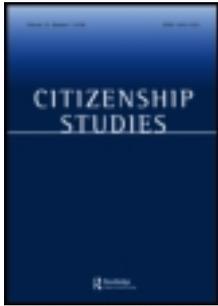


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Degrees of freedom in Canada's culture of redress

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Degrees of freedom in Canada's culture of redress

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This article examines some recent Canadian projects of historical narrative revision in light of Canada's broader redress culture: the recurring norms and assumptions that govern its apportionment of causal and reparative responsibility for historic wrongs. To this end, it studies several grassroots commemorative projects funded under the Community Historical Recognition Program. It asks whether these projects contribute to forging a broader culture of redress capable of contributing to a goal that this article identifies as a central underlying justification for enterprises of historical justice in general: democratizing citizenship. Thus, the article aims to fulfil two main objectives. First, it offers an empirical analysis of some important Canadian historical justice initiatives, thus contributing to our understanding of a case often seen as a leader in redress politics. Second, by developing and then applying its own account of how historical justice projects can contribute to goals of democratic citizenship, the article offers what I hope is a suggestive model for analysing and evaluating particular acts or policies of historical redress more generally. A key conclusion from this analysis is that the Canadian example is much less inspiring than often assumed.

Keywords: reconciliation; reparation; redress; social memory; commemoration; racism

The classic scholarship on nationalism (Anderson 1983, Ranger and Hobsbawm 1983) taught us that nations are constructed in part through the creation of collective memories connecting members across time and space. But the struggles of colonized, exploited, marginalized, or otherwise oppressed minorities occupy memory terrain, too. They rue acts of infamy and celebrate oppositional heroes in counter-memory projects that challenge the certitudes and elisions of the memory infrastructures of nation-states. The result, as burgeoning literatures on reparation (Torpey 2006), political apology (Gibney et al. 2008), transitional justice (Teitel 2000), and, particularly, reconciliation and democratic deliberation (Iverson 2009, Kymlicka and Bashir 2008, McCarthy 2002, 2004, Murphy 2011, Verdeja 2013, Schaap 2008, Smits 2008), suggest, is that transforming dominant historical narratives has gained attention as a way of democratizing or, at least of making more tolerable, existing frameworks of citizenship.

Political communities will of course differ in how they engage the new memory terrain; just as they vary in their political cultures, so they will take different approaches to their unjust pasts as well. These differences can be conceptualized by charting what literary and cultural critics Jennifer Henderson and Pauline Wakeham (2013) call 'cultures of redress'. Abstractly, a redress culture can be defined as the overall pattern of governance arising from how a community engages its historical injustices. Grasping a redress culture means grasping the recurring norms and assumptions that govern the

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community's apportionment of causal and reparative responsibility for historic wrongs. What kinds of wrongs get addressed? How is blame for them allocated? How are contemporary responsibilities stemming from them conceived? What kinds of political understandings and relationships do the attendant modes of acknowledgment appear to promote?

Studies of redress cultures can make empirical and conceptual contributions to social memory research, area studies, and comparative politics; they are also relevant for questions of democratic citizenship. By 'democratic citizenship', I mean citizenship not in terms of legal status or some static list of desired rights or programmes, but rather in the participatory-cum-historical sense of long-run processes of renegotiation oriented towards turning relationships of domination and exclusion into ones based on equality and consent (Kymlicka 2012). The democratic value with which I am particularly concerned is the equal opportunity to influence political outcomes (Young 2002).

This article does not attempt to map the vast variety of ways in which questions of historical justice and democratic citizenship may be interrelated. Neither does it treat the full array of practices relevant to studying a redress culture, which might include financial reparation, restitution of land, criminal trials, truth commissions, law reform efforts, and explicit acts of political apology. Instead, I focus more specifically on several recent projects of narrative reconstruction, involving wrongs against victims of Chinese, Italian, and Jewish ancestry, and funded under the Canadian federal government's Community Historical Recognition Program (CHRP), a 2008–2013 policy framework that provided CAD\$25 million for voluntary groups to address particular Canadian instances of historical injustice. As part of my focus on understanding the broader Canadian redress culture, I also briefly situate these projects against the backdrop of Canada's 2009–2014 Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC): an official inquiry into the country's century-long policy of forcing native children to attend residential schools.

Sketching some important aspects of the Canadian case is important in its own right, given Canada's putative status as a multicultural exemplar in the forefront of the new politics of apology and redress (Kymlicka 2007; Wakeham 2012). At the same time, this article aims to advance our thinking on matters of historical justice more generally. It does so by offering what I hope is a suggestive model that situates specific projects of narrative revision within their broader redress culture in order to gauge their contribution to what I understand as a crucial underlying justification for projects of historical redress more generally: advancing the prospects for democratic citizenship.

To these ends, this essay explores two notable problems in some recent Canadian projects of narrative revision. I argue that these problems reflect broader tendencies in Canadian redress culture that appear significantly to compromise that culture's democratic citizenship potential. The first problem is a set of pervasive biases and taboos, which often constrain narrative revision projects in ways that insulate leading Canadian institutions and figures from scrutiny, thus supporting a prevailing dominant insistence on the basic justness of contemporary relations. These taboos and biases impede prospects for democratic citizenship renegotiation by supporting rather than undermining majoritarian hostility to criticism and introspection.

The second problem comes into view upon considering an interesting wrinkle in the first: rather than blanketing the historical justice landscape with totalizing evenness, the biases and taboos in Canadian redress culture seem to operate in persistently unequal ways, engendering inequalities in processes of narrative revision that place undue constraints on certain citizenship renegotiation projects in particular. These inequalities, and the unequal degrees of freedom underlying them, offend the democratic citizenship

value of the equal opportunity of citizens to influence political outcomes. Before developing these points through an analysis of the cases, let me provide some context by sketching the apparent broader outlines of Canadian redress culture.¹

Canadian redress culture and its lines of divergence: an overview

The dominant redress culture assigns causal responsibility for historical injustices to the Canadian state, past federal governments, and, less occasionally, leading societal institutions (such as the major Christian churches), taken as undifferentiated wholes; it says virtually nothing about specific state entities or actors, corporations, professions, associations, the citizenry, local institutions, particular architects of wrongdoing, individual agents of injustice (save for ones found guilty of gross physical or sexual abuse), indifferent bystanders, and passive beneficiaries. When it comes to present-day reparative responsibilities, Canadian redress culture tends to confine itself to occasional instances of compensation to immediate living survivors of specific gross human rights abuses. More diffusely, it treats contemporary questions of acknowledgment and memory not as possible routes to accountability or institutional reform but as matters of paying increased emotional regard to the past experiences of victims.

This latter emphasis may qualify as a particular Canadian inflection of a more broadly global move towards ‘victim-centred’ (Phelps 2006; Fassin and Rechtman 2009) responses to historic wrongdoing. However, the features just enumerated – a tendency to bypass questions of causal responsibility, ignore specific agents and mechanisms of injustice, and duck contemporary reform and accountability issues – suggest that Canada’s victim-centredness is of a very particular sort. Its ‘no-fault’ tenor certainly differs from that of many transitional justice processes in the global South. In these latter contexts, polities embarking on projects of political transformation, even as they turn to questions of restorative justice for victims, often treat grappling with historical wrongdoing as a forensic task of digging into the circumstances and mechanics of how, by whom, and under what institutional auspices the outrages were committed – the better to promote precisely those democratic citizenship goals that appear comparatively ill-served in Canadian redress culture: introspection, openness to criticism, and, therefore, political accountability (Bonner and James 2011; cf. Teitel 2000).

Taking this basic account of Canada’s redress culture as backdrop, I want now to explore some more specific lines of divergence within it, focusing on an occasion when they seemed to me particularly vivid. On 29 October 2011, I was in Halifax, Nova Scotia, attending one of the national events of Canada’s TRC, an official inquiry into the country’s century-long policy of forcing native children to attend residential schools: the schools, by separating families and attacking traditional cultures and languages, were central to Canada’s broader colonial assault on indigeneity.² I had decided to leave the TRC proceedings to visit the Canadian immigration museum on the downtown Halifax harbour, known as Pier 21. As I left the TRC convention centre, I mulled over a series of disappointments that seemed emblematic of Canada’s weak engagement with injustices against indigenous peoples more generally.

A Catholic bishop had delivered a blandly patronizing speech in which he essentially said that the era of residential schools predated his appointment. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Canada’s national police service, had issued a disingenuously self-exculpatory report which concluded that the force did not know anything it had not already shared about abuse, unmarked burials, forced abortions and sterilizations, criminal failures of care and duty, or any other similar outrages associated with the schools: no one had ever

come to it with such information. And the federal Aboriginal Relations minister had told the gathering that the residential schools were not instances of genocide on any possible meaning of that term (but cf. Woolford 2009, 2013) but merely an ‘education policy gone wrong’. So far as Canadian officialdom was concerned, then, the TRC did not warrant disclosure or accountability-minded introspection. It was an occasion for showcasing emotionally solicitous contemporary attitudes and nothing more.³

The specific destination on my walk was renowned architect Daniel Libeskind’s (2011) ‘Wheel of Conscience’, a sculpture inside the museum, commissioned by the Canadian Jewish Congress and funded partly by the Congress in partnership with the CHRP on which this article focuses.⁴ The Wheel of Conscience commemorates the roughly 900 Jewish refugees aboard the M.S. St. Louis in 1939, whom Canada refused in an act that contributed to the deaths of more than 250 passengers in the Holocaust. The ship’s forlorn voyage is chronicled in the book *None Is Too Many* (Abella and Troper 2010); the title refers to Canada’s stridently anti-Semitic wartime opposition to Jewish refugees.

The Wheel of Conscience is essentially a large concatenation of interlocking gears of the sort one might see in a mechanical device – like the drive assembly for powering a steamship. The work comprises one big wheel, housing four smaller ones inside it; the smaller ones move each other and, through that movement, make the big one turn. Each gear features a word embossed in a font reminiscent of a mid-century propaganda poster; the smallest is ‘Hatred’, the next, ‘Racism’, the penultimate, ‘Xenophobia’, and the biggest, ‘Anti-Semitism’. The accompanying plaque explains that the Wheel of Conscience addresses a ‘dark chapter in Canadian history [to] educate and sensitize current and future generations about the importance of tolerance, understanding and diversity’. The plaque pulls no punches. Located at the very site where the St. Louis passengers should have been admitted, it says that they and ‘countless others might have been saved, if not for Canadian policy of the time regarding Jewish immigrants’. Likening the sculpture’s ‘gears of a ship’ to the grinding, bureaucratic ‘gears of government’, it explores the lessons of ‘Canada’s historical anti-Semitic immigration policy’.

Thus, and somewhat uncommonly for a state-funded memory project in Canada’s no-fault culture of redress, the Wheel of Conscience strives to promote introspection and accountability. Without euphemism or self-serving nationalist redemption, it reminds Canadians of their demonstrated recent capacity for violating basic human rights, and it links Holocaust deaths to specific Canadian attitudes and policy choices. But intersecting with my TRC experience the way it had, the Wheel of Conscience instead provoked me to reflect on Canada’s seeming inability to draw similarly tough lessons about its ongoing history of indigenous dispossession. I wondered whether the contrast between the sculpture’s forthrightness and the patronizing waffle-waffle I’d heard at the TRC was not an integral reflection of profound inequalities in Canada’s redress culture.

The difference between Canada at the Halifax TRC and 10 or so blocks away at Pier 21 is at a certain level easy enough to grasp. There is a set of widely accepted frames for promoting Holocaust awareness that have no counterparts as far as anti-indigenous injustices are concerned (MacDonald 2008). Native claims involve territory and sovereignty; condemning Canadian anti-Semitism is by comparison relatively cost-free. Indeed, the increased centrality given to fighting anti-Semitism in Canadian human rights discourse (Griffith 2013), a product not only of the 2006 election of the unwaveringly pro-Israel federal Conservative party but also of the changed political climate following the 9/11 attacks more generally, deserves mention.⁵ Thus, at the official unveiling of the Wheel of Conscience, then federal Citizenship and Immigration Minister Jason Kenney (2011) noted Canada’s ‘history of anti-Semitism ... hatred ... racism ... contempt ...

rejectionism'; he called anti-Semitism 'this uniquely durable and pernicious form of hatred' and indeed the 'most historically durable and pernicious hatred of all'. My point is not to challenge Kenney in what de Costa (2009) calls the 'ghoulish' business of 'ranking ... injustices or ... suffering'. It is rather to suggest that comparing Canadian approaches to historical condemnation and blame assignment opens an interesting window on the country's redress culture.

The Community Historical Recognition Program

While attending to commonalities, the analysis below focuses on differences in condemnation and blame assignment among projects that, like the Wheel of Conscience, were funded under the CHRP. The CHRP was a 2008–2013 federal framework for addressing past wrongs committed against immigrant minorities; at the most general level, it can be seen as a kind of non-indigenous counterpart running parallel to the 2009–2014 TRC's focus on the residential schools policy. Although the CHRP was concerned with racist injustices against migrants as opposed to colonial depredation on native peoples, the ensuing analysis extends and strengthens a point suggested by my contrast between the Halifax TRC event and the Pier 21 Wheel of Conscience: Canada's redress culture is a deeply unequal field striated by varying levels of relative taboo and empowerment. Before developing the point further, let me offer a brief account of the CHRP itself.

CHRP funding ended in February 2013. The programme established a process through which voluntary groups could apply for federal support to do commemorative, artistic, or educational work on a range of specifically identified injustices. Funding decisions were made by government-appointed boards, composed of members from the community linked to the relevant injustice, but chosen with a careful eye to upholding government messaging and priorities (Griffith 2013). Final approval for all CHRP projects rested with Citizenship and Immigration Minister Jason Kenney, the renowned administrative micromanager (Griffith 2013) who spoke at the Wheel of Conscience unveiling. The CHRP Applicant's Guide named the following eligible wrongs: the internment of Eastern Europeans, mostly of Ukrainian origin, during the First World War (CAD\$10 million in total available funding); the internment of Italian Canadians during the Second World War (\$5 million); the 1885–1921 Chinese 'head tax' and subsequent 1921–1947 ban on Chinese immigration (\$5 million); the refusal and mistreatment of migrants from India aboard the Komagata Maru in 1914 (\$2.5 million); and the 1939 'none is too many' rejection of the M.S. St. Louis (\$2.5 million).⁶

Above all, the CHRP aimed to shape how Canadian wrongdoing is understood and discussed. It followed the quintessentially neoliberal public–private partnership model of using conditional project funding to govern civil-society conduct (Smith 2005). For example, it stipulated which injustices could be recognized and it forbade 'political activities' and 'advocacy' as well. It also aimed to steer public attention away from the wrongs themselves by emphasizing the experiences and contributions of the relevant communities. As the CHRP Applicant's Guide (Canada 2010) explained, the programme's 'primary objective' was to 'recognize and/or commemorate the historical experiences of [the] ethnocultural communities affected'; its 'secondary objective' was to 'promote the respective contributions of these communities to the shaping of Canada'.

Academic assessments have not been kind. Wakeham (2012, p. 219) criticizes the CHRP's 'assembly-line approach to reconciliation'; James (2013, p. 41) calls CHRP funding a 'company-store currency [that proscribed] more ambitiously reparative discourses and claims'. But programme design and programme accomplishments are

different things. As Coombe (2009) points out in surveying the literature on neoliberalism and cultural property, once we turn away from a focus on rules, institutions, and planners, we often see official dictates being mitigated and even defeated by the forces of creative engagement and subversion. What, then, do we find in the case of the CHRP?

The CHRP projects

Assessing the programme's output is daunting; the CHRP financed 12 websites, 12 teacher's guides, 10 museum exhibits, 8 documentary films, 6 monuments, 4 plays, 2 radio shows, 2 musicals, 1 orchestral work, 1 graphic novel, 1 coffee-table book, and much else besides (Canada 2013). I look here only at CHRP works involving the Chinese head tax and exclusion act, Italian-Canadian internment, and Jewish wartime refugees – injustices with formal endpoints more or less coterminous with the close of the Second World War. Furthermore, I restrict the study to museum exhibits and specifically related works, which allows me to focus on undertakings of relatively high visibility.⁷ To this end, I have examined the following:

- “‘They Gave Up Themselves for the Next Generation’: The Working Lives of Chinese Canadian Women, 1923–1967’, a temporary exhibit mounted by the Multicultural History Society of Ontario (2012) at Toronto’s Black Creek Pioneer Village in summer 2012. The exhibit included hundreds of photos, excerpts from 33 oral history interviews, a book detailing the interviewees’ stories, and audio stations offering interview excerpts and contextual material. A companion website contains these features plus a larger documentary collection with more than 1000 photos and scans.⁸
- ‘The Ties That Bind’, a 30-minute film produced by the Foundation to Commemorate the Chinese Railroad Workers in Canada and the Multicultural History Society of Ontario (Nipp 2011). The film features interviews with historians, other experts, and descendants of the Chinese men who built the CPR. It also features photos and footage of people, places, items, and documents. The companion ‘Ties That Bind’ website contains documents, interviews, photos, and explanatory material; it consists of roughly 140 web pages.⁹
- The permanent exhibit, ‘Italian Canadians as Enemy Aliens: Memories of World War Two’, at the Columbus Centre (2012a) in Toronto. The exhibit, along with a 16-page brochure, 16-page exhibit guide, teacher’s guide, and website, was produced by a Centre team. The exhibit includes an interactive multimedia station featuring footage of the internment camps and interviews, a ‘feedback area’ for visitors, and a ‘memorial wall’ remembering the internees. It draws on a collection of more than 800 photos and 86 interviews, all available on the website.¹⁰
- The temporary exhibit at the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre (2012), ‘Enemy Aliens: The Internment of Jewish Refugees in Canada – 1940–1943’, which began a Canadian tour in June 2013. The exhibit includes artefacts from the camps, photos, video excerpts from interviews, and interpretive panels. The companion website comprises around 140 web pages.¹¹ A 27-page guide includes highlights from the exhibit and several short essays. The works were produced by Centre staff and a research team.
- Finally, the previously discussed ‘Wheel of Conscience’ sculpture, dealing with Canada’s exclusion of the Jewish refugees aboard the M.S. St. Louis. The sculpture was designed by Daniel Libeskind (2011) under commission from the Canadian Jewish Congress and is permanently located at Halifax’s Pier 21 immigration museum.

So what does analysing these works tell us about the CHRP's contribution to Canadian redress culture? Core regularities, not only stemming from the CHRP programme criteria but also reflecting the peculiar kind of no-fault victim-centredness described earlier in this essay, are certainly apparent. Recall that the notion of victim-centredness has come to the fore globally in contexts of transitional justice, where it has arisen as a restorative counterweight to the traditionally more forensic bent of investigative enterprises such as truth commissions (Phelps 2006). But victim-centredness in the Canadian redress culture is not a similar matter of complementing investigative processes; for example, even the Canadian TRC, a putatively investigative body, has a sharply circumscribed mandate that renders it forensically weak by international standards (Nagy 2013). The CHRP works reflect this broader Canadian resistance to blame and introspection by treating the relevant injustices only as parenthetical background for a more primary focus on individuals and communities. Let me illustrate this commonality in more detail, first, by discussing in brief sequence the victim-centred character of the different CHRP works and then by looking more specifically at their common focus on the Canadian contributions of minoritized communities.

Victim-centredness and discourses of 'contribution' in the CHRP projects

The sophisticated and engaging museum exhibit, 'They Gave Up Themselves for the Next Generation', features the voices, stories, and personal items of Chinese-Canadian women who lived in the era from the head tax's 1885 introduction to the advent of a formally non-discriminatory immigration system in 1967. The women endured conditions of intense racism and social isolation in what were primarily 'male bachelor' communities – that is, ones whose make-up was skewed by the expense of the head tax in the context of a heavily racialized and gendered system of labour exploitation (Cho 2002). The exhibit's oral history interviews narrate worlds of family separation, disrespect, and missed opportunities. But as we shall see, they tell stories of perseverance and triumph as well.

For their part, the 'Ties That Bind' film documentary and website focus on the lives of Chinese labourers on Canada's transcontinental Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), offering archival material, new research, and interviews with descendants. Perhaps above all, they invert traditional accounts of the CPR as a feat of Canadian nation-building by focusing on the suffering of the exploited Chinese migrants who built its most dangerous sections. The 'Ties That Bind' film and website also celebrate community accomplishments and triumphs, characterizing the descendants' stories as ones of 'sacrifice, separation, perseverance and a deep respect for their ancestors who chose to make Canada their home'.

The 'Italian Canadians as Enemy Aliens' exhibit and website are broadly similar to their Chinese-Canadian counterparts in emphasizing first-hand experiences and intergenerational impact. However, as Spillman's (2003) critique of pure social constructionist accounts of collective memory reminds us, analysts need to focus on the basic properties of remembered events and not only on the contemporary interests of the groups doing the remembering. Comprehending the distinctness of the Italian-Canadian projects certainly seems to require noting the specific character of the Second World War internment. Because the roughly 600 internees were targeted on the basis of suspected fascist ties (Iacovetta *et al.* 2000), as opposed to being rounded up categorically on the basis of national origin, religion, or ethnicity, the Italian-Canadian works wrestle with questions of guilt and stigma in ways that their counterparts do not.

Thus, the descendants interviewed in the ‘Italian Canadians as Enemy Aliens’ exhibit discuss the internment legacy in terms of shame, confusion, and silence. As for interpretive approach, the Italian-Canadian works adopt a questioning tone; they ask about rather than assume the innocence of the internees, and they puzzle over, before ultimately rejecting, the appropriateness of internment as a wartime policy response. For example, the ‘Italian Canadians as Enemy Aliens’ exhibit guide (Columbus Centre 2012b) juxtaposes police bulletins about fascist activities with a reminder that none of the internees was ever formally charged with a disloyalty-related offence. And although the exhibit itself provides considerable evidence of official bias, overkill, and misjudgement, it also calls attention to unrepentant fascism, including the following 1990 quotation from a former internee: ‘I was a fascist. I still am a fascist. I haven’t changed. Let’s be honest.’

The ‘Enemy Aliens: The Internment of Jewish Refugees in Canada, 1940–1943’ exhibit is starkly different. It certainly shares a focus on experiences of internment; it features personal objects from the camps, such as a toilet paper roll, a coffee mug, a camp uniform, and internees’ letters and drawings. However, because there is no historical debate about guilt – the internees were Holocaust refugees detained wrongfully as ‘security risks’ at British behest – the exhibit lacks the questioning tone of its Italian-Canadian counterpart. It focuses instead without ambiguity on the travails of men wracked with frustration not only at being wrongfully incarcerated but also at being unable to defend their loved ones from the Nazi genocide.

Thus, notwithstanding the differences just enumerated, all these projects fulfil the CHRP’s primary objective (Canada 2010): ‘recogniz[ing] and/or commemorat[ing] the historical experiences of [the] ethnocultural communities affected’. Recall also that the programme’s secondary objective was to ‘promote the respective contributions of these communities to the shaping of Canada’. This objective reflected the longstanding emphasis of Canada’s official multiculturalism policy on promoting the integration of minoritized groups by recognizing their contributions to Canadian society (Mackey 2012, p. 328).

Making frequent references to the word ‘contribution’ and its variants, the CHRP works pursue this objective via the settler-society immigration trope of adversity, hard work, and eventual reward. For example, an entry (Draper 2012, pp. 10–11) in the museum guide on the Jewish internment explains that after the war, ‘The “camp boys” [became] Canadians. They had married, worked hard to contribute to the war effort, and had begun to rebuild their lives’; it notes further that several former prisoners went on to become ‘prominent intellectuals, entertainers, musicians, and professionals . . . a group of remarkable men [who] have all made significant contributions to Canadian society’. Now the exceptional nature of the Jewish internees should not be gainsaid; the group of some 2300 individuals included nine future members of the Order of Canada and two Nobel laureates (Hemel 2013).

The Italian-Canadian internment exhibit strikes a more blue-collar tone, emphasizing the community’s ‘solid work ethic’ and ‘many achievements, such as having contributed to building the infrastructures of various cities’. But subsequent quotations stress Italian-Canadian contributions in the more conventional terms of embourgeoisement. For example, one panel tells the visitor that, ‘[a]lthough Italian Canadians are still challenged by the harmful stereotypes of the past, they have flourished and are now firmly established in Canada’; another declares that Italian Canadians are now ‘businessmen, skilled professionals, artists, and innovators in every field’.

The Chinese-Canadian projects also take this approach. For example, the ‘Ties That Bind’ CPR website states, ‘Despite the odds, and through hard work and perseverance . . .

Chinese Canadians are recognized in the professions. . . . They contribute to all aspects of Canadian life.’ The works dealing specifically with Chinese-Canadian women also frame ‘contributions’ in the idiom of struggle and reward. For example, after quoting an interviewee who noted that ‘strong families and churches’ helped her community cope with the Great Depression, the website adds that Chinese Canadians earned ‘the notice and respect of other Canadians for their limited use of government assistance programmes’. The museum exhibit pamphlet (Multicultural History Society of Ontario 2011) encapsulates the ‘contributions’ narrative by saying that the women ‘gave themselves up for the next generation [with] paid and unpaid labour [that] contributed to the development of strong families, communities, and economies’.

As messages emanating from Canada’s major contemporary reparative response to non-indigenous redress struggles, the basic incongruity of these examples is striking. By alchemizing Canadian human rights violations into immigrant success stories, they frame Canadian racism as a memory to be contemplated rather than a reality to be confronted. The specifically neoliberal, responsabilizing move involved in turning experiences of extraordinary injustice into narratives of class ascent should also be noted. In the face of growing concerns about the exploitation of racialized labour in contemporary Canada (e.g. Bakan and Stasiulis 2005), the CHRP projects wind up functioning as a kind of rebuke, implying: ‘Earlier immigrant cohorts suffered torments that could never happen today and yet they still came out on top – so what’s your problem?’

Lines of divergence in the CHRP projects

Thus far, I have focused on similarities among the CHRP works that reflect broader regularities in Canadian redress culture; drawing on existing studies, I characterized these regularities as the products of a peculiarly ‘no-fault’ kind of victim-centredness. But as the article suggested when contrasting the Halifax TRC proceedings and the Wheel of Conscience sculpture, we also need to think in terms of differences: striations, inequalities, and lines of divergence. One line of divergence is with respect to connecting historic and present-day injustices. Although the emphasis in the CHRP works on ‘contributions’ tends to obscure present injustices, and although the broader Canadian redress culture tends to sanitize the present by locating injustice firmly in the past (Henderson 2013; Wakeham 2013), the Italian-Canadian projects take a different approach. They draw explicit linkages, highlighting patterns of Canadian blameworthiness that raise tough questions for the contemporary political community.

The strongest example of this approach is a panel at the Columbus Centre exhibit noting subsequent Canadian internments: communists in the 1950s; Quebec separatists during the 1970 FLQ crisis; suspected Arab or Muslim terrorists in the wake of the 9/11 attacks; and anti-neoliberal protestors at the 2010 G20 summit in Toronto. Testing the limits of the CHRP prohibition on ‘political activities’ and ‘advocacy’, the panel concludes: ‘Canada has a history of interning populations it considers a threat to public safety . . . Holding views in favour of fascism, communism, or religious fundamentalism is not specific to certain communities; nor does this necessarily make a person or group of people a security risk.’ There is no comparable message in the other CHRP works examined here.

Another key difference among the projects has to do with questions of racism. The federal government’s official CHRP materials and announcements were doggedly consistent in refusing to use that word; the noteworthy exception was Kenney’s (2011) speech at the Wheel of Conscience unveiling, which referred twice to ‘racism’ and six

times to ‘anti-Semitism’. Interestingly, this contrast at the level of official pronouncements seems replicated in the CHRP output itself: whereas their counterparts tend towards euphemism or avoidance where racism is concerned, the Jewish-Canadian works discuss anti-Semitism forthrightly.

They are also unique in attaching blame for specific anti-Semitic practices and decisions to specific Canadian officials and even to particular Canadian communities. For example, the internment exhibit guide (Draper 2012) states, ‘The last thing Ottawa ... wanted was Jews.’ It then calls attention to a series of anti-Semitic quotations from internment camp commander W.J.H. Ellwood and identifies ‘The very loud Sergeant-Major MacIntosh in Camp N in Sherbrooke ... ranting about the Jews’ (Koch 2012, p. 17). The exhibit itself is particularly unflinching. For example, one panel states, ‘Hostility to Jews was widespread, common among government bureaucrats, and found its most virulent voice in rural, Catholic Quebec on which the government depended heavily for re-election.’ Another names Frederick Charles Blair, wartime Secretary of the Canadian Department of Immigration, as ‘a powerful authority opposing Jewish immigration into Canada [who] consistently refused activist efforts to release internees into the country’.

Quite different is the tendency towards silence and evasion around matters of racism in the Chinese-Canadian projects; I noted only three instances of the word in examining them, one in the ‘Ties That Bind’ film, and two on the website of the same name in subsections several links away from the main pages. Indeed, the Chinese-Canadian materials appear consciously to reject the term ‘racism’. For example, whereas the earlier, two-decade long redress campaign invariably used the phrase, ‘legislated racism’, to describe the Chinese head tax and exclusion act, the relevant CHRP works consistently use weaker terminology – ‘legislated discrimination’ – to describe the same unjust policies.¹²

Indeed, euphemism recurs throughout. For example, attributing the use of Chinese workers by the CPR to the ‘abundance and relative low cost’ of Chinese labour, the ‘Chinese Canadian Women’ website explains that demands for the head tax emerged after ‘tensions between Chinese and non-Chinese mounted’. And whereas the Jewish internment exhibit specifically identifies anti-Semitic Canadian politicians, bureaucrats, and camp commanders, the Chinese-Canadian works steer clear of naming. The exceptions are the ‘Ties That Bind’ website and film, which note lead CPR contractor Andrew Onderdonk as responsible for the decision to recruit Chinese workers. The website also features a sidebar quotation from Sir John A. Macdonald highlighting the enthusiastic racism of Canada’s first prime minister. But the agents and mechanisms of Canadian racism are otherwise invisible in the Chinese-Canadian CHRP projects, whose overall approach to such matters is best described as careful silence interspersed with conspicuous understatements.

At one level, this reticence reflects the strictures of the CHRP (Canada 2010). The ban on ‘political activities’ and ‘advocacy’; the requirement that projects focus on experiences, communities, and contributions as opposed to injustices, perpetrators, and beneficiaries; the vetting of project proposals by state-picked committees; the overall supervisory control exercised by Jason Kenney, a particularly right-wing minister in a Conservative government – all suggest that the CHRP would favour ‘safe’, non-activist projects. At the same time, note also that the CHRP’s basic structure and rules came from the previous Liberal government’s 2005 Acknowledgement, Commemoration, and Education (ACE) programme, which was itself a response to the success of the Conservatives in using historical justice issues to make electoral inroads with minoritized communities (James 2013). Further evidence of bipartisanship is the CHRP emphasis on recognizing group

contributions, which reflects a Canadian discourse going back to former Liberal Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau's 1971 multiculturalism policy, endorsed by the Conservatives since at least 1984 (Abu-Laban and Gabriel 2002).

It is therefore unsurprising that a programme framed via a longstanding, quasi-official Canadian rhetoric and developed and supported by Canada's two leading political parties would share the basic moral contours of the broader Canadian redress culture. But given the CHRP's deep Canadian roots, bipartisan support, detailed rules, and tight political oversight – all of which might support a corresponding expectation of uniformity – what stand out are the lines of divergence among the projects. As we have seen, the CHRP works were not uniform in neglecting to identify injustice, allocate blame, and explore contemporary problems and responsibilities. They exhibited varying degrees of freedom and frankness instead.

The CHRP projects and their histories of memory

Sociologist Barbara Misztal (2003, p. 25) notes epigrammatically that memory 'has its own history'. A key implication of her point is that commemorative practices need themselves to be grasped historically (see esp. Olick 2003a, 2007, ch. 4). Because collective remembering tends to occur in dialogic awareness of past relevant approaches, studying collective remembrance requires studying relevant predecessor undertakings. Groups may choose to keep alive particular commemorative traditions (as with the basic routines of Remembrance Day); rework them to suit new purposes (as with the mainstream German right's 'normalization' Holocaust remembrance strategy of the 1980s); or even reject them outright (as with the Canadian Conservative government's recent furtive approach to the thirtieth anniversary of the Charter of Rights).¹³ Understanding memory politics means tracking the historical development of these kinds of choices.

In the case of the CHRP, tracking the relevant histories of memory also helps us to avoid a mistaken assumption to which a one-sided focus on the CHRP might otherwise lead: that Canada's redress culture is the product of official edicts alone. As I suggest below, we also need to situate it in relation to more dispersed processes of social governance in which civil-society histories of memory play crucial roles. Thus, the following section interprets the lines of divergence in the CHRP projects in the light of previous campaigns for historical redress and their respective trajectories and fates. Let me begin by focusing first on the Chinese-Canadian materials.

Their tendency to avoid tough encounters with Canadian racism cannot be understood in abstraction from the more than two-decade long campaign for head-tax redress. An explicitly anti-racist project, concerned to expose inequalities and biases in contemporary Canadian immigration policy, and networked with a wide variety of progressive groups, the campaign sparred with successive Canadian federal governments – and challenged the limits of the dominant redress culture – before winning a grudgingly extended apology and compensation package in 2006 (Cho 2013). For its troubles, the campaign's lead organization, the Chinese Canadian National Council (CCNC), was derided by Conservatives as 'an arm of the NDP' (O'Neil 2005), Canada's social-democratic party. Liberal and Conservative governments alike attempted to marginalize the CCNC by favouring, explicitly and repeatedly, the rival National Congress of Chinese Canadians (Bramham 2005), an obscure pro-business organization that, even by this article's time of writing, had yet to establish a website. The more grassroots CCNC received no CHRP funding.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, therefore, projects funded by the CHRP programme's Chinese-Canadian section avoid the redress campaign's framings and approaches.

Particularly in their substitution of the tamer wording, ‘legislated discrimination’, for ‘legislated racism’, and in their failure to draw connections between racism past and present, they amount instead to a strategic repudiation of the campaign’s activist legacy.

The history of memory surrounding the Italian-Canadian internment is somewhat different. Unlike its Chinese-Canadian counterpart, the internment redress campaign, which was most active from the late 1980s to the early 1990s, was neither progressive nor strongly supported in the community. Indeed, it was criticized by some prominent Italian-Canadian historians (Iacovetta and Perin 2000, p. 6), who argued that the campaign misrepresented the internment as a war on innocents, drew inappropriate and misleading comparisons with other Canadian injustices, and promoted a ‘laundered version of history’. When Minister Kenney named one of the historians, Roberto Perin, to the CHRP’s Italian-Canadian advisory board, the organization behind the redress campaign, the National Congress of Italian Canadians, protested the perceived affront vociferously.¹⁴

The ‘Italian Canadians as Enemy Aliens’ exhibit and related publications negotiate this difficult history by abandoning the redress campaign’s core claims. For example, instead of treating the internment as a ‘war on ethnicity’ (Ramirez 1988), they reframe it as an unfair response to the possible security problems posed by some Italian-Canadian individuals. Indeed, the museum exhibit situates its interpretive approach explicitly as a response to the redress campaign’s failure. Panels state that ‘the Italian-Canadian community has not embraced the internment as part of its collective history’ and that ‘the community does not have a unified position to advocate to the Canadian government and the Canadian public’.

I noted earlier the distinctive focus of the ‘Italian Canadians as Enemy Aliens’ exhibit on using the internment to explore more recent instances of the wrongful targeting of other communities. This focus breaks signally with the redress campaign, which began in the late 1980s by seizing on the ground-breaking 1988 Japanese Canadian Redress Agreement to press the alleged moral equivalency of its case. The Agreement, Canada’s first-ever official political apology and compensation programme for an act of racist injustice, and which focused explicitly on fighting present-day racism with a \$36 million endowment to establish the Canadian Race Relations Foundation (Kobayashi 1992), was a response to the Second World War internment of Japanese Canadians on Canada’s West Coast. From 1942 to 1947, roughly 23,000 innocent people – British Columbia’s entire Japanese-Canadian community – were deprived of their liberty. They also suffered the permanent confiscation and fire-sale auctioning of their homes, businesses, and property (Sunahara 1981).

Thus, critics (Iacovetta *et al.* 2000) of the Italian-Canadian campaign argued that it was a gross historical distortion to paint in the same light a more modest round-up of some 600 suspected fascists, most of whom were interned for periods of less than two years, and none of whom was deprived permanently of his or her possessions, enterprises, or real property.¹⁵ The ‘Italian Canadians as Enemy Aliens’ exhibit navigates this fraught history of memory by reversing the redress campaign’s approach to the business of mobilizing moral sympathies. By raising questions about the neoliberal war on dissent and Canada’s treatment of Arabs and Muslims, it uses the Italian-Canadian experience to focus on the mistreatment of others.

In these various ways, then, the Italian- and Chinese-Canadian CHRP projects wrestle with constraints bequeathed by their respective histories of memory. The former contend with controversies over historical disproportion and inappropriate comparison; the latter with officialdom’s demonstrated hostility towards avowedly anti-racist modes of civic engagement.

Works dealing with Canada's treatment of wartime Jewish refugees navigate a different context still. Unlike the Chinese Canadian National Council, for instance, the country's leading Jewish organizations appear to have good relations with the current Conservative government; indeed, B'nai Brith awarded Prime Minister Stephen Harper its Presidential Medal of Freedom in recognition of Harper's support for Israeli policy in the Middle East.¹⁶ The Jewish-Canadian projects also differ in lacking earlier redress campaign legacies to manage: when it comes to demands for apologies or compensation for Canadian injustices, among Canadian Jewry there have been virtually none.

The relevant history of memory is instead encoded in the global frame of Holocaust awareness (Howard-Hassmann and Lombardo 2007; Torpey 2001). The frame's famous message – 'never again!' – metonymizes the core faith of post-war human rights discourse: that preventing future injustices requires dealing unstintingly with past ones. This framing legacy imparts a unique path dependency to commemorative initiatives dealing with anti-Semitism. Quite appropriately, the Wheel of Conscience and Jewish 'Enemy Aliens' projects embrace this legacy in their refusal to euphemize anti-Semitism and in their insistence on speaking plainly about its Canadian enablers and perpetrators.

Conclusion

But as we have seen, however, the broader redress culture appears inhospitable to similarly forthright approaches when it comes to other notable Canadian injustices. This analysis supports the tentative conclusion that some of the colonial and racist hierarchies involved in the original wrongs continue to influence the contemporary modes of response (cf. Hesse 2011); my earlier juxtaposition of the Wheel of Conscience sculpture, Minister Kenney's strong statements against anti-Semitism, and officialdom's stingy evasiveness at the TRC suggested as much. To invoke a case that this essay treated in greater depth, consider the present-day echoes of the Chinese head tax: an increasingly racialized labour market, policy changes that criminalize refugees, and a dramatically expanded reliance on temporary workers who lack basic civil freedoms (Bakan and Stasiulis 2005). The CHRP's focus on replacing the head tax redress campaign's framings with ones more congenial to the status quo indicates a determination to ensure that commemorative approaches stressing these sorts of continuities remain outside the boundaries of Canadian redress culture.

This essay has asked how the CHRP's projects of narrative revision might contribute to a redress culture better placed to serve goals of democratic citizenship. The picture is not encouraging. The programme's insistence on downplaying Canadian injustices in favour of redemptive tales of multiculturalist success mocks the very idea of examining historical wrongs in the spirit of introspection and political learning. Much the same can be said about promoting the equal opportunity to influence political outcomes; it appears that the CHRP excluded precisely those voices most engaged in fighting exclusion. The problem for democratic citizenship is this: when equal voice and historical learning are systematically impeded, the prospects for renegotiating relationships of domination and exclusion would appear correspondingly to suffer.

Of course, activists fight the taboos and biases of Canadian redress culture. For example, the Vancouver chapter of the anti-racist and anti-colonial organization, No-One Is Illegal (2013), has launched a counter-memory project called 'Inheriting Resistance', which commemorates notable West Coast social justice struggles in order to fuel contemporary successors. For its part, the Chinese head-tax redress campaign (Cho 2013)

promoted introspection, accountability, and equal political voice by using a focus on historical wrongs to illuminate and contest contemporary inequalities.

Even when it comes to the CHRP, which saw significant ministerial efforts to ensure that funded projects would advance the federal government's preferred messages and framings (Griffith 2013), this essay has uncovered challenges and exceptions. The Italian-Canadian projects used the Second World War internment to focus on contemporary civil liberties violations, while their Jewish-Canadian counterparts exposed the responsibility of particular Canadian individuals and institutions for specific anti-Semitic acts and outrages. But the picture changed dramatically when we turned to consider racialized groups fighting against unjust contemporary relations. My account of the Halifax TRC (also see Nagy 2013) further suggests that the dominant redress culture applies its biases and taboos with particular vigour to indigenous historical justice struggles as well.

Critiquing these unequal degrees of freedom does not mean implying that complaints about inequalities in historical recognition will inevitably be equally meritorious. Indeed, this essay has shown how resistance to the Italian-Canadian redress movement's extravagant claims of equivalency ultimately produced commemorative approaches better positioned to contribute to democratic citizenship goals. Similar battles have also surfaced in a rash of controversies surrounding the soon-to-be opened Canadian Museum of Human Rights. Thus far, the outcomes of these battles seem consistent with the account of Canadian redress culture sketched in this article.

For example, it appears that the Museum will privilege the Holocaust over other historical atrocities, including settler colonialism, in content, design, and allocation of floor space (Moses 2012). The Museum has also refused to sanction the use of the word 'genocide' to describe in any way Canada's colonial assault on indigenous peoples, lands, and cultures (Dhamoon and Hankivsky 2014), despite an emerging consensus (e.g. Chrisjohn and Wasacase 2009, Claes and Clifton 1998, MacDonald and Hudson 2012, Woolford 2009, 2013) that aspects of the term's official international definition apply to important dimensions of the Canadian case. Criticizing these decisions, Dhamoon and Hankivsky (2014) argue that the Museum could help mitigate the 'Oppression Olympics' of inter-group competition by doing more to focus on the interlocking systems of oppression that produce injustice in the first place. For his part, Moses (2012) suggests that the role of donor pressure and government preferences in the decision to foreground the Holocaust augurs poorly for the Museum's mandate of promoting education in human rights.

Although their terms, foci, and concerns are of course their own, these analyses of the Canadian Museum of Human Rights can be read as negative answers to questions that this article has suggested we ask about endeavours in historical justice generally. Do the efforts promote democratic citizenship? That is, do they encourage introspection, political learning, and the equal opportunity to influence political outcomes, the better to stimulate processes of historical renegotiation oriented towards forging relations of equality and consent? Although Canada is sometimes taken as a model in this regard, this article has suggested that analysing its redress culture may provide an instructive pathology instead.

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Notes

1. The following account draws on Henderson and Wakeham (2009, 2013), Henderson (2013), James (2009, 2012, 2013), and Wakeham (2012, 2013).
2. Shockingly high rates of mortality, disease, abuse, as well as culture loss and various kinds of personal dysfunction have all been direct consequences of the schools (Milloy 1999).
3. For a broader account of the TRC, including the Halifax event, see Nagy (2013).
4. See <http://daniel-libeskind.com/projects/wheel-conscience>. The Canadian Jewish Congress has since disbanded and been replaced as Canada's main Jewish advocacy organization by the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs.
5. On this climate, see Abu-Laban and Bakan (2012).
6. On these injustices, see, respectively, Kordan and Mahovsky (2004); Ramirez (1988); Dyzenhaus and Moran (2005); Johnston (1979); Abella and Troper (2010).
7. All exhibit visits, save for the Wheel of Conscience at Pier 21 (October 2011), were conducted during the summer of 2012.
8. See <http://www.mhso.ca/chinesecanadianwomen/en/>.
9. See <http://www.mhso.ca/tiesthatbind/>.
10. See <http://www.italiancanadianww2.ca/>.
11. See <http://enemyaliens.ca/accueil-home-eng.html>. The story of the Jewish internees is not well known; after fleeing Nazism, more than 2000 Jewish refugees were interned in Canada at British behest and kept as 'enemy alien' security risks for three years during the war.
12. For example, see the account of the campaign on the Chinese Canadian National Council website at <http://www.cnc.ca/sectionEntry.php?entryID=10&type=Advocacy>.
13. On the German case, see Olick (2003b).
14. See <http://www.newswire.ca/fr/story/400739/the-national-congress-of-italian-canadians-responds-to-minister-kenney-s-announcement-regarding-the-community-historical-recognition-program-a-shameful>.
15. For examples of the inappropriate comparison, see Henderson and Wakeham (2013, p. 409).
16. See <http://www.pm.gc.ca/eng/media.asp?id=2173>.

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