Écosociété have been on the receiving end.

On Parliament Hill, the left-leaning NDP and Bloc Québécois, together with an array of NGOs, are mobilizing to push the Conservative government into providing a minimal framework of transparency, standards, and guidelines for the Canadian mining industry’s international ventures. Following the Norwegian government’s example, Ottawa should turn neither a blind eye, nor the other cheek. Rather, they should slap back by reining in and shedding light upon the activities of the Canadian mining companies that have given Canada a black-eye in Africa and throughout the world.

DELPHINE ABADIE, ALAIN DENEAULT, WILLIAM SACHER are the authors of Noir Canada: Pillage, Corruption et Criminalité en Afrique (Ecosociété, 2008)

You can help by slapping back at http://slapp.ecosociete.org/en
The 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago bemused visitors with its unique Middle Eastern Cairo Street. But the representation of Islam did not get a warm reception— the audience likened the Islamic call to prayer to the noise of a dogfight! Even in the twenty-first century, the Western media struggles to face reality: Muslims, far from being a mere sideshow, comprise a remarkably large part of those who immigrate to the West. Since the 1960s, Muslims in the West have progressed steadily from the realm of the “invisible—newcomers to new lands with little public voice of recognition— to more visible modes of participation in the structures of the societies of which they are not a part.” Muslim Minorities in the West aims to examine what kinds of issues present themselves as Muslims assume their legitimate places in Western societies—societies that may or may not be eager to acknowledge either their presence or their demands.

Muslim Minorities splits into three parts: the American experience, European experience, and the experience in areas of European settlement. Each traces the pushing and pulling factors that caused the Muslim immigration, the similarities and differences in the newly formed Muslim minority communities across time and space, and the choices they confront in the West. Muslims, especially in Europe and the US, have recognized the disparity between their communal values and the individualistic values of their host countries. To reconcile and resolve the dilemmas of identity and citizenship, the Muslim minorities constructed a hybrid identity composed of elements both transplanted from their country of origins and their Western environment.

Muslin Minorities in the West: Visible and Invisible. Yvonne Haddad and Jane Smith (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2002)

There are three major shortcomings. First, the paradigms that define the recent scholarly research in immigration and religion are either not included or are sacrificed for the book’s implicit objective in vindicating the communal complexity and goodness of Muslims. For instance, the chapter on the Turks in Germany starts by discussing Huntington’s civilization-clash thesis, but then goes on to explain that the Turkish experience in Germany cannot be reduced to arguments that the East and West are incompatible.

Second, the book risks robbing some groups of such sui generis characters fed by their multifarious ethnicities, micro-cultures, and idiosyncrasies. Although Islam has played a binding role for Western Muslim communities, those who constitute said communities are heterogeneous and their sect and region of origin (not just the country) also contributes considerably to changing Muslim identities in the West.

Third, the groups under study seem to have been chosen based solely on the scholars’ areas of interest and their ability to fit within the book’s central thesis; a more complete picture could have been drawn by adding the Muslim minority groups that have recently mushroomed in the urban and industrial neighborhoods in, say, the United Kingdom or Italy.

Muslim Minorities in the West, its shortcomings notwithstanding, offers a fascinating and essential read on how Western Muslims came to define themselves and how they were/are perceived by their host state and mainstream society. It is a good reminder that the legacy of their experience on Western soil needs resuscitating, not only in order to do them justice, but also for a better appreciation of the blessed diversity we cherish here in the West.

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