



**KEYNOTE ADDRESS FOR IMA FOUNDING ASSEMBLY  
YMCA HONG KONG  
15 JUNE 2008**

*By Dr. Irene Fernandez, Director, Tenaganita*

**If helping the poor is a crime, and fighting for freedom is rebellion, then I plead guilty as charged – Ka Bel – Crispin Beltran.**

**RESISTANCE TO IMPERIALIST GLOBALIZATION AND  
POLITICS OF MIGRATION TO GAIN RIGHTS AND  
DIGNITY.**

It is indeed an honor and privilege today for me to address you. It is historic. Historic because we have been, in spite of it all, able to forge our solidarity and our struggles as global working class people towards a global movement to regain and reclaim our rights, our dignity and our equality against an inhuman, violent, ruthless, terrorist imperialist global regime.

I do not know whether the tears are droplets of pain and anxiety in looking at the migrant torn and ripped, pushed and pulled, violated and imprisoned, stateless, stripped of rights and dignity or tears of celebration because we have come a long way in our struggles, never giving up, determined ever to raise our voices and our fists in resistance.

I want to remember and celebrate the life of my friend Ka Bel, Crispin Beltran who left us recently. He was a fighter, a hero and a person of character who gave his life for the working class of the Philippines and of the world. I want to celebrate his life because what he lived for, what he believed in and the movement he led and died for, must be the life, the way and the spirit of IMA.

Taken from Bayan Muna: *Ka Bel's death is an irreparable loss, not only to the working class movement, but to every Filipino yearning for genuine social change. He was a tower of a man, a pillar of strength for the progressive people's movement. His name has become synonymous to the militant labor movement.*

Imperialism is based on the exploitation of wage and reproduction differentials between regions and countries, races and gender, and legal and social groups. It has a strategic

KEYNOTE ADDRESS FOR IMA FOUNDING ASSEMBLY  
YMCA HONG KONG  
15 JUNE 2008

*By Dr. Arno Fernandez, Director, Teragantia*

interest in keeping social or geographical divisions by genderising, racialising or territorialising the humanity. Migration politics aims to keep the system of borders and territories whilst in the same time exploits the wage and reproduction cost differential between countries. The political economy of the wage ratio between Singapore and Indonesia (1: 289), Mexico and the US (1:50), or Germany and Poland (1:10) are well documented. The enforcement of borders, the control over migration movements and mobility in general, the introduction of new borders (as on the Balkan or the former Soviet Union) or even movement control technology such as CCTV and biometric scanning are aspects of the same concept

The tension between the right to free movement and the nation states' claim to defend their borders and control access to their territory in the last consequence is a matter of life and death. What happened at the Iranian-Turkish border where a number of Afganistan, Bangladeshi and Pakistani migrants who were shot dead while trying to cross over to Turkey two years ago, was no coincidence but reflects the discussion on the international stage. "Many members of the more prosperous economies are beginning to agree to the concept that there is a world of two 'camps', separated and unequal, in which the rich will have to fight and the poor will have to die if mass migration is not to overwhelm us" This is how the conservative French thinker Rapail has been appreciated by US-American policy advisors. It prepares the ground for a 'militarisation of migration control', and also signals the willingness of the international community to sacrifice life for the sake of defending the status quo of social injustice, inequality and exclusion.

It is acknowledged that globalisation corresponds with an increase in mobility and migration. Irregular migration in particular, though sometimes appreciated as cheap labour but generally a term used to defame the unwanted, is perceived a number one threat to the world order and to nation states integrity.

Any study in migration typically highlights the wishes, dreams, expectations and demands of immigrants. Therefore migration is also some kind of a 'social movement towards global social justice'. Exclusively victimizing migrants or simply downplaying does not help to understand the phenomenon and the deeper meaning of the antagonism; distinguishing between refuge, internal or border crossing migration and mobility does not help either.

### **Migration Politics and Management**

Indeed, at the core of migration lies the social question it represents part of a globally mobile world proletariat. A world working class that strategically has been divided and

KEYNOTE ADDRESS FOR IMA FOUNDING ASSEMBLY  
YMCA HONG KONG  
15 JUNE 2008

*By Dr. Arno Fernandez, Director, Teresianitas*

categorized by nationality; by immigrant, refugee, undocumented, asylum seeker, documented, illegal, IMM 13 holders. The categorization continues. The migrant is confused and perplexed.

In response, national governments and international organisations agree that migration needs to be regulated and 'orderly managed' (IOM). It is often international conferences, such as 'Managing Migration in the 21. Century' (Hamburg 1998) or the 'International Symposium on Migration: Towards Regional Cooperation on Irregular Migration' (Bangkok 1999) that identify and analyse perceived problems and prepare the ground for what has to come. Meanwhile, there are rarely international agreements, stability pacts, bilateral action plans or contracts that do not also refer to migration and the necessity to jointly contain it. Neoliberalism and imperialistic dominant ideology pushed by the industrialized world, now forms the basis of migration policy.

Migration has often been analysed as vital to economic growth such as for the US-American history and the Mexican-US maquiladora industry, the German Ruhr region, during the post-war boom, the Gulf States industrialisation, the economic success of global cities, the NIC dragon countries of East and South East Asia or the South Asian growth triangle. Migration policy is closely related to population policy, labour market policy, as well as foreign policy and wars.

It has many facets such as containing the movement of the poor to the centres of wealth, or in opposite the recruitment of migrant labour to accumulation centres. It can be the expulsion of 'surplus people' from their soil or the blocking of escape moves from war or ecological disaster. Migration has been analysed as a potential of being a precondition to economic growth as well as a threat to capitalism and accumulation; therefore recruitment and containment are closely related.

In 1999, the European Union and its member states at their summit in Tampere decided to modernise their immigration policy along three lines, (a) containing asylum migration, (b) fighting irregular migration, and (c) opening up new migration channels to migrant workers. Its 2002 summit in Seville confirmed another point, (d) the extension of European migration policy onto any other country of origin or transit. Suggesting an integrated approach, the EU aims to respond to combine solutions for internal problems such as 'ageing societies, a lack of certain professionals, and a lack of internal labour market mobility, a slow-down of economy, with attempting to get its hands on what is perceived migration pressure, the business of trafficking, and the positive elements in immigration.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS FOR IMA FOUNDING ASSEMBLY  
YMCA HONG KONG  
15 JUNE 2008

*By Dr. Arno Fernandez, Director, Terengganu*

Since the Tampere summit, Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK did begin modernising their immigration policy by introducing Green Cards, increasing quotas for foreign workers, signing contracts over guest workers or allowing the number of work permits to rise. Economic migration, until recently a term to discredit asylum seekers, rapidly got a positive connotation. However, these governments did not only selectively open up its borders to some kind of migration but also strengthened a major rationale for exclusion. Two weeks ago, the EU announced that it will begin to expel undocumented workers.

What then is the framework used to determine the “illegal”? Is it on fundamental human rights? Or is it an extension of market laws where the immigrant is purely now seen as a commodity to be traded to facilitate economic growth and social aspects where capital has failed to sustain like care of the elderly, children and the sick.?

Schemes such as the point system of the US or German Green Card to assess the 'human capital of an applicant or the Daily Telegraph's call for a 'quality control' of future immigrants clearly make this point. The 'unwanted' and the 'surplus people' will and already do suffer from the whole brutality of economic laws. In continuity of notoriously racist patterns, it is the populations of the Black, Asian or Slavic world that are perceived a threat to world order, the fabric of social hierarchies and economics. For many of them there is no place in the world of investments and profits. Stuck in poor, exploited or robbed parts of the world, for them it can become a matter of life and death as the worldwide 2.1 billion poor or those one million suffering from starvation shows.

And similar, the ASEM-EU agreement makes clear that migration control is an 'important element' and precondition for good bilateral relations. If that fails the EU has agreed to establish a final defence line by integrating the military alliance into its structure, setting up a paramilitary force of 5,000 officers, that shall be deployed for example to contain 'massive population movements'. When it comes to immigration, the EU reflects a very aggressive approach, which does not hesitate to interfere with domestic affairs of other states, even using some blackmailing over development aid or threats of military intervention. The EU tries to force compliance with its migration policy that spreads like shockwaves onto wide parts of the world. However, beyond any such development lies another level of transnational cooperation and planning.

In Malaysia, we are all familiar with the use of volunteer corps called RELA to hunt down “illegals, enter premises without a warrant and arrests and detain people. The RELA consists of more than 460,000 ordinary Malaysians who will now be oriented to become the new militia for the ruling corrupt elite, if unchecked. For each arrest RELA makes, it is awarded USD25. Thus driven by profit from capturing immigrants, RELA men and women see each immigrant as profit making as well as a threat to security.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS FOR IMA FOUNDING ASSEMBLY  
YMCA HONG KONG  
15 JUNE 2008

*By Dr. Arno Fernandez, Director, Terengganu*

They believe they must detain, abuse and dehumanize them. The abuses have been exhaustive to the point that we have cases of pregnant women forced to bribe up to a thousand ringgit to escape arrests. The consequence is racism and the rise of xenophobia in Malaysia.

Since 9/11, the immigrants are now profiled as terrorist or potential ones as reflected in the racist policies in the US, in Europe and in Malaysia. In spite of visible indicators of the failure of current form of capitalism, what we see now are strategies to control migration through linking with the war on terror and defence of security.

Terrorism experts have targeted controlling illegal immigration as a top priority, and many opponents of immigration have jumped on the opportunity to promote their policy and political objectives on this issue. Thus governments rationalize the use of force, of all forms of arrest, detention and consequent torture of immigrants in a number of countries. Violence and torture are justified by governments with deportation, sometimes mass deportations as a way to get rid of the so called "unwanted". These surplus people or unwanted are again profiled as criminals, as prostitutes and illegals who cannot hold a place in the society of the elite.

With the war on terror raged on immigrants, with threat of deportation without access to justice and with increased repressive immigration laws, corruption by enforcement agencies has increased where migrants buy out their arrests and detention.

**Trade in Human Beings sanctioned by GATS Mode 4.**

'Strategies for an international migration regime' and global migration management, are key words in present international politics. What is known from the regulation of finance and goods, in particular the role of IMF or WTO will serve as a blueprint to global migration politics too. In fact, a General Agreement on the Movement of People, equally to those on Transport and Trade (GATT) has already been established.

The impact of liberalizing trade in services is directly proportionate to the sheer size of the services economy. On average, services account for some 40% of employment in developing countries and up to 70% in the industrial world, and the liberalization of trade in services holds great potential for increasing global welfare. It has been estimated that welfare gains from liberalizing the movement of workers could amount to US\$ 156 billion a year if developed countries increased their quota for the entry of workers from developing countries by 3%. Another study has projected annual gains of some US\$ 200 billion if a temporary work visa scheme is designed and adopted multilaterally.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS FOR IMA FOUNDING ASSEMBLY  
YMCA HONG KONG  
15 JUNE 2008

*By Dr. Arno Fernandez, Director, Forogonito*

By giving the temporary movement of individual service providers a status similar to the movement of goods and capital, effective Mode 4 GATS commitments would also address what many call the "unfinished business" of globalization that is based purely on capitalist dominant ideology of profit through cheap labor strategy with the justification that through remittances the source country's economy will grow and reduce poverty.

Through this sanctioned trade in human beings as labor commodities, today the global elite has created a global bonded contract system of labor which is intensely exploitative with punitive controls by employers and the state. The worker has no or limited access to justice and representation. The deregulation of labor has brought us to a point where we are no more human beings with dignity or rights but global machines for production. All rights fought and gained have now been stripped by repressive and militarized forms of control.

Beyond that, this myth of immigrants as "parasites" on destination countries like U.S. or Malaysian society turns things upside down. On one level, it is totally upside down to claim that the people who are actually doing the work to build the houses, mop the floors, and harvest the fields—who are actually slaving away in the dangerous factories and slaughterhouses—are somehow "parasites"! And it is the ultimate in hypocrisy for people who enjoy a better standard of living because of the super exploitation of immigrants, and the "trickle down" perks of living in a country that plunders the world, to join in that chorus.

To scientifically understand who the real parasites are, you need to know that the whole world system we live under today is one where not only are billions of proletarians and other working people exploited by a relative handful of capitalists, but that capitalism itself has developed to a stage where a handful of imperialist countries exploit and plunder whole nations, and that this plunder is the *lifeblood* of the whole system. And that is the relation between the U.S. and Mexico—the U.S. politically and economically dominates Mexico as part of this whole world system of extracting wealth from the masses. This parasitism plays itself out in millions of ways—including in how immigrants have been forced to come to the US, where they are super-exploited by this same capitalist system that drove them here in the first place.

The combination of cheaper imported pork from the U.S. and the slashing of subsidies worked together to further chain the lives of the people of Mexico to U.S. imperialism. By the end of 2002, one third of all Mexican pig farmers who had farms when NAFTA was implemented had been driven out of business. Eugenio Guerrero a Mexican farmer in an article in the Times, stated, "[W]e are putting our independence at risk. We are

KEYNOTE ADDRESS FOR IMA FOUNDING ASSEMBLY  
YMCA HONG KONG  
15 JUNE 2008

*By Dr. Aino Fernandez, Director, Temagatica*

becoming a country that depends on foreigners for food." It is exactly what Malaysia and many countries face in our current food crisis.

There are literally a million such stories—of vegetable, chicken, pig, and other farmers driven off the land in Mexico, in Asia, in Africa and the world over. According to a 2004 report by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, at least 1.5 million Mexican farmers lost their livelihoods under NAFTA. Many of the displaced campesinos ended up in the *maquiladoras*, the vast belt of sweatshops on the U.S.-Mexico border where workers, including large numbers of youth and women, have the life worked out of them for wages that are something like 1/10th those paid to workers in the U.S.

But the relentless motion of capital has swept even some of *those* jobs to Asia, where wages are *even lower*, and workers' rights are even more brutally repressed. All this is just one expression of a whole worldwide setup that drives hundreds of millions of people from their homes, often across borders, to survive—and to be further exploited..

### **Failure of Migration Control.**

It has been frequently acknowledged that the old system of migration control has failed. Nation states are crumbling, global traffic increases constantly, borders have become porous and relying on control of external borders does not work anymore, in a flexible world inflexible systems of control such as a nation state's border have become increasingly inadequate.

Therefore, the move is towards a comprehensive regime that covers the whole process of migration from the countries of origin, along the pathways and through any country of transit to its final destination. Any such approach lies well beyond the scope of the nation states, which instead have identified the need for supranational and transnational organisations. These are the Intergovernmental Consultations on Asylum, Refugees and Migration Policies (IGC), the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), to some extent the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and some think tanks and regular conferences including UNHCR that now wants to move into migration issues.

The IOM not only concentrates, accumulates and in return spreads the state of the art migration control policy and technology from and to any part of the globe (Capacity Building Programs), it also offers a comprehensive approach consisting of a combination of migration discouragement schemes (so called Information Seminars), the erection of border control posts (such as in the Ukraine), building and running detention camps (for example on Nauru), the subsequent removal of unwanted migrants (so-called voluntary

KEYNOTE ADDRESS FOR IMA FOUNDING ASSEMBLY  
YMCA HONG KONG  
15 JUNE 2008

*By Dr. Arno Fernandez, Director, Teresianitas*

return schemes in UK, Germany, Netherlands and many other countries) and the recruitment of wanted labour (such as from Equador to Spain). It is nothing but fascist.

There is already a 'hierarchy of mobility' as global elites are allowed to move freely, whilst workers' movements are heavily regulated, but those not having the funds to subsidise themselves (such as tourists) or not primarily economically active, even more so in case they could become a financial burden to public funds (such as refugees) are prevented from moving at all. The unequal treatment of the highly skilled, asylum seekers, illegal immigrants and displaced people clearly shows the economic rational and the contradictions behind the neoliberalism twin-strategy of deregulation and regulation.

Post second-world-war concepts of guest or migrants workers who have been anticipated to return once the economic boom was over failed and forced countries such as France, the UK or Germany to accept its role as multi-ethnic societies. However, the new German immigration law in its introduction did make clear that this mistake should not be repeated. IOM and EU now accept global migration as matter of fact but insist in its 'orderly management'. Recent schemes in Germany, the UK, Italy or Spain reveal a preference of just-in-time migration that respond to short term economic demands over long-term settlement. Current trends in immigration management both in Asia and in the industrialized world rather reflect a hire-and-fire policy, the result will be the flexibilisation of populations, contractualization of labor rather than an immigration policy.

This trend also awakes some reminiscences of strategies known from Keynesianism, namely those elements, which aimed to domesticate and thereby control social conflict by integrating the working class and its demand for better wages and living standards into capitalist growth. Such a strategy, adapted to migration policy aims to distinguish between the productive and the unproductive elements of migration movements and turn the former into a driving force of economic growth.

The aggressivity by which the EU, the US and the transnational agencies dominated by them, enforce their concepts of immigration control, reveal an imperialist move towards simply gaining compliance and obedience of third countries through political, economic, financial and even military force.

In understanding migration and population politics one finally needs to take into account the lessons from Nazi politics on population within the European space in order to understand the concept of the value of a population, its health and productivity, and thereby the link between genocide, starvation, displacement, population management, social question, problem solving strategies to migration, demographic issues and not at



KEYNOTE ADDRESS FOR IMA FOUNDING ASSEMBLY  
YMCA HONG KONG  
15 JUNE 2008

*By Dr. Arno Fernandez, Director, Forogantia*

least the overall social productivity of capitalist societies. There is a worrying equilibrium between those who are deported each year, in millions, an unknown number of those leaving 'voluntarily' because of deterrent politics, and those who are recruited on some kind of a foreign labour scheme. In that light migration politics appears to represent a strategy of social engineering to rationalise and to recompose its population, similar to a workforce.

In order to keep the unwanted out, and that is the majority of the world 's population, a cruel global system of deportations and removals, UN-controlled 'safe havens', refugee and internment camps, Pacific prison islands like Nauru, and armed border guards has been established. Linked to this form of politics of migration is corruption and organized syndicated violent recruiters where the members of the status act in tandem to further exploit and dehumanize the unwanted.

Today the inequalities have sharpened to a point that we are faced with the global food crisis, high fuel prices and emergence of starvation in many countries. The International finance institutions, WTO, UN agencies like the FAO should commit hara-kiri. They have pushed the agenda of the imperialist forces in trade and investment liberalization. The consequence is the current food crisis the world is experiencing. 20 years ago, the world was warned of such a crisis and the need for food security. Civil society today, pushes for food sovereignty.

But greed of investors, TNCs and local elites gripped with corruption have only pushed people and nations of the south to starvation. The failure of the neo liberal and imperialist agenda is now being addressed through increased militarization, conflict and wars and increased militarized border controls as manifested by the wall of disgust and epitome of racism and xenophobia dividing Mexico and the US

In Asia, a very good example is the Philippines. At an average, 60,000 Filipinos enter the U.S. every year, composing the third largest immigrant community in the U.S. after Mexicans and Chinese. Over 60 percent of migrant Filipinos are women. Most take up work as domestic workers, nannies, care givers, service workers, entertainers, nurses, teachers. Many women are trafficked in the sex trade, or migrate as mail-order brides.

In 2005, out of a total of 11 billion U.S. dollars in total remittances back to the Philippine economy, \$6 billion was generated from Filipinos in the U.S. The Philippines remains not only amongst the top three labor-sending countries in the world, but the most remittance-dependent economy in the world.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS FOR IMA FOUNDING ASSEMBLY  
YMCA HONG KONG  
15 JUNE 2008

*By Dr. Arno Fernandez, Director, Terasanitas*

This “maldevelopment” rather than the misleading term “underdevelopment” results in chronic economic crisis characterized by chronic deficit, which leads to endless debt. While the billions raked in by the sweat of Overseas Filipino Workers —OFWs—keep the crippled Philippine economy afloat in the absence of industry, nearly 95 percent of remittance intake goes toward debt servicing to pay off the Philippine government’s international loans.

And while the Philippine government prides itself as one of the few countries that have developed so called sane and rights based policies to protect its overseas contract workers, it still continues to sustain a very corrupt and repressive government. The question that emerges is: Are overseas contract workers continuing to sustain such a government through their intense hard work to send remittances home? It is indeed a catch 22 situation. But then as migrants we are challenged to determine our political, economic and social struggle not only in the country of destination to ensure our rights are respected and translated into actions and laws by the government of the day but that we have to organize and mobilize for social transformation in our home country as well.

**Feminization of Migration.**

Women are forced abroad as a result of social and economic dislocations in their countries of origin brought about largely by corporate-driven globalization that keeps siphoning off human and natural resources from the South into the centers of global capitalism in the North. Propelling this globalization is the intrinsic logic of capitalism as an economic system that continuously expands and seeks market for its surplus product and capital and utilizes the cheapest labor and raw materials available in order to sustain its accumulation process.

A major aspect of this global migration is its growing feminization. This growing trend in the feminization of migration is a reflection of the state of underdevelopment of women in developing countries despite decades of support programs for women and development. Micro credit programs and other forms of income generating projects have failed miserably to empower and transform women’s status collectively. And it is clear within the framework of current capitalist corporate driven centers of growth, the micro credit women’s program is struggling to survive, caught in the web of globalization and patriarchal norms and values of subjugation and repression..

And women choose to migrate. That many highly educated and professional women are leaving to work in other countries attests to the failure of the economy of their country of origin in absorbing the growing number of working women. Unable to earn decent

KEYNOTE ADDRESS FOR IMA FOUNDING ASSEMBLY  
YMCA HONG KONG  
15 JUNE 2008

*By Dr. Arno Fernandez, Director, Foroganita*

income appropriate to their education and training, many of these women look to other countries as lands of opportunities to improve their quality of life and economic status.

Many governments that hold a labor export policy, have realized that it is more profitable to invest in women migrants and ensure increased migration by women because women diligently and regularly send back their remittances to their loved ones back home.

According to the Asian Development Bank (ADB) recent study showed that South East Asian women migrant workers, of which over a half are Filipinas, sent more money than male workers to their home countries. An estimated 2.182 million contract workers and immigrants, largely women, remitted some US\$3.3 billion from Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia “on monthly averages ranging from US\$300 to US\$500,” said the ADB study Southeast Asian Workers Remittances.

This development surrounding remittances from Southeast Asian migrants reflects the significant trend of increasing number of female migrants from Southeast Asia, “especially those who independently decide to migrate”, the study cited

“The human movement involved in labor migration is of obvious economic importance and (labor export) has become the largest single foreign exchange earning activity, outweighing commodity exports, in a number of Asian labor-surplus nations,” added the study, presented by the ADB in a conference last September.

Academic studies and researches have shown that international migration of workers into Canada is structured by an interweaving of economic, political and ideological relations mediated by the Canadian state through its immigration program. Just like any advanced capitalist country, Canada opens up its borders to migration in response to the dynamics of the supply and demand for labor in the process of capital accumulation and in the context of global economic competition. As the Canadian economy continues to grow, it draws out women from the household and accommodates them in the workplace where their labor power becomes commodities for sale. While this brings women into the public sphere of production, this also creates a demand for replacement labor in the private sphere of the household.

But instead of instituting a universal day care system to address the needs of women who are leaving the home to join the workplace, the Canadian state response to this economic restructuring is to import cheap but highly educated and relatively skilled foreign domestic workers. . In the immediate term, the Canadian state earns revenue through the processing of migration documents and subsequent taxation of these foreign domestic workers. Meanwhile, rich and middle class Canadian families get the benefit of reduced

KEYNOTE ADDRESS FOR IMA FOUNDING ASSEMBLY  
YMCA HONG KONG  
15 JUNE 2008

*By Dr. Arno Fernandez, Director, Foroganita*

taxes since the wages of their foreign domestic workers are legitimate expenditures subject to tax exemptions.

This expanded responsibility of quasi-extended health care beyond child care and household work has transformed the Live-in-Caregiver Program into a program that we at the Philippine Women Centre call from cradle to grave or from strollers to wheelchairs . This foray of foreign domestic workers into the realm of extended health care could only be the beginning of a slow erosion of the distinction in the economy between public sphere “ hence, supposedly more productive and offers relatively good wages “ and private sphere of the household hence, less productive and offers low wages. This is another wedge towards the privatization of the health care system along with its attendant implications. One domestic worker said: We know that, under the LCP, we are like modern slaves who have to wait for at least two years to get our freedom.

A similar reality is seen in the Gulf countries, in Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, US and Europe where domestic worker is even not recognized as work. And thus a very significant number of women are excluded from any form of protection. It has taken years of organizing for the domestic workers in Hong Kong to gain recognition.

A cursory review of the history of the women movement since the late 1960s would show that foreign domestic workers or FDWs hardly benefited from the political and economic advances that many women of the North had attained. While studies have been made about their conditions of work and their exploited situation, the women’s movement has not translated these findings into campaigns for the betterment of the FDWs. . It has been one of exclusion in relation to foreign domestic workers and their struggle. To continue to ignore these women and their issues will hardly make way for a revival of a vibrant and militant women movement in the North.

**Right to Stay and the Right to Move.**

If we see the entire process of capitalist globalization as a form of colonization, it is hard to imagine a single place in the world today that is not occupied territory. To say that people should not move to places that are occupied would in fact be an argument that people shouldn't move.

People need to see themselves as part of the whole world that they live in and we need to forge new identities that are transformative in breaking down the structures that oppress us, while also challenging ourselves about who we see ourselves in the struggle with. All people have an inherent relationship to land; the question becomes which land. The

KEYNOTE ADDRESS FOR IMA FOUNDING ASSEMBLY  
YMCA HONG KONG  
15 JUNE 2008

*By Dr. Arno Fernandez, Director, Tenaganita*

divisions are not between indigenous and migrants; rather the divisions are between different ideas of what to do with land.

There are indigenous capitalists who want to follow the project of economic development and private indigenous ownership, and there are those who believe in the values of common use. The vision I support is this non-industrial model of common use and self-sufficiency. So we need to shift the debate from who has the entitlement to do something with the land to what do you want to do with the land.

Let us not think the struggle for the right to remain and the struggle for the right to migrate are contradictory; I think they are the paramount struggles we face globally today. The reality is that we struggle for a world in which no one is forced to migrate against their will, and also for a world in which people are able to move freely. The reality of migration today is that millions are forced to migrate due to colonial, capitalist, and oppressive forces.

However even without these forces, people should have the right to migrate and I think we need to challenge the assertion that people are only able to migrate if they are 'forced' to do so. In the ideal anti-capitalist world that I wish to live in, the borders between fighting in the homeland/ fighting in exile disappear as the idea of ownership and entitlements to different spaces is eradicated

There is no contradiction whatsoever between both asserting the right of people to move, and at the same time asserting the right for people to not be forcibly displaced from their homelands. It's a false debate, imposed by people with a superficial understanding of what it means to be a migrant. Free movement and the right not to be displaced, are two essential elements to the assertion of collective and individual self-determination.

### **Direction of Our Struggle.**

The proletariat is one class, worldwide. Proletarians in every country share a common interest—a world without classes and class distinctions and all the oppressive ideas and institutions that go along with those distinctions; a world where the division between oppressor and oppressed nations has been overcome through struggle and where, ultimately, borders become a thing of the past. That is the outlook of *proletarian internationalism*, and it requires a struggle against the oppression of nations and against the persecution of any section of the proletariat on the basis of that oppression.

The bourgeoisie constantly fights to divide the proletariat along national lines, appealing to people on the narrow basis of “me first.” This is national chauvinism. It is the outlook

KEYNOTE ADDRESS FOR IMA FOUNDING ASSEMBLY  
YMCA HONG KONG  
15 JUNE 2008

*By Dr. Arno Fernandez, Director, Forogonito*

and ideology of the enemy, and it must be defeated—in the realm of ideas and, very concretely, by getting out and joining in the struggle against national oppression

But we must recognize that the current momentum of the immigrant rights movement, which is not at all a new movement, against the current capitalist-serving imperialist immigration system, must not end with the struggle for immigration reforms.

The democratic sectors of the people, particularly the most oppressed recipients of imperialist class oppression within the working class non-immigrant communities, must struggle alongside their new immigrant sisters and brothers.

To “contain” the struggle for immigrant rights within the immigrant community alone would be a mistake, and frankly, would serve the interest of the capitalist state that takes delight in and laughs at divisions sown amongst the ranks of the oppressed masses.

As the overwhelming majority of new immigrants in a destination country are low-wage to no-wage workers, solidarity within the immigrant, working class positions us all for genuine advances in the class struggle in each country

Our strategies of resistance, flows directly from our understanding of our history and our present reality in our home country and the destination country within the context of imperialist globalization. Generally, these have two basic interrelated components and are concretized through our general task of educating, mobilizing and organizing our migrants and immigrants and the second is the struggle of the people from our home country for national democracy rooted in a basic level of universal human rights common to all, including the principle of "portability" of these rights no matter where a person may move, and regardless of their citizenship or documentation. The goal of a negotiated global open migration policy would be to make universal what is already the reality for the affluent everywhere, making what is now a privilege for some a universal right for all.

What would change in an open migration policy is the meaning and function of the border - a transition from a closed fortress wall, to a modest well-maintained fence with an open well-administered gateway. It is a proposition that would prioritise administering borders rather than policing them. It would reallocate the tremendous financial, institutional, infrastructural and human resources presently devoted to population control, incarceration and prosecution, to migration administration, reception, and social and economic insertion.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS FOR IMA FOUNDING ASSEMBLY  
YMCA HONG KONG  
15 JUNE 2008

*By Dr. Arno Fernandez, Director, Forogantia*

But there can no longer be any doubt that in general migrants are an economic and social boon, and that the exception is largely in those places where-and to the extent which-movement is forced or restricted, and rights curtailed. It is also clear that all countries in the global north (and many in the south) absolutely depend upon migrant workers and permanent immigrants, a dependency that will only increase; the viability of many of these countries will be determined by the extent to which they can effect radical changes in migration policy (and social attitudes).

A transition to global open migration is not a modest proposition and making it happen will be an intricate political process. The policy is not a panacea for all issues of global justice and equality. However, any movement towards open migration policies and the decriminalisation and regularisation of migration will make conditions very much more [equitable](#) for those migrants already in place, and for those on the move, and will make it even more so for those who follow.

It is only by placing the local issues and struggles in a global context that we can make sense of what is being attempted by the forces of capital, patriarchy and imperialism. And it is only by sharing information, strategies and making the connections that we can be successful in confronting with a socialist perspective.

In essence, global open migration would mean a transition to a global order in which every person has the right and freedom to move if they wish. The corollary would be that each person has the right and freedom to stay where they are if that is their desire, a choice that most certainly would be the predominant one. This new order would be

This system of imperialism has militarily and politically dominated nations around the globe. It has ransacked their economies, chained people's livelihood to imperialism, and driven people from their homes to this country. It viciously preys on them when they are forced across the border into the U.S. And then, this system says these people are illegal, a threat to "national security," and the cause of the problems of everyone else in this country after completion of their agenda of growth. All this, is nothing but in service of a system of global plunder.

To break these chains of global exploitation and oppression requires revolution — socialist democratic revolution — leading ultimately a world without classes and without borders . And revolution requires a revolutionary movement. Congratulations to each one of us here for being part of this process in the formation of the International Migrant Alliance.