

## コメント

Baden Offord

This symposium has provided an in depth inquiry into very complex and connected issues of migration, citizenship and refugees, critically contextualised across diverse Pacific Rim experiences, events and conditions. As an Australian scholar of Human Rights, Asian and Cultural Studies, I found all of the papers highly stimulating, challenging, relevant, and at times quite thought provoking. My task here is to respond to the salient features of the papers and to reflect on what I see as linking them together; whether there is in fact a cohesive and cogent relationship between each of the papers. I will try to do so in two ways if I may. First, I want to provide a very brief response to this particular symposium and its theme and what I believe it has attempted to do. Then I want to speak, if I still have time, to the discrete papers because I think that each paper offers specific views on migration, citizenship and the nature of refugees in the Asia/ Pacific. I think it's important that we notice some of the distinctive things about what the speakers have attempted to argue. But, I'm going to do this from my perspective – which is an Australian perspective – though I do not necessarily represent Australian mainstream thought.

I want to begin by referring to Professor Yamashita's final comment about Benedict Anderson when he talked about the important concept of the 'imagined community'. Because in a sense for me, this symposium has been very much about that idea of the 'imagined community' and the consequential implication for how we then understand and negotiate questions of migration, citizenship and the refugee.

As a further note, I'm responding here to the symposium as someone who, as a foreign resident of Japan carries an alien card; as someone who migrated from New Zealand to Australia; and as someone whose antecedents come from Britain, Norway and Poland to name a few. I am also Maori by heritage, and therefore the product of the immense colonial aftermath of the past three hundred years of European expansion. In other words, I am one of those people whom the cultural theorist Stuart Hall has called a "mongrel person" of the 20th century. My position in this symposium is therefore bound up in the issues discussed in each of the papers. From my point of view, what connects the papers in this symposium is the idea of belonging.

As I remarked earlier, it is very interesting to finish this symposium, as Professor Yamashita did, with the idea of the 'imagined community' because these papers have all been about how the nation [in a sense] comes to grips with how it defines itself, how it interprets itself, how it comes to terms with the way in which a culture is never static and fixed, but rather something that is always in movement and flux; that culture is always in fact something that's growing, changing, emerging and developing. I think that when we talk about migration, when we talk about refugees, we are in fact called to come face to face with

the extraordinary cultural, social and economic events of displacement. Professor Espiritu's paper on Vietnamese refugees to the United States, for example, demonstrates one of the most ironic features of history where the very forces that are brought to bear in rescuing people, are actually the very same forces that have made people vulnerable and displaced in the first place.

History is about these sorts of profound ironies and the paper by Professor Espiritu presents this irony against the background of how nations interpret themselves through political and cultural citizenship. In the 20th century the idea of human rights that developed was really formed in response to the Second World War. The concept of human rights was, in one sense, about giving voice to human suffering, what the sociologist Bryan Turner has referred to as a response to the ontological community of suffering which all human beings belong to. All the papers in this symposium are speaking, in one way or another, on the question of belonging.

At the heart of migration is the story of belonging and not belonging in the nation. For migrants and refugees, what does belonging mean in the new home? How is it experienced, imagined and conceived? What are the conditions of citizenship under which such belonging is and can be framed? In this global era of enormous human movement and migration – both voluntary and involuntary – and human displacement through war or economic hardship, climate change and so on, the question of belonging is now fundamentally important. So in my view this symposium presented very compelling sets of arguments about the complexity of what it means in the 21st century to conceptualise frameworks of coexistence and belonging. An underlying theme of how communities and nations are imagined through acts and experiences of belonging seemed to be an intrinsic approach of the presenters.

At a time when countries like Australia are under increasing pressures to understand their own complex multicultural reality; where Germany, for example, has actually stated that multiculturalism is a failed idea, a failed system; in a world in which these very ideas of who is the foreigner and what does it mean to be a local (or indigenous even) – these are fundamental and significant questions posed by this symposium.

One of the things that really struck me about these papers from Professor Yu, Professor Espiritu, Professor Kashiwazaki and Professor Yamashita, is that all of them were about this central rubric of imagination - imagining how human beings actually get along together, how they exist in these nation states. What an enormous task to think about! Because imagination is something that is so fluid and opens up possibilities, the symposium quite crucially provided an intellectual space in which these difficult questions could be considered. All of the papers here offered astute, incisive, qualifying expositions of significant aspects of how particular formations of multicultural reality are happening or going to happen. There were two facets through the papers that connected these formations and imaginings. The first thing that struck me is that we actually live in a multicultural world; that is a fact. Second, that the world of the migrant and refugee is caught up in the borders that are built to delineate, demarcate, to strategically bind people together, into an imagined community. So

much is at stake therefore in who has a place in actively imagining the nation, and again this comes back to the question of belonging or not belonging.

I'm going to simply say that each paper for me was like a window, a very intriguing and compelling window into these questions. It was very interesting for me to hear Professor Yu talk about Canada because Canada and Australia are in many ways very similar. The cultural transformation in the last forty years in Australia is nothing short of a miracle and the transformation of Vancouver into an Asian dominant city will have a marked effect on how Canada as a nation builds its community into the future.

But one of the things I found interesting in Professor Yu's presentation was his comments on the Asianisation of Canada. Canadian and Australian national imagining have historically been Atlantic focused and based on the dominant systems of colonial structures that were white and European. Even though in Australia the White Australia Policy has been dismantled since the 1970s, its effects continue to linger in the social, cultural and political structures of society. For Canada as well as Australia, colonialism has left its deep marks. The colonial project was not merely an event, but a structure, and these structures have remained entrenched for some time. In Australia, and in Canada too, such dominant colonial structures remain held in the core institutions of society, therefore maintaining strong monocultural frames of power. So when I reflect on what Professor Yu was talking about in new Canada, I was thinking, is this happening in the new Australia of the 21st century? The fear of Asianisation in Australia was prevalent in the 1990s. In many ways things have changed, but the debate continues about Australia's future national and regional imaginary. I invite you all to come and see if this is the case. I'm not sure, but it seems interesting to me that this is about the complexity of change and of how Australia now imagines itself like Canada now does.

Professor Espiritu's paper I found very compelling. I have to say that this particular narrative of the Vietnamese refugees coming to the United States through settlement in the Pendleton Base was clearly a story of the ironies of war. What Professor Espiritu has done is to basically look at the extraordinary myth of America as the promised-land, the immigrant nation *par excellence* of modern times, and to turn this myth on its head. This paper offered another history, another way of looking at how contemporary America has become the nation it is today. And it is in stark contradiction to the very ideal, the very myth making that had occurred around, for example, the Marine Corps who basically attempted to rescue the Vietnamese refugees. This narrative was completely turned inside out. And I think that in itself is extraordinary arresting. So this idea of displacing a notion of the immigrant nation through that kind of experience is very powerful.

The next paper by Professor Kashiwazaki's was about symbolic ethnicity. Again I was thinking about my alien registration in Japan. The notion of ethnic and ethnic life, in Japan is very interesting and intriguing. It was interesting to see the final paper discuss this so well. But again one of things, that was very interesting to me in this paper, was that it brought out specific ideas around oppressive dichotomies that exist between that great dialectic of self

and other through the imagined nation and who is allowed or permitted to become part of the actual dominant voice, the visible. Who can be installed into Japanese space and belong there? Who can be installed easily, who can do this? In Australia in the 18th century the great installation of the British mind happened in so many ways; one of the primary ways was through the piano. Six hundred thousand pianos were brought to Australia by boat in the 1800s to install that sense of ethnic culture, that kind of ethnic celebration of belonging to Britain. British belonging in Australia had to be imagined through specific cultural practices and epistemologies. The piano is a good example of how the British mind, as it were, was transplanted from one landscape to a foreign one. The piano was a tool for domestication of the colonial Australia. The landscape had to be Europeanized.

This notion of demarcating the people in Japan in terms of Japanese, non-Japanese is a discourse that I've encountered with my students in Japan. My students have been intrigued by the idea of multiculturalism and ethnic diversity. This is a captivating idea in Japan and came out strongly in the paper by Professor Kashiwazaki.

So I come back to the very last paper by Professor Yamashita, which I referred to at the beginning of my response, and this paper was to me a very fitting way to conclude this symposium, around the idea of the imagined nation. Though I do not want to say that these papers themselves in some way can be knitted together so easily, they nonetheless invite us to actually consider very complex issues in very specific ways. But I would like to say that essentially all of these papers to some degree are talking about coexistence and belonging. And the idea of coexistence is something that is a very dynamic, important and relevant question in the world today. Each of these papers in a sense talks about the dynamics of cultural and political change and exchange; as well as change that has happened through the very act of migration (voluntary and involuntary) and seeking refuge.